

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

Births in institutional facilities, such as a hospital, improved by nearly eight percentage points but children who were either stunted or displayed signs of wasting only dropped by a maximum of three percentage points, shows a comparison of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 5 and 4. The complete results of the NFHS5 were made public. The NFHS4 was released in 2014 15 and the latest, which captured population health indicators in 201719, was delayed due to the pandemic. India has also officially hit a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.0 that indicates a decrease from the 2.2 in the NFHS4. According to the UN Population Division, a TFR of about 2.1 children per woman is called replacement - level fertility. If replacement level fertility is sustained over a sufficiently long period, each generation will exactly replace itself. The urban TFR is 1.6 and rural 2.1.

Acknowledging that poor families still need food security support in the middle of a recovering economy, the Centre has decided to extend its free ration scheme, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), for another four months, until March 2022. At its meeting on Wednesday, the Union Cabinet also gave its formal approval to repeal the three contentious farm reform laws in the winter session of Parliament, as announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Supreme Court asked the Centre if it was “willing” to favour a lifetime ban on contesting polls for people convicted of offences, even as it flagged the high number of cases pending against lawmakers, especially in Uttar Pradesh. “Are you willing to ban people who have been convicted of offences from contesting elections,” Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana, heading a Special Bench, orally asked Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju, appearing for the Centre. Mr. Raju said he had just been assigned the case and would need time to consult and formulate a response.

Over a year since Parliament passed four labour codes, the Centre is still in the process of notifying the rules to implement them and has not set a date for the rollout. Trade unions, however, have planned to intensify their agitation this week against the codes in the wake of the Government’s decision to repeal the three farm laws. A senior functionary of the Union Labour and

ELEPHANT COLLARING

1.A wild elephant was radio-collared in Assam by the state’s Forest Department, in collaboration with NGO World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-India. This initiative is seen as a step to study & mitigate human-elephant conflict in the state. But experts say that the exercise is challenging, and even runs the risk of having a low success rate. Radio-collars are GPS-enabled collars that can be fitted around the elephant’s neck. They relay information about an elephants’ whereabouts.

2.Collaring includes, Identifying a suitable candidate (generally an adult elephant), Darting the candidate with a sedative, and Fitting a collar around its neck, before the animal is revived. The objectives of this joint initiative are twofold. GPS information from the collar would help us track and study the movement patterns of the herd, across regions and habitats. This would help in understanding what is driving the conflict. The collars would serve as an early warning system. If people know in which direction an elephant is moving, they can be prepared.

3.These collars are a tried-and-tested tool for wildlife monitoring and will give rangers a leg up on poachers, allowing them to identify and respond to threats in real-time through mobile devices. Challenges - As we don’t have helicopters and other sophisticated equipment to approach elephants to tranquillise them, we go by foot. There is life risk. All components for radio collaring are not available in India. These have to be imported and are quite expensive. As the elephants grow in size, collars may become tight. So, we usually have to identify a senior elephant to avoid the chance of growth.

4.Each geographical area has its own peculiar problems. Also, we have elephants that are long ranging, and have a diverse topography. Many times elephants are not able to keep the collar on. They will have it on for maximum 6 months, before it falls off. Also, there may be technical glitches with the device too. Apart from Assam, collaring has been attempted in Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Tamil Nadu too.

RANI GAIDINLIU

1.Union Home Minister laid the foundation stone for the ‘Rani Gaidinliu Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum’ in Manipur. Born on January 26, 1915 at Luangkao village in Manipur, Rani Gaidinliu was a spiritual and political leader of the Rongmei Naga tribe. She preserved the identity and culture of her community - Zeme, Liangmai, Rongmei and Inpui - a cognate of tribes referred to as Zeliangrong and are spread across Assam, Manipur & Nagaland. At age 13, she became associated with Haipou Jadonang, and became his lieutenant in his social, religious and political movement.

2.Jadonang started the ‘Heraka movement’, based on ancestral Naga religion, and envisioned an independent Naga kingdom (or Naga-Raja). After the execution of Jadonang, she took up the leadership of the movement, which slowly turned political from religious. Rani started a serious revolt against the British and was eventually imprisoned for life. She was released in 1947. She passed away in 1993 at her native village Luangkao.

3.Acknowledging her role in the struggle against the British, Jawaharlal Nehru called her the ‘Daughter of the Hills’ and gave her the title ‘Rani (Queen)’. Indian Coast Guard commissioned a Fast Patrol Vessel ‘ICGS Rani Gaidinliu’ in 2016.

MACRO OUTLOOK

1.Goldman Sachs in its report ‘Macro Outlook 2022’ forecasted India’s GDP would grow by 9.1% in 2022, accelerating from 2021’s growth of 8% and 2020’s contraction of 7% on the back of increased consumption. The reasons that the Goldman Sachs cited for the growth are, Faster-than-expected recovery, Rising consumer confidence, and Spike in the consumer spending.

2.Consumption is expected to be an important contributor to growth in 2022, as the economy fully reopens, driven by a notable improvement in the virus situation and adequate

Employment Ministry said the notification of rules was “in process”. The codes on wages, social security, occupational safety and industrial relations were passed in 2019 and 2020.

More than 80% of the militants killed this year in Kashmir hailed from the Valley, according to Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) data. The CRPF is one of the largest Central forces deployed in the Valley for counterterrorism operations, along with the Jammu and Kashmir Police and the Army. According to a CRPF official, till November 23, as many as 148 militants had been killed, of which 127 were residents and 21 foreigners. In 2020, the number of militants killed in the Valley stood at 195.

Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana on Wednesday said that in a bid to step up women’s security in the Capital, the force will set up special booths at dark spots and vulnerable areas in consultation with beat officers, traffic police and people. He also said that for the first time, each police station will have three inspectors exclusively to investigate crimes against women. Addressing a press conference at the Indian Women’s Press Corps office, Mr. Asthana said expeditious attention will be given if a woman or a child is in distress. “We have a crime against women cell in every police station and there is also the special unit for women and children that is working throughout the day.”

The nondescript town of Jewar, 100 km from Delhi, is set to find a place on the world map as Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone of an international airport that would be the largest in Asia and the fourth largest in the world. The first phase, built on 1,334 hectares, is expected to be completed by 2024 when one runway would become operational.

Time and again India has proved itself to be “first responder” in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday while stating that the COVID19 pandemic has reaffirmed the “centrality of multilateralism” in our interconnected world not only for matters of international security but also disaster management. “India’s unique position in the IOR, complemented by a capability of our armed forces, enables us to contribute significantly in Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) situations,” said Mr. Singh while virtually inaugurating the 5th World Congress on Disaster Management. “India has been regularly conducting exercises to deepen the HADR cooperation and coordination among our neighbours

progress on vaccination.

3.Government capital spending is expected to continue as there are nascent signs of Private corporate capital expenditure recovery and Revival in housing investment. CPI inflation is forecasted to rise from 5.2% (2021) to 5.8% (2022), driven by a rise in core inflation as manufacturers pass on higher input costs.

FASTEST SPINNING WHITE DWARF

1.An astronomer’s team has confirmed that a white dwarf star that completes a full rotation once every 25 seconds is the fastest spinning white dwarf. A white dwarf is a star that has burnt up all of its nuclear fuel, and is shedding its outer layers, now undergoing a process of shrinking and cooling. This star, named LAMOST J0240+1952, is part of a binary star system. It is the size of the Earth but at least 200,000 times more massive.

2.Magnetic Propeller System - J0240+1952 is an extremely rare example of a magnetic propeller system, as it pulls gaseous plasma from the companion star and flings them into space at 3,000 km per second. J0240+1952 is pulling material from its companion star due to its strong gravitational effect. But as the material gets closer to the white dwarf the magnetic field starts to dominate. This type of gas is highly conducting and picks up a lot of speed from this process, which propels it away from the star and out into space.

3.Evolution of White Dwarf- A white dwarf is a very high density star that has burnt up all of its nuclear fuel (hydrogen). It shed its outer layers, now undergoing a process of shrinking and cooling over millions of years. Mass - White Dwarf is half the size of our Sun and has a surface gravity 100,000 times that of Earth. They can have a mass, which is limited to 4 times the mass of the Sun. This limit is known as the “Chandrasekhar Limit.” Detection - White dwarfs can be detected as they are sources of soft, or lower-energy, X-rays. Black Dwarf - A white dwarf cools until it becomes a black dwarf, which emits no energy.

STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE (SPR) PROGRAMME

1.India will release 5 million barrels of crude oil from its emergency stockpile in tandem with the U.S., China, Japan, and other major economies to cool oil prices. This is the first time ever that India, which stores 5.33 million tonne or about 38 million barrels of crude oil in underground caverns at three locations on the east and west coast, is releasing stocks for such purposes.

2.Background: The U.S. had last week made an unusual request to some of the largest oil-consuming nations, including China, India and Japan, to consider releasing crude stocks in a coordinated effort to pare global energy prices. This after the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies rebuffed repeated requests to speed up production increases.

3.About the SPR Programme: Strategic petroleum reserves are huge stockpiles of crude oil to deal with any crude oil-related crisis like the risk of supply disruption from natural disasters, war or other calamities. The petroleum reserves are strategic in nature and the crude oil stored in these reserves will be used during an oil shortage event, as and when declared so by the Government of India. The construction of the Strategic Crude Oil Storage facilities is being managed by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL), a Special Purpose Vehicle, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.A

4.Need for strategic oil reserves: In 1990, as the Gulf war engulfed West Asia, India was in the throes of a major energy crisis. By all accounts India’s oil reserves at the time were adequate for only three days. While India managed to avert the crisis then, the threat of energy disruption continues to present a real danger even today. To address energy insecurity, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government mooted the concept of strategic petroleum reserves in 1998. Today, with Indian Consumption increasing, the case for creating such reserves grows stronger.

WHAT IS EL SALVADOR’S BITCOIN CITY

1.El Salvador, the only country to recognise Bitcoin as a legal tender, is planning to build an entire city based on the largest cryptocurrency Bitcoin.

2.El Salvador’s “Bitcoin City” would be funded with the issuance of a \$1 billion Bitcoin Bond. **3.**The city will be located along the

and friendly countries with a focus on sharing expertise and building capabilities,” he said.

Assam has moved closer to resolving its decades old boundary dispute with Meghalaya, but tension has been brewing on its Arunachal Pradesh frontier. Miscreants allegedly fired at Assam forest officials on November 23 in the Ronga Reserve Forest of the State’s Lakhimpur district. The spot is near the Arunachal Pradesh border. On November 20, a team of Assam forest officials was detained by allegedly illegal settlers from Arunachal Pradesh in the forest. They were later rescued by the Assam police.

A number of Chinese companies have already begun “onsite inspections” of possible projects to tap lithium deposits in Afghanistan, having received the green light to do so from the Taliban regime, according to a report in the Chinese state media on Wednesday. Lithium is one of many resources in Afghanistan present in large deposits but as yet untapped, largely because of years of political instability and the lack of infrastructure. A Chinese company secured the rights to mine one of the world’s biggest copper reserves in Afghanistan at Aynak more than a decade ago, but has not yet begun work on extraction. While Chinese firms are aware of the risks and pitfalls, they have not wasted time scouting out potential deposits of lithium, a valuable resource for a range of industries from electric cars to energy storage systems.

Gulf of Fonseca near Conchagua volcano.

4.El Salvador is already running a pilot Bitcoin mining venture at another geothermal power plant beside the Tecapa volcano.