

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

A creeper that once gave a monk's robe its saffron hue has made a Buddhist village in eastern Assam's Charaideo district adopt a forest. Five years ago, the bhikkhus of a Buddhist monastery in the 152-year old Chalapather Shyamgaon had bemoaned the near extinction of bhungloti, a creeper that in combination with the pith of the roots of a jackfruit tree yielded a saffron dye for their robes. The women of the village too lamented how getting vital ingredients from four indigenous plants for dyeing their mekhela, a traditional garment, indigo blue, was getting increasingly difficult.

A mission to combat malnourishment among children aged six months to 5 years has earned the SKOCH Award for southern Assam's Cachar district. The SKOCH Award recognises people, projects and institutions that go the extra mile to make India a better nation.

Former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Urjit Patel has been appointed vice president of the Beijing based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Mr. Patel will serve a three-year term as one of the multilateral development bank's five vice presidents, and will take the place of former Gujarat Chief Secretary D.J. Pandian who had been, as Vice President, leading the AIIB's investment operations and all sovereign and non-sovereign lending in South and Southeast Asia.

Amazon has filed an appeal in the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) against the Competition Commission of India (CCI) order that suspended the over two-year-old approval for its deal with Future Coupons Pvt Ltd, according to sources. The NCLAT is an appellate authority for the orders passed by the CCI.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's name and photo will be removed from the COVID-19 vaccination certificates issued in the five poll-bound States since the model code of conduct has come into force there, official sources said on Sunday. The Union Health Ministry would apply the necessary filters on the CoWIN platform to remove Mr. Modi's photo from the certificates issued to people in Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, the sources said.

SC UPHOLDS CONSTITUTIONAL VALIDITY OF OBC QUOTA

1. The Supreme Court allowed NEET counseling to proceed, maintaining 27% reservation for OBC and 10% for EWS in All India Quota seats.

2. **Pandey Committee-While reviewing the petitions the court sought the government's rationale behind the 8 lakh income limit to identify the EWS category. The Pandey Committee was constituted for this purpose.** The panel submitted its report supporting the income limit of Rs 8 lakh gross annual family income as reasonable for identifying EWS. It had however suggested certain other modifications in EWS criteria, which could be considered for implementation only from the next academic year. The government, referring to the Pandey panel recommendation, urged the court to allow the NEET counseling for 2021-2022 to resume under EWS criteria stipulated in January 2019.

3. Recent Supreme court ruling-On medical admission - Considering urgency, this year Supreme court allowed for 27% reservation for OBC and 10% EWS in All India Quota seats as per July 2021 government order. Rs 8 lakh gross annual family income limit criterion for identifying EWS. On OBC category - The court upheld the constitutional validity of 27% reservation for OBC in NEET's All India Quota (AIQ) seats for postgraduate and undergraduate admissions.

4. On EWS category - **The question of the validity of the EWS criteria would be decided upon by the Supreme Court in the third week of March 2022, However the court agreed that EWS criteria can be used for the NEET admissions this year so that the entire exercise is not derailed.** Rs 8 lakh income threshold has to be implemented in this year's NEET counselling. Also future and prospective recommendations made by the Pandey Committee, modifying the criteria in the January 2019 memorandum, would be subject to the final adjudication by the Supreme court.

KAZAKHSTAN UNREST

1. The protests that broke out in Kazakhstan on January 2 over a fuel price hike have transformed into the biggest political crisis, the country's leadership has faced in over three decades.

2. **History of formation of Kazakhstan**-Kazakhstan is one of the five modern Central Asian countries which include Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan broke away from the Soviet Union to become an independent republic in 1991. Nursultan Nazarbayev, the country's powerful leader, stepped down as President in 2019. But he retained an outsized influence over the government of his cherry-picked successor, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. The capital city was named after Mr. Nazarbayev as Nur-Sultan and his statues erected across the country.

3. Reason for the present unrest-**Rise in fuel prices**- The protests began in the oil city of Zhanaozen, where at least 16 oil workers protesting against poor working conditions were killed by the police in 2011. A sharp and sudden spike in fuel prices triggered a national crisis in Kazakhstan. **Inflation**- They have argued that the jump in prices would cause a steep increase in food prices and deepen the income inequality that has plagued the nation for decades. Last year, inflation in the country was closing in on 9% year-on-year, the highest it has been in over five years. **Demands for democracy**- There has been a growing discontent among Kazakhs over rising income inequality and the lack of democracy.

4. Collective Security Treaty Organisation-When the Cold War came to an end in 1991, the Warsaw Pact dissolved. In 1992, the heads of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed the Collective Security Treaty in Tashkent (Uzbekistan). Today it has six members - Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan as Uzbekistan had quit the alliance in 2012. In 2007, the CSTO agreed to create a 3,600-strong peacekeeping force and two years later, it established a rapid-reaction force comprising 20,000 elite personnel who are kept on high alert. The alliance has also held joint exercises, including a series of high-profile

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) did not notify the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 rules till Sunday, the third extended deadline after the Act was passed. January 9 was the last day of an extension it sought from the two parliamentary committees in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha to frame the rules. It was not imminently clear if the Ministry had sought more time from the committee on subordinate legislation in the two Houses of Parliament to notify rules that will govern the CAA. Without rules, the Act cannot be implemented.

Indigenous aircraft carrier Vikrant headed out for the next set of sea trials on Sunday, shortly after two high profile visits — by the President and the Vice President of India within a span of about two weeks. The maiden sea trials in August 2021 were to establish propulsion, navigational suite and basic operations.

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa sought Chinese assistance to restructure the debt owed by the island nation to the Asian giant. “The President pointed out that it would be a great relief to the country if the attention could be paid on restructuring the debt repayments as a solution to the economic crisis that has arisen in the face of the COVID19 pandemic. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa made a similar request to India in February 2020 for a debt moratorium, but there has been no response since. “If India agrees to postpone debt by three years, we can convince others too.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said that Japan and the U.S. have reached “a basic agreement” on banning the U.S. military from leaving its base grounds, amid growing worries about a sharp rise in coronavirus cases. Mr. Kishida said American soldiers will stay on base “except when absolutely necessary,” which presumably means for emergencies or other security reasons.

In partial relief for India, a court in Canada has said that investors of Devas Multimedia can seize only 50% of Air India’s assets held by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). It has also quashed the order permitting seizure of funds belonging to the Airports Authority of India (AAI). Earlier, in two separate orders on November 24 and December 21, Devas shareholders had received permission from the Quebec Superior Court to seize assets of AAI and AI held by IATA over two arbitration awards it won for wrongful cancellation of its deal with ISRO’s arm, Antrix, in 2011. Russia ruled out on Sunday any

“anti-terrorism” drills in response to the growing chaos in Afghanistan.

5. Ahead in Kazakhstan-Dealing with the protests only through force, including with help from Russia (the Belarus model) would not resolve the underlying issues. It is an opportunity for the President to come out of the shadows of the old regime. The most sensible one, is to reach out to the angry public, hold consultations and build consensus to enter a new social contract with the people of Kazakhstan.

WARSAW PACT

1. The Warsaw Pact was a collective defence treaty established by the Soviet Union and 7 other Soviet satellite states- Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania. Albania withdrew in 1968.

2. Formally known as the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance, the Warsaw Pact was created in 1955, immediately after the accession of West Germany to the Alliance. It complemented the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, which was the regional economic organisation set up by the Soviet Union in January 1949 for the communist states of Central and Eastern Europe.

3. The Warsaw Pact embodied what was referred to as the Eastern bloc, while NATO and its member countries represented the Western bloc. NATO and the Warsaw Pact were ideologically opposed and, over time, built up their own defences starting an arms race that lasted throughout the Cold War.

FY22 GDP GROWTH PUT AT 9.2% AS AGRI, MANUFACTURING SHRINE

1. National Statistical Office has released the first Advance Estimate for FY22. Estimate tells us-Considering limited impact of the Covid wave the economic growth for the 2021-22 fiscal year is estimated at 9.2%. Though growth points to 9.2% due to base effect the real growth estimated is only 1.3% over the pre-Covid GDP level. The size of India’s economy is expected to increase to \$3.2 trillion. Nominal GDP is estimated to expand by 17.6% in FY22, higher than the 14.4% assumed in Budget 2021-22. The estimate is the highest in nearly two decades. Nominal growth is overtaking real growth by 8.4 percentage points due to a high implicit price deflator (IPD)-based inflation of 7.7%.

2. Sector wise data-The agriculture sector continues to shine. Manufacturing and construction have shown good growth. The growth in agriculture and industry was higher than in 2019-20 (FY20). Though the services sector grew it lags behind FY20.

3. Concerns-Impact of subsequent covid waves on the revival of economy in 2022-23. Continued supply-side rigidities. Lowering of India’s export due to covid surge.

4. Looks promising-Higher nominal GDP than assumed provides additional expenditure space for the government. This would reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio, which is the focus of FRBM. Despite the shortfall in disinvestment proceeds and additional demand for supplementary grants, the fiscal deficit target of 6.8% of GDP is likely to be achieved.

5. Nominal GDP different from Real GDP-Nominal GDP tells us the present-day value of a country’s goods and services. Here prices are affected by inflation since it uses current market prices. Real GDP is not affected by inflation. Here nominal GDP is adjusted for inflation using GDP deflator to reflect changes in real output. Hence real GDP growth reflects a country’s increased output and is not influenced by inflation increasing price level. The GDP deflator, also called implicit price deflator, is a measure of inflation. It is the ratio of the value of goods and services an economy produces in a particular year at current prices to that of prices that prevailed during the base year.

ONE DISTRICT ONE PRODUCT SCHEME

1. The Food Processing Ministry had inked an agreement with NAFED for developing 10 brands as the One District One Product brands under the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme.

2. Of this, six brands have been launched recently. The six brands include Amrit Phal (developed under the ODOP concept for Gurugram, Haryana), Cori Gold (developed for coriander powder which is the identified ODOP for Kota, Rajasthan), Kashmiri Mantra, Madhu Mantra (developed under the ODOP concept for honey from Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh), Somdana (developed under the ODOP concept of millets from Thane,

concession at talks with the United States on soaring tensions over Ukraine, as Moscow, facing strong pressure to pull back troops, seeks a wideranging new security arrangement with the West.

Beginning Monday, French aircraft maker Dassault Aviation will fly its RafaleM fighter jet from the Indian Navy's Shore Based Test Facility (SBTF) in Goa to demonstrate compatibility and suitability to operate from the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier Vikrant's deck.

Maharashtra), and Whole Wheat Cookies of Dilli Bakes (developed under the bakery ODOP concept for Delhi). All the products will be available at NAFED Bazaars, E-commerce platforms, and prominent retail stores across India.

3.About the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme: Launched in 2020, the scheme will be implemented for five years until 2024-25. It is for the Unorganized Sector on All India basis. Objectives: **Increase in access to finance by micro food processing units. Increase in revenues of target enterprises.**

4.Enhanced compliance with food quality and safety standards. Strengthening capacities of support systems. Transition from the unorganized sector to the formal sector. Special focus on women entrepreneurs and Aspirational districts. Encourage Waste to Wealth activities. Focus on minor forest produce in Tribal Districts.