

International

US based institute projects over one million deaths in China due to COVID-19 in 2023



China's abrupt lifting of stringent Covid-19 restrictions could result in an explosion of cases and over a million deaths through 2023, according to new projections from the U.S.-based Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). According to the group's projections, cases in China would peak around April 1, when deaths would reach 3.22 lakh.

About a third of China's population will have been infected by then, IHME Director Christopher Murray said. China lifted some of the world's toughest Covid restrictions in December after unprecedented public protests and is now experiencing a spike in infections, with fears Covid could sweep across its 1.4 billion population during next month's Lunar New Year holiday.

EU strikes deal to reform bloc's carbon market



EU member States and parliamentarians have announced an agreement for a major reform to the bloc's carbon market. The deal aims to accelerate emissions cuts, phase out free allowances to industries and targets fuel emissions from the building and road transport sectors. The EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) allows electricity producers and industries with high energy demands such as steel and cement to purchase "free allowances" to cover carbon emissions under a "polluter pays" principle.

The deal means emissions in the ETS sectors are to be cut by 62% by 2030 based on 2005 levels, up from a previous goal of 43%. Concerned industries must cut their emissions by that amount.

Fiji election ends in cliffhanger, Opposition eyes deal for power



Fiji's election ended in a cliffhanger on Sunday, with two rival ex-coup leaders failing to win a majority and needing the backing of a minor party to secure power. Incumbent PM Frank Bainimarama's Fiji First party and an Opposition coalition led by Sitiveni Rabuka were both projected to secure 26 seats in the 55-seat legislature.

India's Sargam Koushal wins Mrs World 2022 title



Sargam Koushal was named Mrs World 2022, beating contestants from 63 countries to bring the title back to India after 21 years. Mrs World 2021 Shaylyn Ford of the U.S. presented the crown to Mumbai-based Mrs. Koushal at a ceremony held at Westgate Las Vegas Resort and Casino. Mrs Polynesia was named the first runner-up, followed by Mrs Canada as the second runner-up.

India, Sri Lanka to launch ferry service next month between Kankesanthurai port and Puducherry



Passenger ferry service is slated to commence from next month between India and Sri Lanka. The ferry service will connect the Kankesanthurai port in Jaffna district and Pondicherry. Sri Lanka's Ports and Shipping minister Nimal Siripala de Silva said, the Indian government extended consent for the service.

Steps are being taken to develop infrastructure related to customs, immigration and emigration, and other facilities at the Sri Lankan ports. The vessels under the new service will carry 300 to 400 passengers on a trip. The ferry would take about three and half hours between destinations.

National

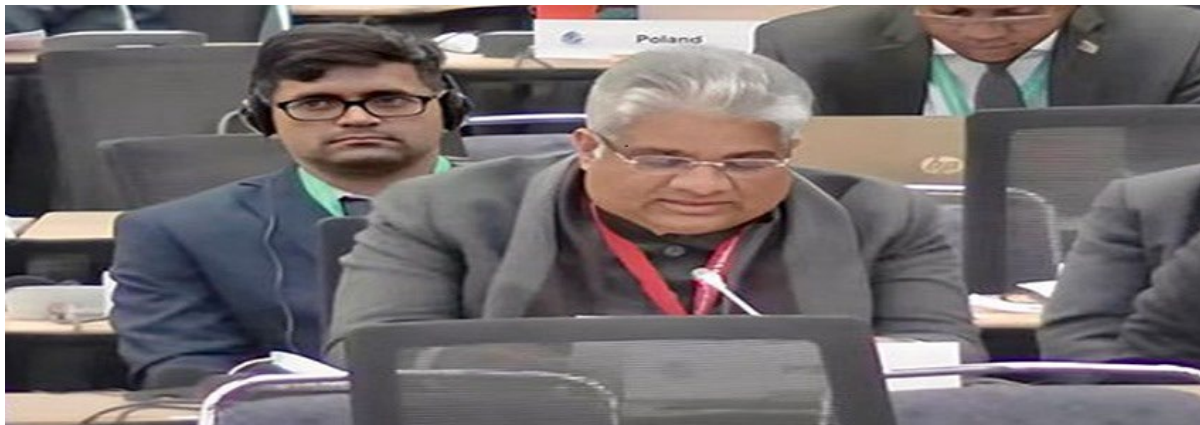
PM Modi greets Israeli PM Yair Lapid on Hanukkah festival



Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted his Israel counterpart Yair Lapid on Israel's auspicious festival Hanukkah. Mr. Modi also expressed wishes to former Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu. In a message, Mr. Modi extended wishes to everyone celebrating the festival of lights around the world.

The eight-day Jewish celebration known as Hanukkah or Chanukah commemorates the rededication during the second century B.C. of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, where according to legend Jews had risen up against their Greek Syrian oppressors in the Maccabean Revolt.

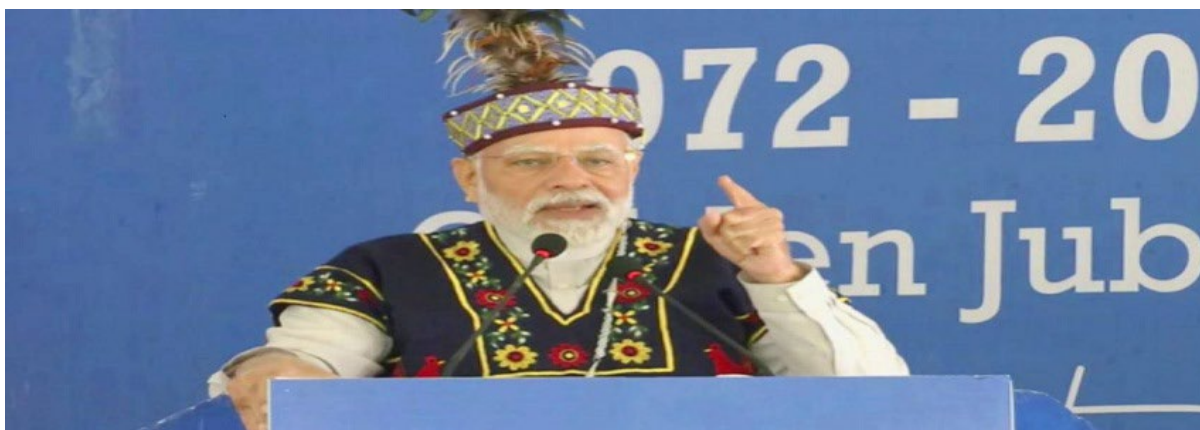
India says reversing ecosystem degradation and halting global biodiversity loss are essential for socio-economic development and well-being of people



Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav has said that reversing ecosystem degradation and halting global biodiversity loss are essential for the socio-economic development and well-being of people, and for advancing global sustainability. He said India is working towards restoring and conserving its rich biodiversity, which includes one of the world's richest mix of flora and fauna.

The Minister stated this while addressing the stocktaking plenary at the UN Biodiversity Conference, COP15 in Montreal, Canada. He underlined India's position that while the goals and targets set in the Global Biodiversity Framework should be ambitious, they should also be realistic and practical. Mr. Yadav also said conservation of biodiversity must also be based on Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective capabilities as climate change also has an impact on biodiversity.

PM Modi unveils several development projects worth over Rs 6,800 crore in Tripura, Meghalaya



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of several development projects worth over 6,800 crore rupees in Tripura and Meghalaya. In Tripura, he launched projects worth 4,350 crore rupees. The projects include 'Grih Pravesh' programme for beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Rural. These houses, which have been developed at a cost of more than 3400 crore rupees, will cover over two lakh beneficiaries. Mr Modi also inaugurated State's first Dental College in Agartala.

In Meghalaya, the Prime Minister unveiled projects worth over 2,450 crore rupees. The multiple projects include the inauguration of 320 completed and 890 under construction 4G mobile towers, the new campus of IIM Shillong, at Umsawli, the Shillong - Diengpasoh Road which will provide

better connectivity to the new Shillong satellite township and four other roads projects across the three states of Meghalaya, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

Over 3,000 govt. services to be added for online delivery



Over 3,100 new government services will be added for online delivery during the five-day Good Governance Week that begins from Monday. A host of good governance activities have been planned during the nationwide campaign based on the theme 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' (Governance Towards Village). As many as 3,120 services identified by the District Collectors will be added for online service delivery during the five-day 'Prashasan Gaon ki Ore' campaign to be inaugurated by Union Minister for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Jitendra Singh.

During the Preparatory Phase of the Good Governance Week 2022 held from December 10-18, 2022, District Collectors have also identified 81,27,944 applications for Service Delivery to be disposed, along with 19,48,122 Public Grievances to be redressed in State Grievance Portals.

Banking and Economy

Foreign investors pump in over Rs 8,600 crore in December



Foreign investors pumped more than 8,600 crore rupees in the Indian capital markets in December, so far. According to the depositories data, Foreign Portfolio investors (FPIs) invested 10,555 crore rupees in the equities market while pulled 2,180 crore rupees from the debt market. FPIs invested 196 crore rupees in the Voluntary Retention Route of the debt market and 65 crore rupees in Hybrid market taking the total net inflow in the Indian capital markets to 8,635 crore rupees in December, so far.

Prior to this, FPIs had pumped 33,847 crore rupees in November and 56,521 crore rupees in August. This is the fourth month in the calendar year 2022 when the net foreign fund inflow in the Indian capital markets is positive.

Gross Direct Tax Collections for FY 2022-23 register growth of 25.90%



The Gross collection of Direct Taxes has registered a growth of 25.90 percent which stood at 13,63,649 crore rupees in the financial year 2022-23. The Gross collection in the corresponding period stood at 10,83,150 crore rupees. According to the Finance Ministry data, the Net Direct tax collection for FY 2022-23 stood at 11,35,754 crore rupees, registering a growth of 19.81 percent. The Net Direct tax collection for the corresponding period was recorded at 9,47,959 crore rupees. Meanwhile, Advance Tax collections for FY 2022-23 recorded at 5,21,302 crore rupees, which showed a growth of 12.83 per cent.

First Framework Working Group Meeting of Finance Track under G20 India Presidency concludes in Bengaluru



The First Framework Working Group Meeting of the Finance Track under G20 India Presidency concluded in Bengaluru. During the two days meeting, the member countries discussed the problem plaguing the global economy due to inflation and recession post-pandemic. Discussions focused on policies that promote strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth across the world, particularly in the emerging economies.

It also discussed issues pertaining to climate change and targets under energy transition. The discussion also revolved around macro policy tools to mitigate short term and medium-term challenges. The Working group will submit its report to the Union Finance Minister Nirmala

Sitharaman on the priorities discussed during the First Finance and Central Bank Deputies meeting and First Framework Working Group meeting in Bengaluru.

Sports

Argentina are the new FIFA World Cup champions



Argentina beat France 4-2 on penalties to win the 2022 FIFA World Cup after a 3-3 draw in a thrilling final at the Lusail Stadium in Doha. The game ran more than two hours as Argentina and France played to a grueling draw. The score was 2-2 after 90 minutes when extra time began. Argentine star Lionel Messi then scored a goal, and a few minutes later France answered back. The win marks Argentina's third-ever World Cup victory and first since 1986.

Lionel Messi won the Golden Ball for the best player at this year's World Cup after leading Argentina to victory in the final against France.

France's Kylian Mbappe won the Golden Boot for the tournament's top scorer with eight goals. Argentina's Emiliano Martinez won the Golden Glove award while Enzo Fernandez won the Best Young Player award.

India beat Bangladesh by 188 runs in Opening Test of two-match series at Chattogram



India registered a convincing 188-run victory against Bangladesh in the first test match played at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury stadium at Chattogram. The hosts started the final day of the match at 272-6, needing 241 runs to win, but they were all out within one hour of the play at 324 chasing the massive score of 513 runs. India scored 404 in the first innings of the match with stellar performances by Cheteshwar Pujara (90) and Shreyas Iyer (86).