



## BREAKING NEW GROUND

Actor Urvashi Rautela is set to collaborate with Egyptian actor Mohammad Ramdan in an upcoming project

LEISURE P2



## ILLEGAL PRAWN GHERIES

Against the 729 gheries permitted, over 20,000 prawn gheries have come up in Kendrapara district

STATE P8



## TRUMP SIGNS TIBET POLICY

Prez Trump signs the American policy on Tibet and reaffirmed the govt's support for Dalai Lama

INTERNATIONAL P10

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I can't come home. Protesting farmers are dying on streets. They need a voice and our leader is on vacation.

## SHORT TAKES

### 62 UK returnees still untraceable

**Bhubaneswar:** Despite several attempts, the state government has been unable to trace 62 United Kingdom (UK) returnees to conduct RT-PCR and genome sequencing tests. Speaking to reporters here Monday, Public Health Director Niranjan Mishra said a total of 181 persons had returned from the UK to Odisha between November 30 and December 21. Out of them, RT-PCR tests of 119 persons have been conducted and six have tested positive for Covid-19. However, the remaining 62 returnees are still untraceable, he said.

### Sonia, Rahul skip Cong's key event

**New Delhi:** Congress President Sonia Gandhi and former party chief Rahul Gandhi on Monday gave the party's 136th Foundation Day event a miss with senior party leader A K Antony unfurling the flag at the AICC headquarters here. A number of senior party functionaries were present at the meeting, including AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Others present included some of the "letter-writers" like Ghulam Nabi Azad and Anand Sharma, who had sought an organisational overhaul in the party, besides Sachin Pilot who revolted against the Congress government in Rajasthan sometime ago.

### Covid vax dry run begins in 4 states

**Ludhiana/Ahmedabad:** As the country awaits a coronavirus vaccination drive in January, at least 125 intended beneficiaries each in four states who had registered on the Co-WIN App were Tuesday sent SMSes informing them about the time and place of their 'vaccination' under a mock-drill and preparations made to administer the shots at designated centres. The dry run was being carried out in Krishna district in AP, in Rajkot and Gandhinagar in Gujarat, Ludhiana and SB Singh Nagar in Punjab and Sonitpur in Assam.

MARKET WATCH			
INDEX		VARIATION	
SENSEX	47353.75	▲	380.21
NIFTY	13873.20	▲	123.90
DOLLAR	73.63	▼	₹0.06
EURO	89.98	▼	₹0.02
GOLD	₹50,150	▲	₹77
SILVER	₹69,033	▲	₹1,524

WEATHER			
		BHUB	CTK
MAX	29.3°C	28.0°C	
MIN	13.2°C	12.0°C	
Humidity	86%	81%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	
Forecast			
Mainly clear sky			

# QUOTAS FOR GOVT SCHOOL STUDENTS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 28:** In a major move to promote students passing out of government-run high schools, the state cabinet Monday passed a resolution to reserve some seats in medical and engineering colleges for these students.

Briefing the media, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha said, after introduction of centralized exams like NEET and JEE for medical and engineering courses, it is observed that the number of meritorious students from government-run high schools and colleges in Odisha, qualifying for admissions in these institutions, has been coming down over the years.

This is not due to lack of meritorious students but a deeper divide in access to coaching classes which is missing in rural areas, he said.

It is a fact that these centralized competitive exams require special skill sets which are imparted mainly through coaching centres and online coaching classes. As such centres are limited to mostly urban pockets and there exists a high economic cost for access to such facilities, thousands of meritorious students from government schools are at a disadvantage and fare lower than

## CONTROVERSIAL MOVE



Reservations for govt school and college students for admission into medical and engineering colleges in the state from next academic year

Cabinet also approves mandatory submission of annual property list for elected representatives and babus

their potential in the entrance exams.

"To correct this imbalance and provide confidence to meritorious students of government schools, to help them fulfill their dreams to become doctors and engineers, the state government has decided to provide reservation to eligible government school and college students of Odisha for admission into medical and engineering colleges in the state. This will be applicable from the next academic year," the minister said.

To finalize the modalities for im-

plementation of the above in-principle decision, a high powered committee headed by a retired judge of the Orissa High Court will be constituted with eminent persons including educationists as members. The committee will be mandated to submit the report within three months so that the recommendations can be implemented from the next academic year. The state cabinet has approved a proposal for mandatory submission of annual property lists for elected representatives

and government employees.

"The state government is committed to provide a transparent and corruption-free administration to the people of Odisha. It has also taken various important steps in this direction. In democracy, accountability is of paramount importance. Our fight against corruption will be successful in eliminating many of our maladies in society like inequality, injustice and poverty," Arukha said.

The uncompromising fight against corruption has brought laurels to the state. Hence, going a step ahead, the state government Monday decided that submission of property statement will now be made mandatory for all public representatives starting from the level of sarpanchs to the Chief Minister, he said.

Similarly, it has also been made mandatory for all government servants starting from the entry level to the Chief Secretary to submit their property lists, the minister said. It was decided that the property statements will be made available in public domain and a copy of the property statement of public representatives and the government servants will be sent to the Lokayukta every year, Arukha added. **More P5**

## Covid-19 guidelines extended till Jan 31

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 28:** Despite the declining trend in new Covid-19 cases, the Central government on Monday extended, till January 31 next year, the safety guidelines directing states and Union Territories (UTs) to maintain surveillance and follow containment measures set earlier.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued the fresh order, extending the earlier guidelines for surveillance in the first month of the new year. "While there has been a continuous decline in the active and new Covid-19 or coronavirus cases, there is need to maintain surveillance, containment and caution, keeping in view the surge in cases globally, and emergence of a new variant of the virus in the United Kingdom (UK)," the ministry said in a statement.

Accordingly, it said containment zones should continue to be demarcated carefully and prescribed containment measures strictly followed within these zones. As per the ministry, there is clear direction to promote Covid-19 appropriate behaviour and its strict enforcement.

It also directed the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) prescribed in respect of various permitted activities be followed "scrupulously".

Therefore, the ministry made it clear that the focused approach on surveillance, containment and strict observance of the guidelines or SOPs issued by it and the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry, as envisaged in the guidelines issued on November 25 this year, need to be enforced strictly by states and UTs.

The fresh order comes at a time when India logged 20,021 fresh Covid-19 infections taking the total number of cases to 1,02,07,871, along with 279 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the toll to 1,47,901 as per latest data. In the last 24 hours, 21,131 people have recovered, taking the total number of the recovered people to 97,82,669. There are 2,77,301 active cases.

# Each year, 1,000 Pak girls forcibly converted to Islam

AGENCIES

**Karachi, Dec 28:** Neha loved the hymns that filled her church with music. But she lost the chance to sing them last year when, at the age of 14, she was forcibly converted from Christianity to Islam and married to a 45-year-old man with children twice her age.

She tells her story in a voice so low it occasionally fades away. She all but disappears as she wraps a blue scarf tightly around her face and head. Neha's husband is in jail now facing charges of rape for the underage marriage, but she is in hiding, afraid after security guards confiscated a pistol from his brother in court.

"He brought the gun to shoot me," said Neha, whose last name The Associated Press is not using for her



safety. Neha is one of nearly 1,000 girls from religious minorities who are forced to convert to Islam in Pakistan each year, largely to pave the way for marriages that are under the legal age and non-consensual.

Human rights activists say the practice has accelerated during

lockdowns against the coronavirus, when girls are out of school and more visible, bride traffickers are more active on the Internet and families are more in debt.

The US State Department this month declared Pakistan "a country of particular concern" for violations of religious freedoms—a des-

ignation the Pakistani government rejects. The declaration was based in part on an appraisal by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom that underage girls in the minority Hindu, Christian, and Sikh communities were "kidnapped for forced conversion to Islam... forcibly married and subjected to rape."

While most of the converted girls are impoverished Hindus from southern Sindh province, two new cases involving Christians, including Neha's, have roiled the country in recent months.

The girls generally are kidnapped by complicit acquaintances and relatives or men looking for brides. Sometimes they are taken by powerful landlords as payment for outstanding debts by their farmhand parents, and police often look the

other way. Once converted, the girls are quickly married off, often to older men or to their abductors, according to the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

Forced conversions thrive unchecked on a money-making web that involves Islamic clerics who solemnise the marriages, magistrates who legalise the unions and corrupt local police who aid the culprits by refusing to investigate or sabotaging investigations, say child protection activists.

One activist, Jibran Nasir, called the network a "mafia" that preys on non-Muslim girls because they are the most vulnerable and the easiest targets "for older men with pedophilia urges." The goal is to secure virginal brides rather than to seek new converts to Islam.



India's first fully automated driverless train runs on the Magenta Line of the Delhi Metro during a trial for the media following its launch by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, Monday (Report P9)

## Assam govt to shut madrasas, tables Bill

AGENCIES

**Guwahati, Dec 28:** The Assam government introduced a Bill in the Assembly Monday to shut over 600 madrasas run by it, which was strongly opposed by the opposition Congress and AIUFE Assam Education and Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma introduced the Assam Madrasah Education (Provincialisation) Act of 1995 on the opening day of the three-day winter session.

"Once the Bill is passed (by the House), the practice of running madrasas by the government in Assam will come to an end, a practice which was started



by the Muslim League government in pre-Independence Assam," Sarma said in a tweet. The Congress and All India United Democratic Front, a Muslim dominated party, strongly opposed the Bill and said that they would restart the madrasa education after coming to the power in the Assembly

polls due in April-May next year. Earlier, Sarma had said that the state government had decided to make education 'secular' and 620 madrasas administered by the state government would be shut. The Assam Cabinet earlier in a meeting chaired by CM Sarbananda Sonowal approved the proposal

to close down all government-run madrasas and Sanskrit tols (schools) in the state.

"All the 620 government-run madrasas will be converted into the general schools and 97 Sanskrit tols handed over to Kumar Bhaskarvarma Sanskrit University. These Sanskrit tols will be converted into centres of learning and research where Indian culture, civilisation and nationalism will be studied. Irrespective of religion, Indian culture, civilisation and nationalism will be taught in these converted educational institutions, making Assam the first Indian state to teach on these themes," Sarma pointed out.

## FARMERS' STIR

## GOVT INVITES UNIONS FOR TALKS DEC 30

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 28:** The government Monday invited 40 protesting farmer unions for the next round of talks December 30 on all relevant issues to find a "logical solution" to the current impasse over the farm laws. The government's invite followed a proposal made by unions last week to hold the talks Tuesday, December 29, on agenda including modalities for the repeal of the three laws enacted in September.

In a letter to the unions, Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Aggarwal has invited them for holding talks at 2 pm Wednesday at Vigyan Bhavan. The last formal meeting took place December 5, in which union leaders had demanded a clear 'yes or no' answer from the government on their main demand of the repeal of the laws.

Taking note of the unions' offer to resume talks, Aggarwal said, "The government is also committed to finding a logical solution on all relevant issues with a clear intention and an open mind." With regard to the proposed agenda by the unions for the meeting, the secretary said detailed talks will take place on three farm laws, MSP procurement system as well as Electricity Amendment bill and ordinance to tackle air pollution in and around NCR. However, the letter did not make reference to one key condition sought by the unions seeking talks on modalities for the repeal of the laws.



## Pari probe leaves many questions unanswered



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nayagarh, Dec 28:** The SIT probe into Pari death case has left several questions unanswered, particularly those raised by the deceased's parents.

Soudamini Sahu, Pari's mother asked why the SIT has not shown their daughter's frock to them. The SIT is claiming that the frock has semen stains. "Who else can better identify the frock than us? The frock may not be of Pari," she said.

"Similarly, the SIT found a pair of leggings from the pond after getting it emptied. Here also the SIT did not think it proper to show us the leggings for verification. After getting the leggings, it claimed it is the same leggings that the deceased was wearing on the fateful day. Does the SIT know better than us what Pari was wearing on that particular day?" she asked.

"We would like to believe that the team is investigating into the case to give us justice. But the team is not consulting us and paying

no heed to our complaints, how will it deliver justice to us," she asked with tears rolling down on her cheeks.

"We already know that the SIT is on the job of suppressing the case. But we will continue our fight till justice is delivered to us," she sobbed out. Advocate Amiya Patnaik said, it would be a difficult task to prove in the court that the college student is the murderer.

"Pari's parents are not accepting that the student is the murderer of their daughter. The SIT is deliberately sidelining the parents' complaints regarding their daughter's death. If the college student is implicated in the case, the SIT will be responsible for this," he said. Pari's advocate Chandra Bijayi Mishra has some questions as well.

"If the college student is the culprit, then why the minister was pressuring Laxmiprasad sarpanch not to take the case further? The said minister is in no way related to the college student, nor has he ever talked to him.



## FORTUNE FORECAST

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### ARIES

Today you will have an eye for beautiful and outlandish things. There is a possibility that you may even contemplate starting a business related to these things. Ganesha feels, though, that you will not be able to reach any conclusion about it.

### TAURUS

You can expect a pleasant, comfortable day at the office, today, so says Ganesha. You will be carrying out your work cheerfully and effortlessly. You could, later in the evening, have a strong urge to go out for dinner with your family and friends.

### GEMINI

Today will be a day filled with energy and enthusiasm. You will have an optimistic view of life and this will help you attain success. You will be able to exercise your free will and take up tasks to your liking. While the day will be busy, it will also be rewarding, says Ganesha.

### CANCER

Lack of support from family members will disable your efforts. Children also disappoint you. Discord or difference of opinion in family is indicated. Beware of neighbours. Yet, says Ganesha, face circumstances with a smile.

### LEO

You will be filled with extraordinary self-confidence today. You will be able to take firm decisions when it comes to work related issues. You will not face any difficulties in completing your tasks today, and will achieve success.

### VIRGO

Take a little break today, and spend some time looking within. At your office there may be some bitter confrontations, so Ganesha advises you to be very careful and try to prevent things from getting too difficult.

### LIBRA

Ganesha says the inner artist in you will come to the surface today and you will showcase your imagination powers too. You will be able to focus on topics of interest today. Those of you in the field of interest will find themselves moving ahead. There may be signing of beneficial legal deals today for you.

### SCORPIO

According to Ganesha, you will be soaked in your work today. During the day, you may be loaded with duties and responsibilities, however, evening has a different story to reveal. Exciting as ever, a get away with friends may be liberating and relaxing.

### SAGITTARIUS

You are caught in a whirlpool of emotions, predicts Ganesha. You may come across many ups and downs today. However, nothing seems to deter you from your determination and dedication towards work.

### CAPRICORN

You can't bear the weight of the heavy work load any more. Very cleverly, you will complete your tasks and slowly but steadily you take the load off your shoulders, predicts Ganesha. Attentive and observant, you meticulously plan your actions and minimise the chances of errors.

### AQUARIUS

You may receive some good news from the foreign shores today. The day will bring on a positive note and it will remain like that for the whole twenty-four hours. You'll be in a mood to merry and it will be transformed to everyone around you, says Ganesha.

### PISCES

A reckless attitude is the root cause of any downfall. Ensure responsible behavior and actions at every step at your workplace, today, suggests Ganesha. Be alert and focused and you will be able to dodge any incoming trouble.

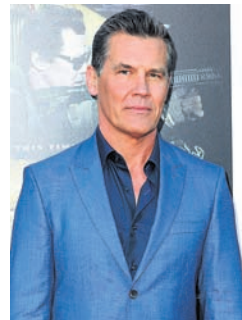


## CHRIS PINE BRINGS THE BEST OUT OF GAL GADOT

Hollywood star Gal Gadot enjoyed working with Chris Pine, and says he is a great partner. The actress got a chance to work with Pine again in *Wonder Woman 1984*, sequel to the Patty Jenkins-directed 2017 DC hit, *Wonder Woman*.

## JOSH BROLIN BECOMES FATHER FOR FOURTH TIME

Actor Josh Brolin and wife Kathryn have welcomed a baby girl, their second child together. Brolin has become a father for the fourth time. "Chapel Grace Brolin Born at 6:20 pm on 12/25/20 Our little Christmas evening angel," Kathryn posted on Instagram, reports *people.com*.



# Tara's latest picture sets temperature soaring



**Mumbai:** Actress Tara Sutaria has shared a picture from the beach leaving fans in awe.

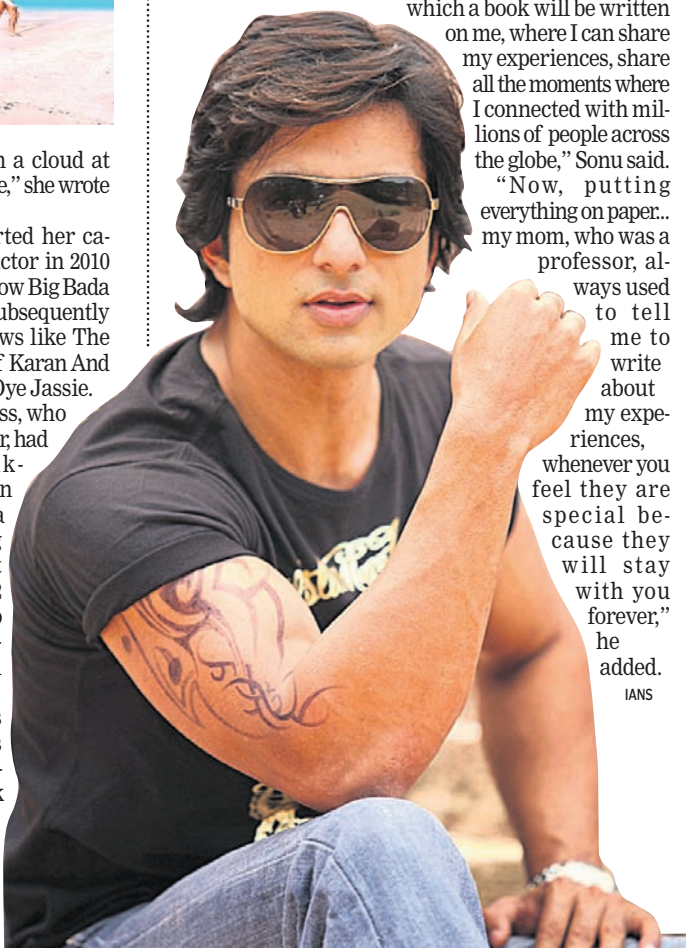
In the Instagram image, she is seen in a white ensemble, walking on a sandy beach and against the backdrop of a bright blue sky and water.

"When you dance down the street with a cloud at your feet, that's amore," she wrote as caption.

Tara, who started her career as a child actor in 2010 with the TV show *Big Bada Boom*, was subsequently seen in shows like *The Suite Life Of Karan And Kabir* and *Oye Jassie*.

The actress, who is also a singer, had her breakthrough in Hindi cinema with a starring role in *Student Of The Year 2* and was also seen in the action film *Marjaavaan*.

She now has two films coming up -- *Tadap* and *Ek Villain 2*.



## Never thought a book will be written on me: Sonu Sood

**New Delhi:** Actor Sonu Sood never envisioned that there would be a book about him someday, adding that he misses his mother when such a thing is happening.

Sonu has written a book recounting his experience of helping migrant workers during the Covid lockdown. Titled *I Am No Messiah*, the book is written in first person, revealing the emotional challenges the actor faced while extending help.

"It has turned out to be very special because I never realised that one day, I will do something, on which a book will be written on me, where I can share my experiences, share all the moments where I connected with millions of people across the globe," Sonu said. "Now, putting everything on paper.. my mom, who was a professor, always used to tell me to write about my experiences, whenever you feel they are special because they will stay with you forever," he added.

IAN S

## Urvashi to collaborate with Egyptian actor Ramadan

**Mumbai:** Actress and former beauty queen Urvashi Rautela is all set to collaborate with Egyptian actor Mohammad Ramadan in an upcoming project.

"Urvashi is the Bollywood's young superstar look at her beauty and popularity. She's excellent and outstanding actor / artist. She is a shining example of beauty from India and I'm sure you'll be seeing her in more Hollywood projects soon," Mohammad Ramadan said.

"The only Bollywood film person I know after Shah Rukh Khan is Urvashi Rautela. She is very fa-



mous," he claimed. Ramadan shared that Urvashi and he have been discussing the project since February. "But the covid pandemic came as a speedbreaker on our journey. Working with her will be a delight and I surely enjoy shooting with her," he added.

Urvashi has been working on her first bilingual movie, Mohan Bhardwaj's *Black Rose*, based on Shakespeare's *The Merchant Of Venice*.

IAN S

# Youth India Foundation organises fundraiser for a cause

**Bhubaneswar:** SHADES, a Youth India Foundation initiative founded by Subhankar Nanda, Saturday conducted a fundraising event at a city hotel here.

The programme was also streamed live on YouTube to encourage local talents to showcase their skills.

The main objective of the event was to eradicate hunger by installing community refrigerators at several places of the city. "We truly value our local



**YIF is a social entrepreneurship platform where youths from across India unite to use their skills for a good cause**

artists and are determined to present them before the world", said Subhankar Nanda, President, Youth India Foundation (YIF).

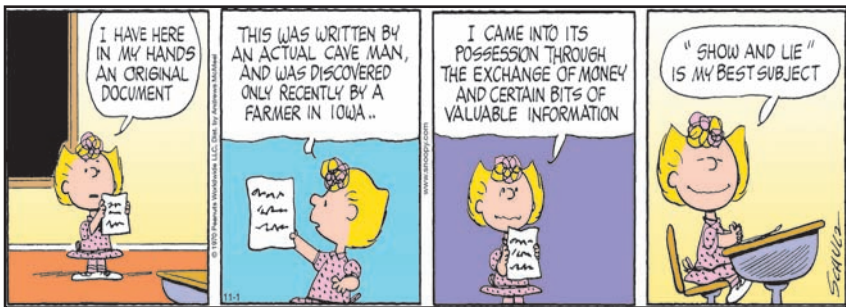
"It is an honour to announce

that this event will be a prominent fundraiser for the needy. The proceeds from the event will be split as the pay of the artists while the rest will go towards installing a community refrigerator to help prevent wastage of food in the city and feed the hungry," added Nanda.

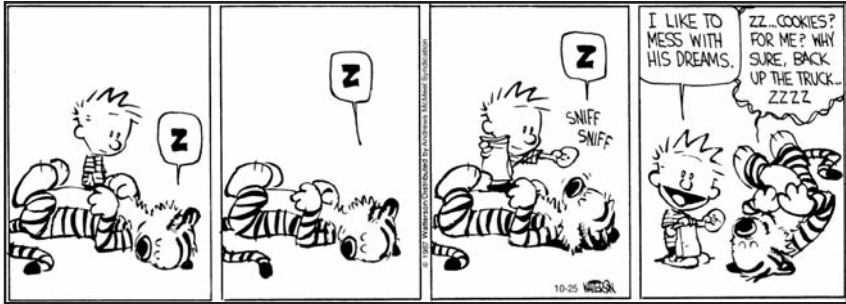
For the unversed, YIF is run by a large group of about 7,000 young college students from top institutions of the country. The first edition of SHADES was held November 13 successfully.

PNN

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

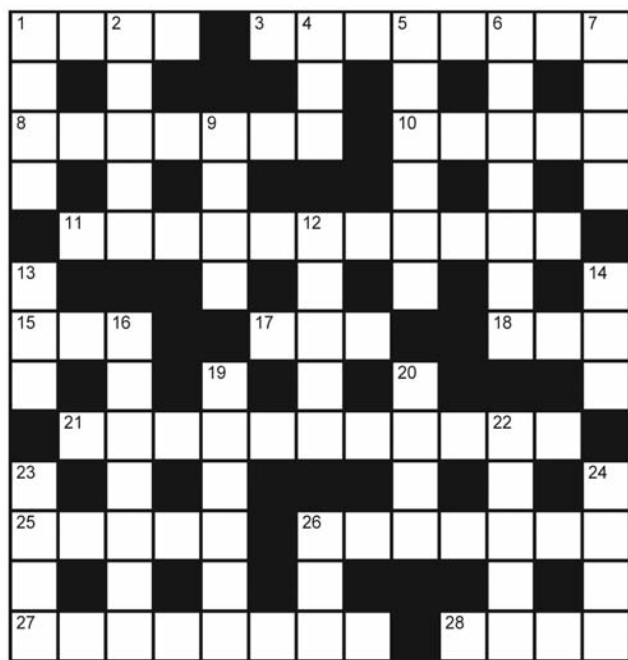


## BREVITY



## FUN post

## CROSSWORD



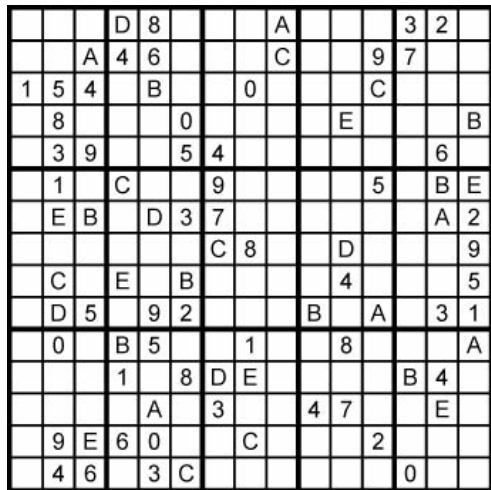
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- |                                  |                    |                         |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Across</b>                    | <b>Down</b>        |                         |
| 1 Zoo feature                    | 1 Quote            | 12 Brusque              |
| 3 Plentiful                      | 2 Spectre          | 13 Swindle              |
| 8 Duet                           | 4 Honey maker      | 14 Solemn promise       |
| 10 Eye part                      | 5 Table linen      | 16 Tea makers           |
| 11 "Twangy"                      | 6 Placate          | 19 Means of escape      |
| instrument (5,6)                 | 7 Barber's supply  | 20 Rugs, to some        |
| 15 Beast of burden               | 9 German automaker | 22 River horse, briefly |
| 17 Wine container                |                    | 23 Floored it           |
| 18 Conceit                       |                    | 24 Wax-coated cheese    |
| 21 Actor's worst nightmare (5,6) |                    | 26 Hot temper           |
| 25 Sign of life                  |                    |                         |

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

## SUDOKU

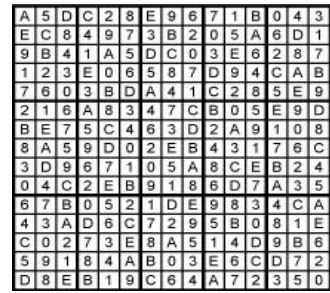
To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.



## SOLUTIONS

## CROSSWORD

## SUDOKU





## Outrage over minor girl's death

The alleged murder of a minor girl of Nayagarh continued to hog the limelight throughout the second half of the year. The allegation of organ trading by the minor girls' parents and the opposition parties put the state government in a tight spot. Parents of the deceased minor alleged that their kid was murdered for organ smuggling and accused Minister Arun Sahoo of being involved in the act. The BJP and Congress took out rallies and staged demonstrations demanding CBI probe into the incident. Buckling under pressure from the opposition parties, the government had to form an SIT to probe the matter. It was headed by CMD of OSRTC Arun Bothra. The minor girl of Jadupur in Nayagarh was playing near her house July 13. Her skeletal remains stacked in a gunny bag were found in the backside of her house July 23. The incident came to the fore after girl's parents attempted self-immolation in front of the Assembly in Bhubaneswar November 24 as the district police failed to crack the case several months after the incident. The SIT picked up Saroj Sethi, a college student and neighbour of the girl, from Jadupur village in the district. Bothra December 22 claimed that Saroj lured the minor into his house and tried to rape her; but the latter opposed it. He strangled her and raped the body after her death.



## Anup Sai & double murder

The arrest of former Brajrajnagar MLA Anup Sai by Chhattisgarh police in connection with alleged murder of a woman and her minor daughter was one of the most talked about issue in 2020. Sai was arrested by

officials of Chakradhar Nagar police station in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district after his name figured in the murder of a woman Kalpana Das, 32, and her daughter Prabhati Das, 14, in 2016. The bodies of the woman and her daughter were recovered from a forest in Hamirpur in Chhattisgarh bordering Jharsuguda district. Sai was accused of being into an extra-marital relationship with the woman, despite being married. He allegedly killed her after the woman insisted on marrying him, fearing that this second marriage might spoil his political career.

## State song status to Bande Utkala Janani

After a prolonged debate and fight, Odisha's own patriotic song *Bande Utkala Janani* written by Kantakabi Laxmikanta Mohapatra was given the status of 'state song'. The Cabinet passed a resolution in this regard. Odias around the world had recited the song at 5.30pm, May 30 to express their gratitude to the frontline workers spearheading the fight against Covid-19. It was in 1994 when the Assembly resolved to sing

*Bande Utkala Janani* at the end of every session. Since then there have been many deliberations on making it the state song. The song will be played or sung in schools, colleges, meetings, cultural events. Whenever it is sung or played, everyone will have to stand in attention except senior citizens, patients, infants, disabled and pregnant women. The govt has also included the state song in the school curriculum.

## RS berth for 4 BJD leaders

BJD leaders Subhas Singh, Munna Khan, Sujit Kumar and Mamata Mahanta were elected to the Upper House of Parliament in March this year. The election was necessitated after Anubhav Mohanty, Narendra Swain, Sarojini Hembram of BJD and Ranjib Biswal of Congress vacated the seats. Though Mohanty's seat fell vacant after he was elected to Kendrapara Lok Sabha seat, the tenure of three other leaders ended April 2. Naveen picked up the candidates for Rajya Sabha polls, giving emphasis on all the four regions of the state.

## MLAs died; by-polls held

The members of Odisha Legislative Assembly were saddened to see demise of three of their colleagues this year. The three MLAs who died are: Madan Mohan Dutta, Bishnu Charan Das and Pradeep Maharathy. Balasore MLA and BJP leader Dutta passed away June 17. He was elected to Assembly for the first time. Ex-minister and six-time MLA Bishnu Charan Das died July 6. Likewise, former minister and veteran BJD MLA from Pipli, Maharathy, passed away October 4, weeks after he tested positive for Covid-19. Maharathy was elected to the Assembly from Pipli constituency seven times consecutively from 1985 till last Assembly elections in 2019. Following the deaths, by-elections for Balasore Sadar and Tirtol Assembly seats were held amid Covid-19 restrictions. Ruling BJD won both the seats. Das' son Bijaya Shankar Das became the new MLA of Tirtol, while Swarup Kumar Das won the Balasore seat. By-poll for the Pipli Assembly segment is yet to be held.



## Padma Awards to 10 Odias

The year 2020 saw as many as 10 eminent Odia personalities from the field of art, education, literature, agriculture and animal husbandry being conferred with Parma Awards. The list announced by the Central government contained 141 Padma awardees - seven Padma Vibhushan, 16 Padma Bhushan and 118 Padma Shri Awards. As many as 34 of the awardees are women. Eminent Odia litterateur, Manoj Das was awarded Padma Bhushan, the second-highest civilian award of the country. The recipients of Padma Shri awardees from Odisha are Dr. Damayanti Beshra for Literature and Education; Utsav Charan Das for Art; Mitrabhanu Gountia for Art; Manmohan Mahapatra - (posthumously) for Art; Binapani Mohanty for Literature and Education; Radha Mohan and Sabarmatee for Agriculture; Batakrushna Sahoo for Animal Husbandry; Dr Digambar Behera for Medicine and Dr. Prasanta Kumar Pattanaik for Literature and Education. The President of India Ram Nath Kovind honoured all of them at ceremonial functions held at Rashtrapati Bhawan in April.



## Prescribe in caps fiat

In a stern message to physicians who are used to scribble the prescriptions, the Orissa High Court in August asked the doctors to write prescriptions in CAPITAL LETTERS. The HC observed that illegible scrawls composed by doctors create unnecessary nuisance for the patients, pharmacists, police, prosecutors and judges who are bound to deal with such medical reports. A bench of Justice SK Panigrahi observed that prescriptions of physicians, OPD slips, autopsy reports, injury reports among others are required to be legible and fully comprehensible. The HC also asked the state Chief Secretary to take necessary action in this regard. "This court feels, it is imperative that the entire physician community need to go an extra mile and make conscious efforts to write prescriptions in good handwriting preferably in CAPITAL LETTERS. The digital era could also throw open several options to make prescriptions and the diagnosis more patient friendly," the court said.



## Amphan fury

Cyclonic storm Amphan which made its landfall at Sundarban in West Bengal in May this year caused extensive damage to northern districts of Odisha by destroying crops, blowing away houses and power transmission lines in the area. The power transmission infra suffered a ₹62 crore blow. As per a Nesco report, the total loss in Balasore, Bhadrak, Mayurbhanj and Jajpur districts stand at ₹62.24 crore. Overall, 16,16,626 consumers have been affected. Out of 3,911 villages under 360 panchayats in Balasore, as many as 2,898 villages in 231 panchayats have been affected in the cyclone.



# New chapter in Srimandir history

Amidst the intense war against novel coronavirus which gripped the entire world, faith finally prevailed over fear as this year's Rath Yatra was organised without congregation of devotees on the Grand Road in Puri, adding a new chapter to the Srimandir's history. Srimandir, the abode of Lord Jagannath, was shut for devotees towards the end of March this year due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus. The 'Rath Anukula' ritual was performed on Srimandir precincts on the occasion of Akshaya Trutiya April 26. However, chariot construction work could not be carried out due to the lockdown restrictions.

After much hiccups, chariot construction work started May 5, at least 12 days behind the schedule. The Centre had given conditional approval for chariot construction at Rath Yard. But, it had authorised the state government

to take a call on holding the mega festival by assessing the Covid-19 situation.

The Orissa High Court also put the ball at the state government's court while disposing some petitions seeking cancellation of Rath Yatra.

In the meantime, the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee and many servants' associations of Srimandir pleaded for the organisation of Rath Yatra without the presence of devotees. However, the Supreme Court ordered for the cancellation of Car Festival due to Covid-19 spread while hearing a petition June 18. The apex court's order created a lot of resentment among the devotees and servants.

Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb, Puri Shankaracharya Nischalananda Saraswati and many Srimandir servants demanded organisation of Rath Yatra in compliance with Covid-19 restrictions. Several petitions were filed with the SC seeking modifications to the court's June 18 order. The state government also filed an affidavit in the SC and supported Rath Yatra with restrictions in place. Finally, a

three member bench of the SC at 4pm June 22 allowed conduct of Car Festival in Puri. With just a few hours in hand for the mega festival, the state government pulled out all the stops to hold the festival amid the pandemic June 23. At least three ministers, the Chief Secretary and the DGP reached the Holy City to supervise the arrangements. "For the first time in the history of Srimandir, the Rath Yatra, Bahuda Yatra, Suna Beshha and Adharapana rituals were held on the Grand Road without the congregation of devotees. Devotees as well as the people of Odisha would remember this year's Rath Yatra forever," said a researcher.

The Srimandir reopened December 23 after nine months in the wake of virus spread. On the first three days (December 23, 24 and 25), servants and their family members were allowed to have darshan of the Trinity.

## Lord's warrior attire

AFTER A GAP OF 25 YEARS, LORD JAGANNATH WAS ADORNED WITH NAGARJUNA BESHA (WARRIOR ATTIRE) AT SRIMANDIR NOVEMBER 27. HOWEVER, DEVOTEES WERE NOT ALLOWED TO WITNESS THE RARE RITUAL DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

## Petrol pump blast in City

A massive explosion ripped through a fuel station close to the Governor's House in Bhubaneswar October 7, leaving behind a pile of debris, at least two dead and many injured. The incident took place around 1.50pm when several people had lined up to refill their vehicles. People scurried for cover, leaving behind their vehicles when the explosion took place. At least a dozen two-wheelers and four-wheelers were damaged in the massive explosion. The blast, which occurred at an auto LPG dispensing unit on the premises of the Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)-run petrol pump, was so loud that it caused people to rush out of the nearby buildings fearing that there was an earthquake. On October 8, one of the injured Satya Nayak, 48, succumbed to his wounds at SCBMCH, while Simanchal Parida, 40, who was missing since the incident was confirmed dead by the Commissionerate Police on the basis of a DNA test report October 30. An investigation found criminal negligence by IOCL authorities and Surya Shakti Vessels Private Limited (a representative of the contractor).

## Pradeep Panigrahi expelled from BJD

The expulsion of Pradeep Panigrahi from Biju Janata Dal and his subsequent arrest is one of the major developments in state politics during 2020. He was expelled from the party on the allegations of involvement in 'anti-people activities' November 29. Panigrahi rose to prominence during 2004 general elections. He was given the charge to look after the party affairs in Hinjili constituency of Ganjam, the home turf for CM Naveen Patnaik. He later got the party's ticket to contest from Gopalpur assembly constituency in 2009 and also became a minister after the 2014 polls. Panigrahi's proximity to suspended IFS officer, Abhay Kant Pathak and his son Akash led to his ouster and arrest. Akash and Panigrahi's daughter were scheduled to tie the nuptial knot at a lavish destination wedding function in Rajasthan. On December 3, the state Crime Branch arrested Panigrahi on the allegations of collecting money from job seekers cheated by Akash.

## Suresh Mohapatra new Chief Secretary

Senior IAS officer Suresh Chandra Mohapatra was appointed as the Chief Secretary and Chief Development Commissioner of Odisha December 26. The 1986-batch IAS officer is currently serving as the Development Commissioner and holding additional charge as the Working Chairperson of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA), Puri. Asit Kumar Tripathy who had been serving as the Chief Secretary was appointed as the chairman of Western Odisha Development Council. He will also be the Principal Advisor to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on regional development, tourism, agribusiness and industry.

## Roof collapse at City airport

At least one worker died and another was injured after the roof of an under-construction building collapsed at Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) in Bhubaneswar, January 25. The incident took place late January 24 night when the labourers were engaged in the construction of a 6,000-sq ft roof meant to link Terminal 1 and 2 of the airport. Four persons including managing director of Dilip Construction Private Limited, officials of airport authority and two engineers were arrested. Bhubaneswar's then DCP said that the roof collapsed due to heavy load.







The flame of the aspiration must be so straight and so ardent that no obstacle can dissolve it.

THE MOTHER

## MP turns UP

Undeterred by repeated judicial pronouncements to the contrary, the Madhya Pradesh government seems to on a crusade against the so-called love jihad. On the other hand, the BJP led Karnataka government had announced early December it won't bring the love-jihad legislation in the winter session. The announcement followed wide-spread criticism of the Yogi Adityanath government's promulgation of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020 last month. This happened at a time when the Allahabad High Court overturned its earlier judgement that questioned a "conversion just for marriage." To buttress its argument in favour of the ordinance, the UP government used the fig leaf of the earlier judgement that the Allahabad High Court subsequently overruled.

Whatever possibility of a rethink on the issue was there, it has been brushed aside and the cabinet of Shivraj Singh Chouhan government has cleared the deck for introducing the MP Dharm Swatantra Vidheyak 2020 (MP Freedom of Religion Bill) in the Assembly. Madhya Pradesh would be the second state after Uttar Pradesh to have such a law, once the Bill is passed in the Assembly. The MP government has even gone a step further and included in the Bill a provision for maintenance of the 'victim' of love jihad and her child. The burden of proof is on the accused and the crime will be cognisable and non-bailable.

According to MP Home Minister Narottam Mishra, the Bill is stricter with longer terms of imprisonment. It will replace the Religious Freedom Act of 1968. Provisions have been made for the parents of the so-called victim or an organisation to register a complaint after which police will start an inquiry. If established that the marriage's motive is religious conversion, it will be annulled. A child born of the annulled marriage will have the right to maintenance, expenses and inherit both paternal and maternal properties. Once a marriage is annulled, the converted person will be deemed to have returned to their paternal religion. It would be worthwhile to mention that the Hindoo religion does not permit inward conversion. That means a person of another faith, whether born in or converted to another religion, may not convert to Hindooism. It is for this very purpose and also to deter any overzealous Hindoo megalomaniac ruler from becoming aggressively conversion oriented that many sacred religious places, including the Lord Jagannath Temple at Puri, do not permit non-Hindoos access to the premises. To be a Hindoo, one has to be born to Hindoo parents.

The MP Bill comes close on the heels of the Allahabad High Court's observation on 18 December that a 21-year-old woman, who is married to a Muslim man, "has a choice to live her life on her own terms." She has now been reunited with her husband. The Division Bench of Justices Pankaj Naqvi and Vivek Agarwal observed that since the woman has attained adulthood and has expressed her desire to live with her husband, "she is free to move as per her own choice without any restriction or hindrance being created by third party."

The Allahabad High Court's judgment is emphatic and the observation leaves no room for doubts about the supremacy of one's freedom to choose one's life partner. It is also a major step towards unshackling women from the age-old male domination that prevents them from choosing their spouse. It may be noted that the CJM Court of Etah, earlier in this case, had ordered the girl to be sent to a child care remand home without considering evidence of her age wherein she is an adult. The remand home, in turn, had turned the girl over to her parents. The observation of the HC Division Bench is also an indictment on the tendency of subordinate judiciary to bow to state governments to further political agenda.

Since the promulgation of the love jihad ordinance, UP police has, so far, arrested 35 persons and filed a dozen FIRs. The first case was registered in Bareilly just a day after the ordinance came into force.

The BJP is taking one step forward and two steps back on the love jihad legislation for obvious reasons. On the one hand, successive probes have failed to find any evidence that such a conspiracy exists and the Central government has admitted in Parliament that the term has no credible definition. On the other hand, the party desperately needs an issue to whip up communal sentiments to divert people's attention from the Union government's mismanagement of the country's economic and defence affairs, as also the snowballing farmers' agitation.

### WISDOM CORNER

- “Forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair.” **KAHILIL GIBRAN**
- “If you don't design your own life plan, chances are you'll fall into someone else's plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much.” **JIM ROHN**
- “Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.” **MARIE CURIE**

### WORDSWORTH

#### ■ Whiffler

Students of Shakespeare will know of whifflers from Henry V: "The deep-smouth'd Sea, Which like a mighty Whiffler 'fore the King, Seems to prepare his way." Whifflers went in front of a procession to clear spectators from its path. In early times, they would have been men-at-arms, wielding their customary weapons such as javelins or swords to keep back the mob. By the time of Shakespeare, they had taken on a formalised role and by the next century had degenerated into being merely part of the ritual of events such as civic parades. They survived until the middle of the nineteenth century in the procession of the London craft guilds to the Guildhall banquet on Lord Mayor's Day, in which young freemen called bachelor whifflers carried flags to lead each guild. They lived on to about the same date in Norwich: "In that of the Corporation of Norwich from the Guild-hall to the Cathedral Church, on the Guild-day, the whifflers are two active men very lightly equipped ... bearing swords of lath or latten, which they keep in perpetual motion, "whiffing" the air on either side, and now and then giving an unlucky boy a slap on the shoulders or posteriors with the flat side of their weapons (The Vocabulary of East Anglia, by Robert Forby, 1830). In an entry written a century ago, the Oxford English Dictionary finds the word's origin in the Old English wifle for a spear or battleaxe. But as whiffle also referred to the wind when it blew in puffs or slight gusts, or veered or shifted about (it became a figurative way to describe a shifty or evasive person), it would be as reasonable to assume that it referred to the continual waving of their weapons to encourage hangers-on to stand back. Whifflers in action would certainly have raised a constant whiffle of wind, as Robert Forby implied with his use of whiff, to blow lightly (this last word is also the source of the word in the sense of a brief or faint smell, as in "a whiff of perfume"). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Thomas Ratcliffe, a contributor to Notes and Queries, recalled this variation: "The art of the whiffler-waffler is still known, though I have not seen the practice for a number of years. Whiffing-waffling was common when I was a boy, and many boys could give very creditable exhibitions of the art. ... Some men were great experts, making the stick twirl in the hands round and about all parts of the body round the head, behind the back, under the thigh, the whiffing-waffling being done as easily with the left as with the right hand. When the exhibition was put of doors the stick was sent whirling high, the performer dancing round a considerable circle before catching it at the right moment of its descent." We are irresistibly reminded of a drum-major with his mace leading a band in a parade or of an American baton-twirler. There certainly seemed to be a skill to whiffing, to judge from George Borrow, who lamented in The Romany Rye in 1857, "The last of the whiffers hanged himself about a fortnight ago ... from pure grief that there was no further demand for the exhibition of his art, there being no demand for whiffing since the discontinuance of Guildhall banquets."



Jagdish Rattanani

THE GOVERNMENT HAS TOLD US THAT IT IS ON THE SIDE OF BIG BUSINESS, NOT ON THE SIDE OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA. THAT IS THE PRECISE COMPLAINT OF THE FARMERS

The farmers of India, led by the feisty fighters from Punjab, have made their opposition to the farm bills very clear. The issues are complex but faces never-before seen on television and on YouTube et al have explained them rather well and told us why they stand against the bills that were rushed through the Parliament with no debate. To the extent the new laws are the handiwork of the BJP and are pushed by its leadership, the protesters have taken a stand against the party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This is a political fight in which the PM isn't backing down yet, but he isn't in the lead. His much-hyped communication skills and vaunted political craft pale in comparison to the farmers' explanations of why they have taken this hard stance against the government.

In a line, the farmers are saying this: don't kill the mandis that have stood the test of time and leave us to the vagaries of private traders, corporates or what are called market forces.

While this clean and clear framing stands out, we cannot miss that the agitation is even more a vote of no confidence against the private sector of India. This is the lesser said story of the protests and it carries implications beyond the immediate battle and how it eventually turns out.

Thirty years after India took the path of economic reforms under Manmohan Singh as the finance minister, here is the peasantry saying that large corporates have not inspired confidence and do not have a track record that offers comfort. As a result, they are unwilling to leave the security of a government-guaranteed support price for their produce, duly legislated so that it is armed with the teeth of the law. It is not insignificant that large corporates are being named as crony capitalists but they only serve to give specifics, the concreteness, the 'gotcha' and the proof as it were, of what the farmers believe and present as a headline concern. And this concern is against large corporate machines that the government wishes and hopes will change India's rural landscape. Exposing the average Indian farmer, small holder, with little or no bargaining power, less savvy about contracts and fine print, to

### FOCUS AGRICULTURE

# FARMERS MAKE IT CLEAR



In a line, the farmers are saying this: don't kill the *mandis* that have stood the test of time and leave us to the vagaries of private traders, corporates or what are called market forces

these large entities is not something the vast majority now sitting in protest are willing to stomach. In fact, they appear convinced that this is the game of the big against the small, of the powerful against the weak, or corporates against the people. That frames the agitation rather well as the battle of the people on the streets versus the combine of big business and the government in its pocket.

This is a tear in the political fabric of India. It indicates that the hopes and promises that came with the path of 'Reforms 1.0', packaged in all the uplifting rhetoric that Singh offered in his maiden speech as finance minister on 24 July 1991 have come to naught. Then, Singh quoted Victor Hugo to say: "no power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come." That idea was India as an economic superpower. The turn that would be called liberalisation was meant to take India away from the so-called Hindu rate of growth, the clutches of the license-permit-quota Raj, corruption, nepotism and a perennial shortage of goods and services.

A new generation of Indians born under liberalisation is now at work – in urban and rural areas. Yet, these years under economic reforms haven't convinced the masses of India that the private sector can work in a fruitful partnership to deliver growth with fairness and balance in areas where the government has failed. In fact, where the government

failed, the government can be nudged, pushed or in extreme cases voted out. The Congress has been dethroned, after all. But the private sector hasn't. The same biggies and power brokers rule the roost, or so goes the narrative. So, in many eyes, this sector may be the new zamindari that sits as the superpower, a law unto itself that gets the government to act on its behalf as it recently did by suspending labour laws in several States so that the workers are forced back to the shop floor and are not allowed to demand their share. Combine this with the recent bank failures, the rising tide of NPAs, the housing boom and bust, the scamsters who scooted the country, the extortionist policies of private hospitals most recently during the pandemic, the sharp practices of the insurance companies, the PSUs being run to the ground – all hammer in the message that we need the government to protect us against sharks and Shylocks in business.

It is immaterial whether business has kept its side of the bargain or not. It is material that this is how the narrative is framed and has taken hold in the minds of the people. Under reforms, growth accelerated, the command-and-control economy was dismantled, and scarcities disappeared. Many achievements have been recounted. We certainly pushed on the pedal but it has been an uncomfortable ride. The current protests tell us that push-

ing this pedal further has its limits and the cylinders of the socio-political engine will burst if the car is driven too fast on this path. This is the political limit to the so-called 'Economic Reforms 2.0'.

There is a lot of spade work to be done; it is for the political establishment to show and to prove that it will be the watchdog for the people, always protecting the interests of the common citizen while it aligns policy to make it easy for businesses to operate but impossible for them to deliver a bad bargain for the common man. Today, that is not the case. Contracts can be enforced and even manipulated only by the contractor/employer, not the contracted/employed. Businesses cannot grow and innovation won't come if the environment laws are relaxed as they were recently; it'll come when businesses are told they must strictly follow norms and must face the full brunt of the law when they violate or cut corners. This means the Prime Minister of India cannot be seen, almost like a model, in full page ads of a chosen business house. That tells us the story of why reforms won't progress because the government has told us that it is on the side of big business, not on the side of the people of India. That is the precise complaint of the farmers of India.

*The writer is a journalist and faculty member at Bhavan's SPJIMR. Views are personal.*

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### SPECTRUM ACCESSIBILITY

# The case for inclusive infrastructure



Shoumyakant Joshi

ENGINEERS WHO CONSTRUCT PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE SHOULD HAVE PROPER ORIENTATION ON ACCESSIBILITY

Odisha is a step ahead of other states in providing better water and sanitation services in urban areas. In the last few months, it introduced two major schemes: one is GARIMA scheme for ensuring dignity and safety of core sanitation workers in cities and the other one is "Sujal- Drinking from Tap" scheme to provide potable water to all in 114 urban local bodies (ULBs). This shows the state government's commitment to meet the Sustainable Development Goal-6: "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all." However, one area that needs to be looked into on priority basis is making all water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure disabled friendly and inclusive.

There are 2.68 crore people living with some form of disability in India, which is 2.21 per cent of the total population. In Odisha, 12 lakh people are living with disability, which is 3.2 per cent, the highest in

the country. Apart from people with disability, there are elderly people, pregnant women and children who need inclusive WASH infrastructure for easy access and use. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, specifically refers to ease of access to public infrastructure, among others. In addition, in 2015, the Prime Minister had started an "Accessible India" campaign, with a motive to make it convenient for persons with disabilities to access public infrastructure.

Despite thrust at policy level for making public space inclusive and disabled friendly, provision of accessible WASH public infrastructure is not appropriately implemented. For an instance, in Bhubaneswar, there are nearly 150 public toilets but because of existing barriers people with disability cannot access those easily.

Most of the public WASH infrastructure are constructed in market or busy places and without

safety measures like proper signage for traffic control, cover over open drains, tactile guiding path and proper pathway. As a result, it becomes risky for a person with disability to reach such facilities.

You can find a ramp in front of the main gate if you visit a public toilet, but reaching that ramp itself a difficult task, as there are no proper clearance in front of it. Even in many places, the ramp's gradient is steeper, which should not be more than 1:12. Additionally, because of many technical defects like without having proper width, non-availability of handrails on both sides of the ramp and lack of landing at beginning and end of ramp, a disabled person fails to access those facilities.

In most of the facilities, the caretakers usually place their table at the entrance, so the available clearance at entry is narrowed down. Every public toilet should have dedicated toilet unit for disabled people that should be disabled friendly

in design; but in some places, those are still missing. Having a dedicated disabled friendly and inclusive toilet is not sufficient; there should be proper facilities like functional toilet pans on proper height, grab bar for support during toilet use, proper space for wheelchair movement, and functional water tap on wall at proper height.

Engineers who construct public infrastructure should have proper orientation on accessibility.

The government should develop a mechanism for an accessible audit of public infrastructure in all cities and identify existing gaps for retrofitting to make existing WASH facilities accessible. In addition, a proper guideline on disabled friendly and accessible public infrastructure should be prepared followed by capacity building plan of officers.

*The writer is Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Lead, WaterAid India, Bhubaneswar. Views are personal.*

### Much-needed initiative

Sir, A bilingual online electricity integrated consumer service portal 'Mo Bidyut' has been developed by the energy department and dedicated to the public under the state government's 5T initiative. It is hoped that the people can now be able to avail efficient, time bound, and transparent online service delivery. The electricity services will now come under Mo Sarkar. Hence, this service will be monitored under Mo Sarkar. It will be beneficial because the people now need not run to various offices for new connections, bill payment or grievance redressal. It is expected that this will benefit more than 89 lakh electricity consumers of the state. All the consumers and the general public of the state can take advantage of this facility to resolve their electricity service related issues in a simple, easy and quick manner. A mobile app has been developed for this facility, and will soon be available in Google Play Store for download. This portal is also equipped with proper escalation matrix and dashboard facility to ensure smooth flow of service disposal, status updating and enforcing accountability of utility officials towards consumer issues.

Hitesh Kumar Parida, PANIKOILI

### Brexit & India

Sir, India is likely to benefit a lot from the Brexit deal for various reasons. One, Indian exporters who were catering to the EU and UK markets will not have to meet different standards and registrations for the markets. Two, in sectors such as IT, R&D, architecture and financial services India may gain in both markets. Three, Brexit will certainly have a favourable impact on the business footprint of UK firms in India. Four, it opens opportunity for India to sign trade deals separately with both the EU and the UK. Five, it gives India an opportunity to show that it is not protectionist when it comes to trade, technology and investment. Six, Indian industrial firms will be allowed to treat the UK as their investment gateway to Europe. Seven, being more of an importing country than an exporting one, the overall effect may turn out positive for India. Eight, it might give a boost to trade ties between India and UK. Nine, fall in the prices of commodities like crude oil will help India save a lot on its import bill. Ten, considering that the fees may be low, more Indian students can afford to study in Britain. In short, India may be a net gainer from the Brexit deal.

Venu GS, KOLLAM (KERALA)



Narasingha falls ill during demo in City



PNN-AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 28:** Congress Legislature Party (CLP) Leader Narasingha Mishra, Monday, suddenly fell ill while attending a party programme here and was rushed to a private hospital.

Mishra, 80, became unconscious immediately after delivering his speech while standing on an open jeep along with Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Niranjan Patnaik. He complained of chest pain, party sources said. Mishra's brother Himansu Mishra said the CLP leader's health condition is all right and there is no such danger. OPCC president Niranjan Patnaik said that his party colleague's condition is stated to be normal at the hospital.

"Mishra is a diabetic and he travelled a long distance from Bolangir today. He is all right now," Patnaik said. Mishra, who observed his 80th birthday December 23, had undergone a bypass surgery in May, 2014.

Cardiologist P K Sahu, who is treating the CLP leader, said, "Mishra is all right now. We are investigating the cause of his sudden illness. He may be discharged in a day or two." As part of the party's foundation day celebration, the Congress had organised a protest programme in front of the CBI office accusing the central agency of not completing investigations into important cases allegedly due to BJD-BJP nexus.

Youth's body found

**BHUBANESWAR:** The decomposed body of a youth was recovered by police a few metres from a star hotel in Mancheswar area here, Monday. The locals spotted the body of the 25-year-old youth Monday afternoon and informed the police. Locals suspected that the youth was murdered and later thrown at the isolated spot. The body was sent to Capital Hospital for post-mortem.

Life history of legendary Odias to find place in school curricula

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 28:** The State Cabinet has decided to include heritage and life history of great sons of Odisha in the school curricula.

"The special life history of our glorious heritage and the life history of our great sons from ancient times till the modern age will find place in textbooks and additional textbooks," said Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari here Monday.

It will keep their memories alive with every generation and make the future generation learn about their contributions for building a great Odisha, he said.

Odisha has many great personalities who have immensely contributed to art, literature and culture and worked for protection of state's unique identity, he said. The government decided to conduct various competitions among Class-VII, VIII and IX students on these topics and award the winners. Such students will also be

62 UK returnees untraceable: Govt

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 28:** Despite several attempts, the state government is unable to trace 62 United Kingdom (UK) returnees to conduct RT-PCR and genome sequencing tests.

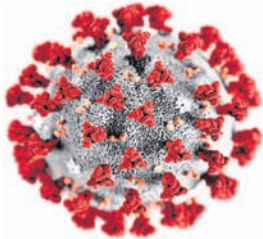
Speaking to reporters here Monday, Public Health director Niranjan Mishra said a total of 181 persons had returned from the UK to Odisha in between November 30 and December 21. Out of them, RT-PCR test of 119 persons have been conducted and six have tested positive for Covid-19. However, the remaining 62 returnees are still untraceable, he said.

While Health department officials are trying to contact them

over the phone, some of the phones are showing switched off while there is no response from others. Even these returnees are not available at the address they have mentioned, the director said.

Stating that there is no need to panic as these returnees have completed their quarantine period, Mishra added, "We are trying to trace them so that their genome sequencing can be conducted to find if they are infected with the new strain of the virus."

It may be mentioned that following the spread of a mutated strain of SARs, CoV-2 in the UK, the Central government has directed the states to take adequate precautions and conduct the RT-PCR test and genome sequencing of all UK returnees.



The Health dept said there is no need to panic as these 62 returnees have completed the quarantine period

EXQUISITE MOVES



Artistes perform at the International Odissi Dance Festival at GKCM Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneswar, Monday

Rawat lauds police for anti-LWE ops

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 28:** The Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, Monday lauded the Odisha police for successfully tackling Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in the state while delivering the keynote speech at the ongoing conference of senior cops of Odisha Police.

CDS Rawat said, "Odisha Police has succeeded in tackling the challenges of LWE with good results in close coordination with all other Central Armed Police Forces operating in the region."

The Odisha police was also commended by the CDS for very 'high standards of Law & Order in the state' and 'a very low crime rate'.

Rawat stressed upon the role of police for smooth law and order amidst the impending risks of destabilisation and disruptions due to fast changing geo strategic environment.

He stated that the change would result in climate change, rapid deglobalisation process, regionalisation, popular protests and trade wars.

He also extolled the police force

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**INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)**  
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT  
IDENTIFICATION NO. RWS&S DIVN., NAYAGARH - 35 OF 2020-21  
No. O-793: The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Nayagarh on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage rate price bids through e-procurement in double cover system according to the norms of e-procurement system, in online mode from eligible contractors.

Sl. No.	Nature of Work	Rural Piped Water Supply
1.	No. of Works	02 (Two)
2.	Estimated Cost	Rs. 78.31 to 82.50 lakhs (App.)
3.	Time for Completion	06 (Six) Months
4.	Cost of bidding document	Rs. 10,000/-
5.	Class of Contractors eligible	B & A
6.	Availability of Bids Online	From 17 hours of 30.12.2020 to 17.00 hours of 06.01.2021
7.	Last date and time for seeking clarification	17.00 hours of 06.01.2021
8.	Date & time of opening of technical bids	On Dt. 13.01.2021 at 11.30 hours in the Office of the Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Nayagarh (All documents should be submitted in online only. No original documents should be dropped in dropping box before opening of technical bid in Division Office).
9.	Date and time of opening of financial bids	To be decided

Further details can be seen from the website <https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in>. Subsequent corrigendum if any shall appear in the website.

**Sd./- Executive Engineer**  
RWS&S Division, Nayagarh  
OIPR-25042/11/0001/2021



COVID & ODISHA

- Angul district recorded the highest of 36 new cases followed by Sundargarh (28) and Khurda (25)
- The three fresh fatalities were reported from the districts of Khurda, Rayagada and Sundargarh
- Khurda alone accounted for 321 deaths followed by Ganjam (246), Sundargarh (166), Cuttack (138) and Puri (114)

The state has so far tested 68.55 lakh samples for Covid-19 including 28,652 Sunday

Odisha's positivity rate now stands at 4.8 per cent

while under treatment in hospitals." The three fresh fatalities were reported from the districts of Khurda, Rayagada and Sundargarh, said the official.

Apart from 1,864 coronavirus fatalities reported so far, 53 other Covid-19 positive patients have also died due to comorbidities, the official pointed out.

Khurda alone accounted for 321 deaths followed by Ganjam (246), Sundargarh (166), Cuttack (138) and Puri (114).

The state has so far tested 68.55 lakh samples for Covid-19 including 28,652 Sunday. Odisha's positivity rate now stands at 4.8 per cent, the data released by the H&FW department said.

PANIGRAHI'S AIDE ON 2-DAY REMAND

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 28:** The Crime Branch (CB) Monday took Sarbeswar Rao, the associate of Gopalpur MLA Pradeep Panigrahi, for further probe into the recruitment scam.

The CB team investigating the job fraud case hoped to elicit vital information on the racket from Rao during remand period.

Sources claimed that Rao worked as the middleman between job aspirants and Panigrahi and the prime accused Akash Pathak, son of tainted IFS officer Abhay Pathak. Akash duped many unemployed youths impersonating the managing director of TATA Motors. He along with Panigrahi reportedly collected several lakhs of rupees from job seekers on the pretext of providing them opportunities in TATA Motors.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. B-573  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, KALAHANDI (R&B) DIVISION, BHAWANIPATNA**  
E-mail: eekalahandi@gmail.com, Fax No. 06670-230512, Cell No. 9437050413

**E-Procurement Notice**  
Bid Identification No. BC KLD-15/2020-21  
No. 10729 Dated: 22.12.2020

1	Name of the Work	07 (Seven No. of Infrastructure Development Works and 04 (Four) No. Building works
2	Estimated Cost	Varies from 34.00 lakhs to 90.00 lakhs
3	Period of Completion	Varies from 04 (Four) to 08 (Eight) Calendar Months
4	Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal	02.01.2021 to 17.00 hours of 12.01.2021
5	Last date/time for receipt of bid in the portal	17.00 hours of 12.01.2021
6	Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	Executive Engineer, Kalahandi (R&B) Division, Bhawanipatna
7	Date & Venue of opening of the Single & Double Cover bid and Technical Bid (Cover 1) of Double cover Bid	On 13.01.2021 at 11.00 A.M. in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Kalahandi (R&B) Division, Bhawanipatna

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>.

**Sd./- (Er. A.K. Babu)**  
Executive Engineer, Kalahandi (R&B) Division  
OIPR-34017/11/0005/2021

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, KENDRAPARA**  
At : Ichhapur, Post : Shree Baladevjeu, Email: eerwsskendrapara@gmail.com

**INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) [e-Procurement]**  
Bid Identification No. RWS/70/2020-2021  
No. O-805 Letter No. 4315 / Dated 21.12.2020

1 The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Kendrapara on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites lump sums its bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for Rural Piped Water Supply Schemes in Kendrapara District.

2	Name of the work	Execution of RPWS Schemes in Kendrapara district.
3	No. of Work	8 ( Eight Nos. )
4	Value of the Work	Rs. 28.80 Lakhs to 82.60 Lakhs
5	Concerned tender inviting authority	Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Kendrapara
6	Security amount (Rs.) (Online)	Rs. 29000/- to Rs. 83000/-
7	Cost of bid documents (Rs.) (Online)	Rs. 6000.00 to 10000.00
8	Class of Bidder	"C" "B" & "A"
9	Period of Completion	6 Months to 8 Months
10	Availability of bid documents in the website	From date 05.01.2021 at 10.00 A.M to date 19.01.2021 5.30 P.M
11	Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Up to 15.01.2021 at 5.30 P.M
12	Date of Opening of Bid	On date 20.01.2021 at 10.30 A.M onwards.

The bidders have to participate in the tender through ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be had from the website i.e <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>. Subsequent corrigendum / addendum if required shall only be appeared in the above website.

**Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Kendrapara**  
OIPR-25004/11/0013/2021

PURI BEACH GETS 'BLUE FLAG' AWARD

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, Dec 28:** The much-awaited moment arrived here Monday when the beach in the Pilgrim city got the 'Blue Flag' award.

The 'Blue Flag' award is given to the cleanest beaches in India. Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar hoisted the flag through videoconferencing. Besides the Puri beach, seven other beaches in India got the same tag.

The minister took to his Twitter handle to inform about the new development. "Hoisted the International #BlueFlag at 8 beaches virtually. It is a proud moment for India that all the 8 beaches which were showcased have been awarded the coveted blue flag. I compliment and congratulate the State Governments, officials and people for this feat (sic)," read the tweet.

In another tweet, Javadekar said, "We have identified 100 beaches in the next phase and planned to make them of in-

ternational standards in coming 3-4 years."

The coveted Blue Flag tag has been accorded to the eight beaches by the Foundation for Environment Education (FEE), Denmark. To get a Blue Flag tag, a beach has to meet 33 criteria including environmental, educational, safety, and accessibility criteria fixed by the FEE.

Notably, an 870-metre stretch of the Puri beach from Digabareni Square to the backside of Mayfair Hotel has been developed as 'Blue Flag' beach under the World Bank-funded Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project (ICZMP) of the State Forest and Environment department and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. The earmarked portion has a safe bathing zone for tourists, pedestrian tracks, huts, decked chairs and, last but not the least, a safe and secure ambience. There are bio-toilets, wheelchairs for the differently-abled and lovely landscape.



OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL BELPAHAR

E-Mail: nacbelpahar@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is information of all concerned that, under Swaccha Bharat Mission (Urban), Odisha, the Jurisdiction of Belpahar Municipality area has been Declared as **ODF+**.

Hence, If any one found open defecating, urinating & spitting in public place, an amount of Rs.50/- shall be imposed as penalty from the person concerned.

**Sd./- Executive Officer, Belpahar Municipality**




With 2020 bringing in huge challenges in the form of a global pandemic to business and trade, Odisha also faced its share of roadblocks. But the state has managed to get back in the game due to consistent efforts of a select few.


Some entrepreneurs managed to steer their companies out of dark waters and contributed to creating positive business atmosphere in the state.

**Orissa POST** presents the Business Power List 2020.


NB: This list is in no particular serial order




**JK MOHANTY**  
SWOSTI GROUP




**MANORANJAN NAYAK**  
SOA UNIVERSITY




**SIDDHARTH GARG**  
RENAULT,  
BHUBANESWAR




**RAJIV DUBEY**  
ROHAN HERO




**AVINASH SINGHANIA**  
SKY AUTO




**RABINDRA LENKA**  
JAYARAM LENKA  
& SONS




**KAMAL S AGARWAL**  
PGL HONDA




**ADITYA PATRA**  
HIGHWAY HONDA




**DEVJYOTI PATTNAIK**  
JYOTE MOTORS




**MUKTIKANTA MISHRA**  
CENTURION UNIVERSITY




**PRADIP AGRAWAL**  
JMG HERO




**DILIP RAY**  
MAYFAIR HOTELS




**SATWIK SWAIN**  
OASME




**PRAKASH BISWAL**  
RAJ ELECTRONICS




**PRIYABRATA DHIR**  
SPARSH HOSPITALS




**SUNIL TANEJA**  
ESPIRIT TOYOTA




**JAGDISH NAYAK**  
DN GROUP




**BADRINARAYAN SAMANTARAY**  
FORD MOTORS




**ARSDEEP SINGH**  
SUNNY MOTORS




**RAJAN GUGNANI**  
GUGNANI AUTOCARS




**TARA RANJAN PATNAIK**  
FALCON GROUP




**ABHINASH SAMAL**  
MG MOTORS




**SOFIA FIRDIOUS**  
METRO BUILDERS




**RINKU PATRA**  
SANDY TOWERS




**PRASHANT AGRAWAL**  
WEFE INTERNET




**SHIBA PRASAD PANDA**  
PANDA TRAVEL MART




**SUSHANT PANDA**  
BHARAT MASALA




**VISHAL DHAWAN**  
KIA MOTORS




**SRIKUMAR MISHRA**  
MILK MANTRA



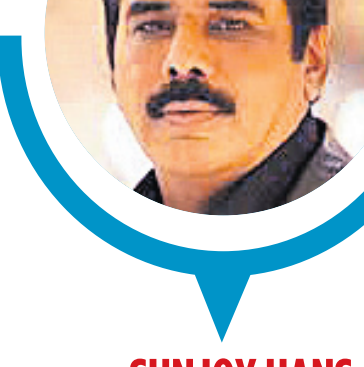
**SATYABRATA MINAKETAN**  
ODM PUBLIC SCHOOL




**RAJINDER SINGH**  
KALAMANDIR




**SUBRAT KUMAR JENA**  
ASHWINI HOSPITAL




**SARAT SAHOO**  
RUCHI MASALA




**SIKATA DAS**  
TAKSHILA SCHOOL



**SUNJOY HANS**  
LALCHND JEWELLERS



**SARAD BAID**  
UTKAL BUILDERS



**SOUNAK PARIKH**  
UTKAL HYUNDAI



# Kalahandi farmers' wait getting longer

CM Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone at Ladu for the mega lift irrigation project in 2013

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhawanipatana, Dec 28:** The farm sector is the main stay of Kalahandi, but farmers here for years have been experiencing droughts in the absence of proper irrigation facilities. But water of Indravati project may inject a new life to the farm sector it is utilised to its full potential. Considering such condition of the farm sector, the state government constructed Indravati Mega Lift Irrigation to boost the agriculture in the district, which is known for its annual labour migration. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone at Ladu village for the mega lift irrigation project in 2013. After completion of the project, it is expected to provide irrigational facilities to 26,248 hectares of farmland in drought-prone Jaypatna, Koksara and Dharmagarh blocks in the district. About 91 villages in the region will get immense benefit of irrigation. The project entails lifting of water



A Rs756cr worth tender was floated for the project which L&T bagged and started its construction March 12, 2015

26,248 hectares of farmland in drought-prone Jaypatna, Koksara and Dharmagarh blocks in the district will be benefitted

from Indravati Hati barrage. A tender for Rs 756 crore was floated for the project. L&T bagged the contract and started its construction March 12, 2015. Its trial run was recently launched. Preparation is on for its inauguration soon.

## INDRAVATI PROJECT

It was stated that after commissioning of the mega lift irrigation project, the farm sector here will get an impetus in Koksara, Dharmagarh and Jaypatna blocks. Long awaited dream of the people in Kalahandi is soon going to be realised, locals said. It may be noted here that Chief

Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated a 220/322 KV grid substation at Baner in Kalahandi district via video conferencing in October this year. He also unveiled three 33 KV feeder lines at Baner, Ladugaon and Badkutru. With the opening of the grid, 121 villages of Jaipatna, Koksara and Kalampur blocks of the district will get direct power supply from Indravati hydropower project 20 years after its inception. Besides, the projects will boost agriculture and industrialisation in the region. Till now, power generated from Indravati project is being directly supplied to four circuits in Bhubaneswar, Bhanjnar, Narendrapur and Theruvali. Power is being supplied to Kalahandi from Theruvali through 132 KV grid at Kesinga. With the commissioning of the new grid substation at Baner, consumers in the district will get direct power from Indravati for the first time. This will ensure uninterrupted power supply to Kalahandi and provide a boost to mega lift irrigation projects and industries.

## Gold chain snatched off elderly woman

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Hinjili, Dec 28:** Two unidentified miscreants riding a bike intercepted an elderly woman named Basanti Sahu and snatched a gold chain from her at Shyamalai Nagar under Hinjili block in Ganjam district Sunday morning. According to an eye-witness, the incident occurred when the elderly woman was returning home after shopping from a local market. One of the miscreants got down from a motorcycle and attempted to snatch the gold chain. The other accomplice waited nearby keeping the vehicle on start, the eye-witness stated. The miscreants fled from the spot soon after committing the crime. Hinjili police immediately reached the spot after being informed by some locals about the incident. Police registered a case in this connection and initiated a probe into the incident. "We are scanning the CCTV installed in a nearby house and are hopeful of nabbing the criminals soon," a police official said.

## Co-op society secy in Boudh under Vig lens

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Boudh, Dec 28:** Vigilance officials Monday carried out simultaneous raids on the properties of the secretary of a cooperative society in Uma, Kantamal block in Boudh district on charges of accumulating assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. The secretary under Vigilance lens is Santosh Kumar Raut. The sleuths conducted searches at his double storied building, one single storied building and his office at Uma Cooperative Society. The raids were carried out on the strength of a search warrant issued by the Court of Special Judge, Vigilance, Phulbani. The total value of his moveable and immovable assets is yet to be ascertained as the raids and valuation were still underway at the time of filing this report. Further details were awaited.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

No. 15789926K L'HAV Sujit Kumar Sahu, S/o Pankaj Kumar Sahu, Village: Nuasahi, Post: Ankula, Teh.: Angul, Dist.- Angul and present serving 45 AD Regt., C/o. 56 APO. My wife original name Sujata Sahoo, mistakenly in my Army document Sujata Sahu. That is wrong, in future will be know as Sujata Sahoo.

## Reds observe 24-hr Bandh; trees felled

*They felled trees Sunday night, disrupting vehicular movement on Rayagada-Kandhamal road*



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baliguda, Dec 28:** As part of the 24-hour bandh being observed by Maoists Monday, the ultras blocked the road near Bonda Pipil village under Kotagarh police limits in Kandhamal district by felling trees on the road. The felled trees were seen on the road Sunday night, disrupting vehicular movement on Rayagada-Kandhamal road. The ultras also put up posters in the area urging people to observe the 'bandh'. They also warned police not to harass them anymore. Notably, the Red Rebels are observing an Odisha 'bandh' over security forces killing two Maoist cadres in an exchange of fire in Gajalmamudi area of Swabhimani Anchal in Malkangiri district December 13.

Prior to this, a woman Maoist died during a gun fight with security forces near a village under Gochhapada police limits in Kandhamal district December 11. In an audio clip released after the incidents, CPI-Maoist Odisha Committee spokesperson Sonali had said the rebels will avenge the deaths of the cadres. She had also said that the Maoist organisation had rejected the DGP's advice for them to surrender. She had also urged the people to extend support to the 'bandh' call given by them. Releasing the audio clip in this regard, CPI-Maoist Odisha committee spokesperson Sonali said the rebels will give a befitting reply to the deaths of the cadres. Terming the deaths as 'killings by SOG and DVF jawans', she warned of destroying the police informers' network.

# Illegal prawn gheries mushrooming in Kendrapara

AGAINST THE 729 GHERIES PERMITTED, OVER 20,000 PRAWN GHERIES HAVE COME UP IN THE DISTRICT

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, Dec 28:** Forest and farmlands are disappearing fast due to mushrooming of illegal prawn gheries in this district, a report said. Meanwhile, over 20,000 prawn gheries have come up in the district while the permission granted by the district fisheries department is only for 729 gheries. Even people establishing prawn gheries are not sparing land under eco-sensitive zones and establishing their gheries in the areas in violation of norms. As a result, forest land is disappearing fast in the district while the saline water and waste discharged by the prawn gheries are polluting the canal water and that of other water bodies and affecting the cultivation in the areas lying close to the gheries. This has sparked serious concern among the residents and environmentalists as they fear this might lead to disaster in days to come in the district if left unchecked. A farmer Radhashyam Mandal of Badatubi village under Mahakalapara tehsil said that mushrooming of prawn gheries has been fast affecting their lives and livelihood. This year, he borrowed money from others and cultivated paddy in this Kharif season on his 8 acre of farmland. However, his cultivation was destroyed in the saline water discharged from a prawn gheri. Earlier, he has drawn the attention of the block and the district administration towards this problem but to no avail. The forest and tehsil officials are pulling down the illegal prawn gheries after the harvest period but the gheri owners are quick to put them up soon as soon as the raid stops.

cern among the residents and environmentalists as they fear this might lead to disaster in days to come in the district if left unchecked. A farmer Radhashyam Mandal of Badatubi village under Mahakalapara tehsil said that mushrooming of prawn gheries has been fast affecting their lives and livelihood. This year, he borrowed money from others and cultivated paddy in this Kharif season on his 8 acre of farmland. However, his cultivation was destroyed in the saline water discharged from a prawn gheri. Earlier, he has drawn the attention of the block and the district administration towards this problem but to no avail. The forest and tehsil officials are pulling down the illegal prawn gheries after the harvest period but the gheri owners are quick to put them up soon as soon as the raid stops.



FILE PHOTO

Mandal apprehends that in coming days farmers like he will not be able to carry out cultivation in the area. Environmentalist Hemant Kumar Rout said that the district administration is of the view that the spread of gheries is on 6,000 acre of land but in a reality the actual spread of prawn gheries is much more than on 20,000 acre of land.

The Union government has established eco-sensitive zones to protect the forest lands but several gheries can be found within 2-km of coastlines. Even gheries have been built on forest land in violation of norms. The Orissa High Court has directed to pull down the prawn gheries but the order is hardly car-

ried on in the district. He expressed concern that the effluents discharged from the prawn gheries are destroying the environment on the coastlines and the forest areas. A prawn farmer Ratikant Debnath said the district lacks any employment opportunities while cultivation is not alluring due to low earnings. However, working in prawn gheri gives him better income. When contacted, Mahakalapara

We have pulled down illegally built prawn gheries over 140 acres of forest land in last one week. The land cleared from encroachment will be put to use in creation of mangrove forests

SAHAJI CHARAN BISWAL | MAHAKALAPARA FOREST RANGER

We have demolished the illegal prawn gheries which came to our notice while the permission is only for 1,400 prawn gheries

MAMATA MOHAPATRA | DIST FISHERIES OFFICER, KENDRAPARA

forest ranger Sahaji Charan Biswal said they have pulled down illegally built prawn gheries over 140 acre of forest land in last one week. The land cleared from encroachment will be put to use in creation of mangrove forests, he said. District fisheries officer Mamata Mohapatra said that the district administration is demolishing the illegal prawn gheries which comes to its notice while the permission is only for 1,400 prawn gheries.

## EYE CHECK-UP



An eye-check up camp for handloom weavers and workers underway at Baghapalli under Sonepur block in Subarnapur district, Monday. Over 150 weavers and workers got their eyes tested in this camp

OP PHOTO

## Miscreants open fire, flee with ₹6.2L in Balasore

*The injured person has been identified as Ashok Kumar Jena, who works as an accountant with a private firm here*

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasore, Dec 28:** Two bike-borne miscreants opened fire at a person and looted cash amounting to Rs 6.2 lakh from him at the State Bank of India's branch at Banaparia under Khantapada police limits in Balasore, Monday. The injured person has been identified as Ashok Kumar Jena, who works as an accountant with a private firm here. He is undergoing treatment at Balasore district headquarters hospital. However, the security guard who was accompanying him escaped unhurt. Sources said, Jena and the se-



curity guard Manoj Gaana were going to the SBI branch, which is just a few metres away from their

office. They were waylaid by two bike-borne miscreants who tried to snatch away the cash bag from Jena. It was when he resisted that one of the miscreants fired a round into the air and then another round at Jena and then fled from the spot with the cash bag. Jena, who suffered gunshot injuries, was immediately rushed to the Balasore DHH. On being informed, a police team reached the spot and carried out an investigation. They seized two empty shells of bullets from the crime scene. They have launched a manhunt to nab the criminals, it was learnt.

## Roadside plantation goes down the drain

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Champua, Dec 28:** The government is spending lakhs of rupees for roadside plantation. But the money spent on this to make the environment green in Champua block has gone down the drain. Gopinathpur village of Parsala panchayat under Champua block can be taken as an example. Under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), more than 400 saplings were planted along both sides of the road from Gopinathpur to Aradei River, spending Rs 3,00,000. A signboard was put up mentioning the avenue plantation with some vital facts missing and work-days were created for labourers,



sources said. After plantation, tree guards were put up to save the saplings from being grazed by cattle. "Generally, plantation is carried out in rainy season. But here, the saplings were planted in the fog-end of the rainy season. Worst, no proper care was provided. As a result, the saplings started to wither within some days after the plantation. Just four months later, more than half of the saplings were found completely damaged," some local

residents said. Many of the survived saplings can be seen without tree guards. Some saplings can be covered with mosquito nets. "The entire amount of Rs 3,00,000 has gone to waste," the fume villagers alleged. Gram Rojgar Sevak (GRS) Shani Sahu said that a bill amounting to Rs 1,00,000 has been passed. The concerned department's engineer has made his point clear on the plantation that if the saplings die, the rest of the bill amount would not be passed. "I have intimidated the engineer's decision to the gaon sathi workers. Within the next 10 days, new saplings will be planted in place of dead ones and proper care will be taken so that they don't die," he added.

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**

**Acharya Vihar-**DayalAgency-9437135727, **A.P. Tours and Travel,** Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, **Aurobindo Market-**Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, **Airport Road-**Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, **Anish Infotech-** Tankapani Road-9861341488, **Bapuji Nagar-** Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, **Baramunda Rential Colony-**Maa Ramchandra Communication-9658821469, **Baramunda Housing Board Colony-**Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, **Cuttack Road-**Alifshan Snacks-8984236754, **District Centre (Chandrasekharpur)-**Sai Google Mart-9776056507, **Forest Park-**DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, **IRC Village-**Bapi Xerox-9090090404, **Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)**-9954781084, **Pruthvi Medicine-**9853314816, **Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-**7978646669, **Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-**7978116618, **Subam Sai Books Store-**8895550649, **Swain Graphics-** 9337121249, **Jagannath Mobile Point-** Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, **Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-**8260697560, **Khandagiri-** Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, **World Solution-** 9938317559, **KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-**9338545031, **Laxmi Sagar-**Aditya Mobile-9438191836, **Lewis Road-Spider Web-**7809186415, **Metro Satellite City-**Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, **Madhusudan Nagar-**Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, **Maa Santoshi travels-** Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, **Nayapalli-** The Cake Room- 7873660137, **Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-**9439491273, **Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-**9668284823, **Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate-** Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, **Net Square-** Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, **Priyadarshini Market-**Astro Point-9938134346, **R.N. General Store-**Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, **Sahid Nagar-** Maa Communication- 9437353424, **Sahini General Store-** Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, **Satya Nagar-**Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, **Samantapur-** Download Point-7504557743, **Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-**8093449515, **Saheed Nagar-**Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, **Photo World-**7978468191, **Sainath Photo Studio-**8984436129, **Shanti & Co-**9937071063, **Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-**9777682449, **Sushree fashion-** Jagmara-9938714347, **Shree Vision-** Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, **Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-**9337787080, **Unit-7- LIC Premium Point-** 9338227422, **VSS Nagar-**Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, **Jeet Infoworld-**7205195782, **XIMB Square-LD Books-**9658061373.



of the day quote

A lot of students are wondering when higher secondary schools or colleges will resume classes. We are stressing on offline exams this year. Class XI, XII as well as college exams will be held offline

PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CHIEF MINISTER

We want to make India a superpower. To make the country a superpower, we need even bigger achievements in the fields of education, health and industry, etc

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

Soon, some way out will emerge and we will reach towards the solution. Everyone knows that the wall of lies is never strong. Truth is truth. There is going to be a time when people will start accepting the truth

NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR | UNION AGRICULTURE MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Modi flags off 100th Kisan Rail

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted Monday that his government has undertaken historic reforms in the farm sector to boost agriculture and strengthen farmers. Flagger off the 100th "Kisan Rail" from Sangola in Maharashtra to Shalimar in West Bengal via video-conferencing, Modi said his government's policies are clear and intentions transparent in reforming the agriculture sector.

Army chief leaves for SK

**New Delhi:** Army Chief Gen MM Naravane Monday left for South Korea on a three-day visit during which he will hold talks with the top defence brass of the country on ways to expand bilateral military cooperation, officials said. South Korea has been a major supplier of military platforms and weapons to India.

U'khand CM admitted to AIIMS

**New Delhi/Dehradun:** Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, who had tested positive for COVID-19 and was hospitalised in Dehradun after developing fever, was admitted to AIIMS in Delhi Monday. He was admitted to AIIMS Trauma Centre, which has been converted into a dedicated COVID-19 facility, around 12.30 pm, sources said, adding his condition was stable.

Delhi braces for cold wave

**New Delhi:** A cold wave is likely to grip parts of Delhi over the next four days as frosty winds from the Himalayas have started blowing towards the plains, weather department officials said Monday. The minimum and maximum temperatures in the national capital settled at 5.6 degrees Celsius and 20.9 degrees Celsius, respectively. The Ayanagar and Jafarpur weather stations recorded a minimum of 4 degrees Celsius and 4.7 degrees Celsius, respectively, they said.

Terror plot foiled

**Jammu:** The Jammu and Kashmir Police have arrested one person linked to the proscribed terrorist outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), who had been tasked by the handlers from across the border to carry out grenade blasts on the National Highway (NHV) bypass road, police said Monday.



Some BJP leaders have been contacting me since the last one year, saying they have made all the arrangements to destabilise the Maharashtra government

SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA MP

21-YR-OLD BECOMES MAYOR OF THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Arya Rajendran, the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) councilor from Mudavanmugal in Thiruvananthapuram was sworn in as the new Mayor of the city corporation. She is just 21 years old



nCoV vaccination mock drill in 4 states

AGENCIES

Ludhiana/Ahmedabad, Dec 28:

As the country eagerly awaits an expected coronavirus vaccination drive in January, at least 125 intended beneficiaries each in four states who had registered on the Co-WIN App were Monday sent SMSes informing them about the time and place of their 'COVID-19 vaccination' under a mock-drill to administer the shots at designated centres.

The two-day end-to-end dry run was being carried out in Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh, in Rajkot and Gandhinagar in Gujarat, Ludhiana and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar (Nawanshahr) in Punjab and Sonitpur and Nalbari districts in Assam.

It is being conducted to test the laid out mechanisms for COVID-19 vaccination in the states and provide insights into any gaps to be addressed before the commencement of the actual vaccination drive, according to officials.

They said said the exercise tested the functionality of Co-WIN, which is an online platform for monitoring the delivery of COVID-19 vaccine, deployment of team members, checking cold storage, transportation arrangements and other arrangements while following all necessary protocols.

Krishna district Collector A Md Imtiyaz, who inaugurated the dry run at the urban primary health centre at Prakash Nagar in Vijayawada, said "the (dummy) vaccine was transported from the central stor-



Representative image

age facility to cold chain points at various places". The dry run was being carried out in five locations with 25 test beneficiaries (healthcare workers) for each session.

As per the checklist shared with the states by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, beneficiaries will be preidentified and an SMS will be sent to them in advance with the name of the vaccinator and the time of the immunization.

After the vaccination, they will be under observation for the next 30 minutes to address any adverse even. A report on the dry run listing the issues involved is to be submitted by the states to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare besides the State Task Force for necessary action.

Gujarat Immunisation Office Dr Nayan Jani told reporters that local health officials of the chosen districts and cities engaged in administrative preparations on the day of the drive.

Gandhinagar Municipal

Corporation (GMC) has identified 125 beneficiaries in the city who will be covered during the mock drill, said GMC Health Officer Dr Kalpesh Goswami. In Ludhiana, seven centres have been set up at various hospitals.

All beneficiaries are to be compulsory pre-registered on CoWIN portal and a Photo ID will be required for the same. Health officials in Ludhiana and Nawanshahr said for each centre 25 persons of those registered online were selected for the dry run. These persons were being sent an SMS each on their respective mobile phones. These SMS's would be treated as identity proof for entry into their allotted centres Tuesday.

Each centre is equipped with a team of five doctors. District Immunisation Officer, Nawanshahr, Dr Davinder Dhanda said that necessary infrastructure at each centre includes a waiting area, an injection room, and an observation room where the person undergoing 'dummy vaccination' Tuesday dur-

SII expects nod for vaccine in a few days

The Serum Institute of India, the local maker of the Oxford/AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine, said Monday it expected the British and Indian governments to approve shots for emergency use within a few days. "You will be hearing some good news from the UK very soon," Serum's Chief Executive Adar Poonawalla told reporters, adding that approval from the Indian regulator would likely follow shortly. The company has already made 40 million to 50 million doses of the vaccine and will be able to ramp up capacity to around 100 million a month by March when a new facility comes online, Poonawalla said.

ing the dry run would be kept for half an hour has been prepared.

Prior to the dry run, a special training workshop of personnel was also held.

Sidhu said that details of 1.5 lakh healthcare workers from private and public facilities have already been uploaded on the COWIN portal. Assam officials said five hospitals in each of Nalbari and Sonitpur districts have been chosen for the exercise.

The state surveillance medical officer of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Monday visited Nalbari district and held discussions on the exercise with health department officials and the Deputy Commissioner Purabi Konwar.

PM Modi inaugurates first-ever driverless train



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 28:** Inaugurating India's first-ever driverless train operations on the Delhi Metro's Magenta Line Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said his government unlike its predecessors has taken growing urbanisation as an opportunity and asserted that metro train services will be extended to 25 cities by 2025 from the current 18.

In his address via video-conferencing, he said the launch of the driverless train and start of the National Common Mobility Card, also inaugurated by him Monday, at the Airport Express Line of the Delhi Metro are an attempt to make urban development future ready.

He lamented that when urbanisation gathered pace a few decades ago, not much attention was given to the needs of the future with "half-hearted" efforts being made and confusion persisting while the gap between the existing infra-

structure and needs grew. Noting that urbanisation should not be seen as a challenge but used as an opportunity to build better infrastructure and enhance people's ease of living, he highlighted his government's works towards this, saying the number of cities with metro rail has grown from five to 18 now.

By 2025, this is going to be extended to more than 25 cities.

"In 2014, only 248 km of metro lines were operational in the country and today it is about three times, more than 700 kilometers. By the year 2025, we are working to expand it to 1,700 km," he said.

The prime minister asserted these figures are a proof of ease of living in the lives of crores of Indians and an evidence of the fulfillment of the aspirations of the citizens. Metro rail is a great way to reduce pollution and has taken thousands of vehicles off roads, he said, adding his government has formulated metro policy as per the needs of a city and its working population.

11 UK returnees test nCoV+ve in Andhra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Amaravati, Dec 28:** Amid the rising global concerns about the new United Kingdom (UK) COVID-19 strain, 11 more UK returnees tested positive while 17 are yet to be traced in Andhra Pradesh, an official statement said on Monday.

According to a statement from Medical and Health department of Andhra Pradesh, "Total returnees from the UK till date are 1,363. Out of these, traced returnees are 1,346. Rest 17 are yet to be traced. Among the traced, 1324 are in quarantine."



Representative image

"11 are tested COVID-19 positive among UK returnees of which 1 is from Anantapuram district, 2 from East Godavari district, 3 from Krishna district, 4 from Guntur and 1 from Nellore district," it added.

Results of clinical tests of the UK returnees received from National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune and Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology (CCMB), Telangana did not verify whether it was new UK virus strain or not.

"5,784 contacts of the UK returnees have also been traced and sent for testing. So far, 12 contacts of UK returnees have been detected positive. These are 8 from Guntur, 1 from Nellore and 3 from East Godavari district," the statement said.

The new strain of coronavirus first found in the UK, earlier this month, has caused a stir as it is reported to be more transmissible than other COVID-19 variants.



A youth performs stunts with a bicycle in a skate park at Bandra in Mumbai

PTI PHOTO

K'taka Cabinet okays anti-cow slaughter Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Dec 28:** The Karnataka cabinet Monday decided to promulgate an ordinance to give effect to the contentious anti-cow slaughter bill that is yet to be approved by the legislative council.

Once it comes into effect, there will be a blanket prohibition of slaughter of cows in the state. However, slaughter houses will continue to function and beef consumption will not be prohibited with respect to buffalo meat. "The anti-cow slaughter law is

not new. We have had it for decades. Previously, there was a ban on slaughter of cows until the age of 13. We have extended it with an intention that older cows should not be left out. Since the prohibition does not extend to buffaloes, there is no ban on beef consumption," Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister J C Madhuswamy said.

Speaking to reporters after the cabinet meeting here, he said the ordinance is likely to be sent to the Governor within a day for his assent.

Over 700 cases registered under NDPS Act in Delhi in 2020: Police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 28:** The Delhi Police registered over 700 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and arrested 882 people in this connection this year, officials said Sunday.

According to police, the major recoveries include 10.46 lakh tablets of Tramadol and Nitrazepam, 19,560 bottles of codeine-based syrup and 500 kg ganja trafficked from Andhra Pradesh.

"A total of 726 FIRs under the

Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act were registered in Delhi in 2020, and 882 people were arrested," a police official said. It was noticed that besides alcohol, the commonly used drugs are ganja, heroin, charas, cocaine, codeine syrup and inhalants.

The mostly sold party drugs in Delhi are lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), amphetamine, methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), ketamine and methamphetamine, police said. In 2020, Nepali and Nigerian drug sup-

pliers active in Delhi were also arrested besides the sources from other states across the country, they said. Several drug suppliers like Sharafat Sheikh, Bishan alias Natiya, Rocky, Javed alias Sulemani and others were held this year, police said.

Besides stepping up legal action against drug suppliers, the city police said it has taken several steps to sensitise general public about the menace of drug abuse, adding that children have also been made aware about the ill-effects of drug addiction.

Shimla gets season's first snowfall, several roads blocked

AGENCIES

**Shimla, Dec 28:** After a long wait, the Himachal Pradesh capital witnessed the season's first snowfall Monday, which snapped road links but tourists made merry by hurling snowballs at one another.

Officials said roads in the higher reaches of Kinnaur, Shimla, Chamba, Mandi, Kullu and Sirmour districts were hit by heavy snowfall and work was on to reopen these.

In the state capital and other popular tourist resorts like Manali and Dalhousie, internal roads were too slippery for traffic as these were laden with snow. Even walking in the streets was risky. Shimla

saw 9 cm snowfall, while Manali and Dalhousie had 14 cm and 22 cm snow respectively.

Hoteliers have cheered up with the snowfall in the hope that tourists will come in large numbers on the New Year's Eve. Tourist spots near Shimla, such as Kufri, Fagu and Narkanda also experienced snowfall, making the hill stations even more picturesque.

Even Dharampur in Solan district experienced snowfall. So did picturesque tourist resorts Kasauli and Chail in the district.

As news of the snowfall spreads, more tourists will flock to Shimla, known for the imperial grandeur of its buildings that were once institutions of power when the town



served as the summer capital of British India, and other destinations. Likewise, Manali and its up-hill Solang ski slopes and Kalpa, 250 km from the state capital, saw

snowfall. The mighty snow-clad Dhauladhar ranges, forming the backdrop of Dharamsala, turned more white with fresh snow. Kufri near here recorded 30 cm snow,

New Year eve set to be chilly in N India

Brace for a chilly New Year's Eve in north India. Night temperatures are expected to fall by 3-5 degrees Celsius in the northern parts of the country from December 29-31, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Monday as a cold wave sweeps across several states. Cold wave conditions are likely to abate from January 2, the IMD said.

the highest in the state. Keylong in Lahaul and Spiti district experienced 3 cm snow and recorded a low

of minus 6.7 degrees Celsius.

Picturesque tourist resort Manali recorded a low of 0.2 degree Celsius while it was 1.4 degrees Celsius in Dharamsala, minus 3.1 degrees in Kalpa and minus 1.1 degrees in Shimla. A weatherman told IANS Shimla and its nearby tourist destinations have good snow cover and would stay covered in snow for the next few days.

He said the western disturbances are expected to recede by Tuesday, and the weather would be dry after that.

After opening of skies, the minimum temperatures across the state is likely to plummet by three to four notches, a weather man said.



## of the day quote

The number of the main accused in the assassination of Soleimani has increased from 45 to 48



**HOSSEIN AMIR ABDOLLAHIAN** | SENIOR FOREIGN ADVISOR TO THE IRANIAN PARLIAMENT SPEAKER

It is important to underline the need for Afghan government to take proactive measures to fulfil its responsibility for internal security, law and order and protection of Afghan lives



**IMRAN KHAN** | PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER

A war criminal, murderer Haftar and his supporters must know that they will be seen as a legitimate target in case of an attack on Turkish troops by his forces



**HULUSI AKAR** | TURKEY DEFENCE MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Seven killed in Pak accident

**Lahore:** An overspeeding passenger van lost control and fell into a deep gorge in Pakistan's Punjab province Monday, killing at least seven persons. The accident occurred near Rakhi Gaj area of Dera Ghazi Khan, according to The Express Tribune. At least seven people, including a father and his son, were killed in the accident. The van was en-route from Fort Monroe to DG Khan and was travelling on a rail road when the accident occurred.

### 6.7-magnitude quake jolts Chile

**Santiago:** A massive earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale jolted Chile's Araucania region, authorities said, adding that there were no immediate reports of injuries or property damage. According to the National Seismological Center of the University of Chile, the epicentre of the quake Sunday was recorded 144 km west of the municipality of Tolten, in the Pacific Ocean, about 680 km from the capital city of Santiago, reports Xinhua news agency.

### Blizzard claims 12 lives in Iran

**Tehran:** The bodies of 12 mountain climbers were found in the northern mountains of Iran's capital Tehran after a blizzard hit the area, rescuers and police sources said. Three separate incidents occurred in the districts of Kolakchal, Ahar, and Darabad December 25 when a sudden blizzard caused avalanches, prompting large-scale search and rescue missions, reports Xinhua news agency. After three days of search, the Red Crescent in Tehran Sunday called off their operations.

### China's launches new satellite

**Beijing:** China has launched a new remote sensing satellite which will be used for scientific experiments. It was launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center Sunday, reports Xinhua news agency. The satellite, Yaogan-33, was launched aboard a Long March-4C rocket and entered the planned orbit successfully. It was the 357th flight mission of the Long March carrier rocket series. The mission also sent a micro and nano technology experiment satellite into orbit. The two satellites will be used for scientific experiments, land resources survey and crop yield estimation.



**Does it (coronavirus mutation) make someone more ill? Is it more serious virus in the sense of virulence? And the answer is, it doesn't appear to be that way**  
**DR ANTHONY FAUCI** | TOP US INFECTIOUS DISEASE EXPERT

## CHINESE ASTRONOMERS DISCOVER 591 HIGH-VELOCITY STARS

A Chinese research team has discovered 591 high-velocity stars based on data from the Large Sky Area Multi-Object Fiber Spectroscopic Telescope (LAMOST) and the European Space Agency's Gaia satellite



# Trump signs Tibet policy to prevent China from installing own Dalai Lama

*Trump signed the Act Sunday as part of the massive \$2.3 trillion package for the year-end Bill to provide Covid-19 relief and fund the federal govt*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, Dec 28:** US President Donald Trump has signed into law a Bill that calls for establishing a US consulate in Tibet and building an international coalition to ensure that the next Dalai Lama is appointed solely by the Tibetan Buddhist community without China's interference.

The Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 modifies and re-authorises various programmes and provisions related to Tibet.

Trump signed the Act Sunday as part of the massive \$2.3 trillion package for the year-end bill to provide long-delayed coronavirus relief and fund the federal government. The US Senate last week unanimously passed the bill despite China's protest.

It authorises assistance to non-governmental organisations in support of Tibetan communities in Tibet; places restrictions on new Chinese consulates in the United States until a US consulate has been established in Lhasa, Tibet.

The law now authorises the Office of the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues



The US says it will take all appropriate measures to hold accountable senior officials of the Chinese government or the Chinese Communist Party who directly interfere with the identification and installation of the future 15th Dalai Lama of Tibetan Buddhism

THE TIBETAN POLICY AND SUPPORT ACT OF 2020 APPROVES \$1 MILLION PER ANNUM FOR THE SPECIAL US COORDINATOR ON TIBET, \$675,000 TOWARDS SCHOLARSHIP PROVISIONS, \$575,000 FOR SCHOLAR EXCHANGE INITIATIVES, \$8 MILLION FOR THE TIBETAN AUTONOMOUS REGION

and expands the office's duties to include additional tasks, such as pursuing international coalitions to ensure that the next Dalai Lama is appointed solely by the Tibetan Buddhist faith community.

It also directs the Secretary of State not to open a new Chinese consulate in the US unless China allows the opening of an American consulate in Lhasa.

It is the policy of the US to take all appropriate measures to hold accountable senior officials of the

Chinese government or the Chinese Communist Party who directly interfere with the identification and installation of the future 15th Dalai Lama of Tibetan Buddhism, the successor to the 14th Dalai Lama.

Beijing views the 14th Dalai Lama as a "separatist" working to split Tibet from China.

Some of the prominent measures approved by the US Congress include imposing sanctions on Chinese officials, including travel restrictions.

# China jails citizen journalist for 4 yrs for Wuhan virus reports

*Zhang Zhan, a former lawyer, was sentenced for allegedly 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble' for her reporting in the chaotic initial stages of the outbreak*

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Shanghai, Dec 28:** A Chinese citizen journalist was jailed for four years for her livestream reporting from Wuhan as the Covid-19 outbreak unfurled almost a year after details of an "unknown viral pneumonia" surfaced in the central China city.

Zhang Zhan, a former lawyer, was sentenced at a brief hearing in a Shanghai court for allegedly "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" for her reporting in the chaotic initial stages of the outbreak.

Her live reports and essays were widely shared on social media platforms in February, grabbing the attention of authorities, who have punished eight virus whistle-blowers so far as they defang criticism of the government's response to the outbreak.

Beijing has congratulated itself for "extraordinary" success in controlling the virus inside its borders, with an economy on the rebound while much of the rest of the world stutters through painful lockdowns and surging caseloads a year on from the start of the pandemic in Wuhan. Controlling the information flow during an un-

precedented global health crisis has been pivotal in allowing China's communist authorities to reframe the narrative in their favour.

But that has come at a serious cost to anyone picking holes in that storyline. "Zhang Zhan looked devastated when the sentence was announced," Ren Quanniu, one of Zhang's defence lawyers, told reporters confirming the four year jail term outside Shanghai Pudong New District People's Court Monday morning.

Her mother sobbed loudly as the verdict was read, Ren added.

Concerns are mounting over the health of 37-year-old Zhang who began a hunger strike in June and has been force-fed via a nasal tube. "She said when I visited her (last week): 'If they give me a heavy sentence then I will refuse food until the very end...' She thinks she will die in prison," Ren said before the trial. "It's an extreme method of protesting against this society and this environment."

China's communist authorities have a history of putting dissidents on trial in opaque courts between Christmas and New Year to minimise Western scrutiny.



Cars drive along a road on a winter day in Omsk, Russia

REUTERS PHOTO

## TRIAL OF HK ACTIVISTS BEGINS IN CHINA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Shenzhen, Dec 28:** The trial in China of a group of Hong Kong pro-democracy activists who tried to escape the city by speedboat for sanctuary in Taiwan opened Monday, as the United States urged the immediate release of dissidents it says "fled tyranny".

Ten of the so-called "Hong Kong 12" was in court in the southern city of Shenzhen facing charges linked to an illegal border crossing.

Chinese authorities took them into custody after their boat was intercepted August 23.

The hearing began as scheduled Monday afternoon, AFP understands, and was likely to run into the evening.



But court officials would confirm nothing about the case and the trial - like many in China's opaque legal system - was not open to foreign reporters or diplomats.

At least two of the group face around seven years in jail for organising the attempted escape from a city where democracy activists last year led massive protests against Beijing's rule.

Some of the group were already facing prosecution in Hong Kong, where China has imposed a draconian national security law that has stamped out the city's protest movement.

"Their so-called 'crime' was to flee tyranny," a US embassy spokesperson told AFP, ahead of their scheduled court appearance via video link. Urging their "immediate release", the spokesperson said: "Communist China will stop at nothing to prevent its people from seeking freedom elsewhere."

The US has used Hong Kong's evaporating freedoms as a stick to beat China with in recent months.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs went into a familiar attack mode over the US comments.

## Handle differences properly, China tells Oli and Prachanda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, Dec 28:** China Monday appealed to the warring factions of the Nepal Communist Party to properly handle their disputes and strive for political stability as a high-level delegation of the Chinese Communist Party made efforts to bring about a rapprochement between feuding leaders.

China rushed a team of officials headed by Vice Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Guo Yezhou to Kathmandu on Sunday after its high-profile Ambassador to Nepal Hou Yanqi failed to sort out differences between Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and his rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis last Sunday after Prime Minister Oli, known for his pro-Beijing leanings, in a surprise move, recommended dissolving the 275-member House. Acting on the Prime Minister's recommendation, Nepal's President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House the same day and announced fresh elections April 30 and May 10.

While China's open meddling in Nepal's politics raised eyebrows, Beijing Monday sought to defend Guo's visit, saying it was aimed at deepening exchanges and cooperation between the CPC and Nepal's political parties.

Asked whether Guo's visit was aimed at bringing about a political reconciliation between the two groups within the NCP, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing that China has noted the "developments in Nepal's political situation".

# Despotic Erdogan regime curbs free speech in Turkey

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 28:** The deplorable state of freedom of speech and expression in Turkey has once again been brought to the fore with the shutting down of a Turkish channel, just 26 days after its launch. Olay TV blamed Turkish government for putting intense pressure before darkening its screen during a dramatic live broadcast Friday.

The channel's executive editor Suleyman Sarilar, who was joined in on the news set by dozens of staffers during his farewell speech, said the network's joint-owner Cavit Caglar, a former state minister, was "under great pressure by the government" as the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan-led regime was disturbed by the pro-Kurdish coverage.

"Everybody knows which office in Turkey would silence and pressure a television channel that just

started broadcasting on November 30, and one that meant to engage in neutral journalism," Sarilar said.

The move has generated a lot of criticism from the Turkish netizens and the Opposition parties who believe that Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has tarnished the country's reputation beyond repair.

"Despotism and freedom of the press cannot stand side by side. There is either freedom of the press or despotism in a country," said Democracy and Breakthrough Party's Mustafa Yeneroglu.

Main Opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu also lashed out at the ruling government.

"Our country does not deserve this darkness. We will definitely bring the light! #Olaytv," Kilicdaroglu tweeted, tagging an image of the channel's black screen.

Ironically, Erdogan on Saturday proclaimed that 2021 would be a

## THE DEPLORABLE STATE OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION IN TURKEY HAS ONCE AGAIN BEEN BROUGHT TO THE FORE



year of democratic and economic reforms in the country.

"As promised, I hope 2021 will be a year of democratic and economic reforms," the Turkish President was quoted as saying by the state-run news agency Anadolu during a video address from Istanbul.

The ground reality is a lot different though as has been proven by hundreds of incidents over the last few years, especially since the alleged coup attempt in 2016.

Erdogan has been accused of imposing draconian laws that suppresses human rights and freedoms in Turkey and criminalise the defence by lawyers of persons opposing the government. The authoritarian regime has been widely criticized for its extensive and unjust use of anti-terrorism laws against lawyers, activists, journalists, trade unionists, and intellectuals.

Last week, a local court sentenced Can Dundar, the exiled former editor-in-chief of the Cumhuriyet daily, to more than 27 years in jail on espionage and terror charges for publishing a story headlined "Iste Erdogan'in yok dedigi silahlar" ("Here are the weapons that Erdogan said do not exist") which revealed that Turkish intelligence was supplying weapons to Islamist groups in Turkey.

After the verdict, Presidential

Communications Director Fahrettin Altun even called for the extradition of Dundar who had fled to Germany in 2016.

The Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF), which ranked Turkey 154th out of 180 countries in its 2020 World Press Freedom Index, termed the court's decision "insane".

"This insane and shocking decision confirms that President Erdogan's regime is unable to halt its headlong flight into ever-greater authoritarianism," RSF editor-in-chief Pauline Ades-Mével said.

"More than any other case, it shows the degree to which journalists are subjected to judicial persecution in Turkey. Even if Can Dundar now lives freely in Germany, we call for this eminent journalist's conviction to be overturned."



# business

## of the day quote

It has become a political issue unfortunately as governments of certain countries are unable or not willing to extend their control over various groups of pirates

**AMAR SINGH THAKUR** | GENERAL SECRETARY, MUI

Our relationship with TIL is very important to us and holds the key to our strategy for making Mundra container hub for the region and AICTPL as our flagship terminal

**KARAN ADANI** | CEO, APSEZ

At Hero Electric, we've always believed that to solve last mile delivery connectivity, the best option is to go electric. In the endeavour to drive the same, we have many partners

**NAVEEN MUNIAL** | MD, HERO ELECTRIC

## SHORT TAKES

### Fund raising via equity issues up

**Mumbai:** The devastating pandemic failed to dampen the primary and secondary capital market issuances with the year closing with the highest ever fund raising from the equity markets, that grew at 116 per cent to ₹1.78 lakh crore in IPOs, OFS and other market issuances, according to a report. Despite the entire 2020 being overshadowed by the pandemic, an all-time high fund raising through public equity markets at ₹1,77,468 crore. This was 116 per cent higher than 2019.

### NTPC's Dulanga mine begins ops

**New Delhi:** State-owned power giant NTPC on Monday said its Dulanga coal mine is commercially operational from October 1, 2020. "...Based on achievement of approved norms and due approval; Dulanga Coal Mine (in Odisha) of NTPC Limited, having an ultimate peak rated annual capacity of 7 Million Tonnes Per Annum, is declared commercial operation from October 1, 2020, a BSE filing said. Banhardih coal block was allocated earlier to the Jharkhand government.

### Telecom industry 'is very stressed'

**New Delhi:** The telecom industry, which facilitated wide-spread digital adoption during the pandemic, continues to be financially stressed and seeks government support on issues like liquidity, rationalisation of levies, AGR and spectrum pricing, according to COAI. The Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI), in its outlook for 2021, said 5G launch is expected in the later part of the year. The technology is poised to open up a plethora of possibilities.

### Aggromalin raises ₹2 crore funding

**New Delhi:** Agri-tech startup Aggromalin Monday said it has raised ₹2 crore from angel investors participating from the Middle East. The company aims to utilise the capital in setting up 500 micro-farms in the states of Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh, it said in a statement. Aggromalin supplements the income of small landholding farmers through ready to implement micro-farms mainly in the areas of Animal Husbandry and Aquaculture.



The insurance regulatory body maintains that introduction of standard insurance plans will make it easier for consumers to select services owing to the standardisation of the process

**TARUN MATHUR** | CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICER, POLICYBAZAAR.COM

## MARKETS SCALE NEW HIGHS

Extending gains for the fourth straight session, key stock indices Sensex and Nifty raced to new peaks in line with broad-based rally in global equities as investors cheered a USD 2.3 trillion US stimulus package and a last-minute Brexit deal.



# Mining reforms coming in 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 28:** The country's mining sector will see hectic activities in the new year with the central government's approvals for pending mining reforms expected in January itself and efforts continuing to bolster overall mineral output.

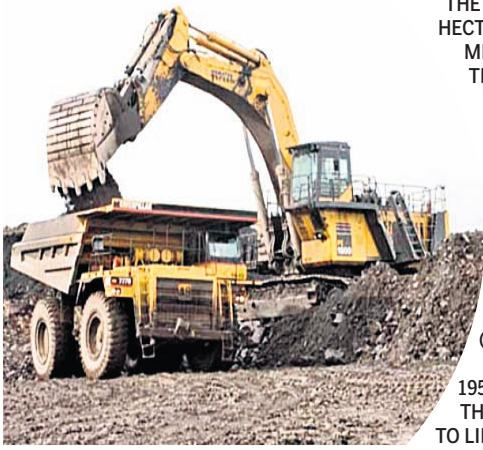
The reforms will pave the way for auctioning of at least 500 mineral blocks, Mines Secretary Anil Kumar Jain said and emphasised that calendar year 2021 will be a bridge year between the past and the future.

On account of market forces, there is a fluctuation in steel prices but the COVID-19 pandemic did not impact the country's mineral production this year, he noted.

While many sectors had to bear the brunt of the pandemic-induced lockdown, Jain said India has registered in iron ore some of the best export numbers in the last seven-eight months as compared to previous years.

The year 2021 will see hectic activity on the mining side because the reforms which have been in waiting for some time, they (reforms) are likely to be approved in

## Long-awaited changes



THE YEAR 2021 WILL SEE HECTIC ACTIVITY ON THE MINING SIDE BECAUSE THE REFORMS WHICH HAVE BEEN IN WAITING FOR SOME TIME ARE LIKELY TO BE APPROVED

THESE INCLUDE CHANGES IN THE MMDR ACT (MINES AND MINERALS (DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATION) ACT, 1957) AND CHANGES IN THE RULES ALL MEANT TO LIBERATE THE SECTOR

the month of January which will involve some changes in the MMDR Act (Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957) and some changes in the rules all meant to liberate the sector.

It is going to bring into play a large number of mining blocks so the production in most of the minerals resources will see quantum

jump because of these mines which will become available for interested parties in the calendar year 2021, Jain said.

As per official figures, India's iron ore export increased by 70.26 per cent to 29.261 MT in the April-September period of ongoing fiscal over 17.186 MT in the year-ago period.

## More regulation of virtual assets from 2021: SBI



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 28:** The use of crowdfunding websites create additional risk and the year 2021 will see a lot of regulatory effort channelled towards virtual assets, a senior SBI official said Monday.

Addressing a virtual 'AMLCFT Conference 2020', Sujit Kumar Varma, SBI's Deputy Managing Director (Corporate Accounts Group) said that the trade-based money laundering remains a significant risk.

The use of crowdfunding websites, although not entirely new, create an additional risk as these are specially designed to solicit funding and can be misused for terror financing, he said.

Varma also noted that crypto currencies and its potential means to finance terrorism is a significant threat especially when is anonymous in nature.

The year 2021 will see a lot of regulatory effort channelled towards virtual assets. The year 2021 will also likely witness the introduction of more rules and regulations for virtual assets service providers, he said.

According to Varma, there will be enhanced supervision for those dealing in precious metals and jewels from next year.

The senior SBI official also noted that baseline expectations of regulators are that financial institutions must ensure that there is market integrity.

## Power sector limps back to normal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 28:** Limping back to normal after bearing the brunt of the pandemic this year, the power sector needs a slew of reforms, especially implementation of consumer rules to achieve the government's ambitious target of 24X7 electricity supply for all in 2021, and also steps to improve the financial health of discoms.

The most important task before the government will be to deal with the sickness of power distribution utilities (discoms), which are cash-strapped and unable to pay the electricity generation firms (gencos) for



ensuring 24X7 power supply for all.

There has been a cascading effect of the pandemic on power demand and revenue collection of discoms, a scenario that has aggravated the stress on the already troubled gencos. There has been an issue with cash flow and finance of gencos due to delay in payments by discoms.

Going ahead, central as well as state governments along with power

## Hiring set to bounce back



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 28:** Hiring activities will bounce back in the coming year as major industries are recovering from the impact of Covid-19, according to a Naukri.com survey Monday.

While 26 per cent recruiters foresee hiring bouncing back to pre-Covid levels within the next three-six months, 34 per cent said that it would take their organisations six months to one year, said the "Hiring Outlook Survey" by the job portal.

The survey, which involved 1,327 recruiters and consultants across the country, showed that jobseekers should remain optimistic for the coming year.

In 2020, while industries such as medical/healthcare, IT,

BPO/ITES were less impacted, a few such as retail, hospitality and travel struggled to cope.

The overall hiring market started on a positive note this year with increasing job postings in the initial months of the year at a year-on-year comparison. The incline in hiring was steady until the pandemic impacted the job market.

The impact of Covid-19 was visible right from March. In April and May, hiring declined 60 per cent year-over-year, the lowest ever seen on the platform, Naukri.com said. Steadily, the job market started to revive from June onwards.

Though the market is still down by 28 per cent year-over-year as per the Naukri JobSpeak index for November, jobseekers, recruiters and experts are eyeing on sequential recovery to spot

## 1.5K telecom towers damaged in Punjab



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 28:** More than 1,500 telecom towers in Punjab have been damaged by farmers protesting against the three farm laws, disrupting services in some pockets, sources said.

Power supply to towers that relay telecom signals was snapped and cables cut in several parts of the state as farmers vented their anger on the infrastructure owned by billionaire Mukesh Ambani's firm Jio as they saw him along with infrastructure tycoon Gautam Adani as major beneficiaries of the new laws.

Neither Ambani's Reliance group nor Adani's companies are into the business of procuring foodgrains from farmers.

Till yesterday, 1,411 towers were damaged and today the count has gone well past 1,500, a source with knowledge of the matter said.

In Jalandhar, some bundles of Jio's fibre cable were also burnt. Jio has 9,000 plus towers in the state.

Another source said the most common way of damaging the telecom towers was to cut off the power supply.

In at least one case, the genera-

## Neither Ambani's Reliance group nor Adani's companies are into the business of procuring foodgrains from farmers

tor at a tower site was physically taken away and allegedly donated to a local guru dwara.

Videos of Jio employees being threatened and made to flee have gone viral.

The attacks have impacted telecom services and operators are struggling to maintain services in absence of action by law enforcement agencies, the source said.

The Punjab chief minister had on Friday appealed to protesting farmers to not cause inconvenience to the general public with such actions and continue to exercise the same restraint as they had shown over the past several months of their agitation.

Sources said state police have so far not acted against those damaging telecom towers and even FIRs have not been registered in most cases.

## BIZ BUZZ

### Tips Industries, Facebook ink deal

**New Delhi:** Music record label Tips Industries Monday announced a global deal with social media giant Facebook to license its music for videos and other social experiences across Facebook and Instagram. "It has been a big and significant year for Tips music, as the company signs another global deal with the biggest social media platform in the world Facebook to license its music for videos and other social experiences across Facebook and Instagram," Tips Industries said in a statement. With the move, Facebook and Instagram users will be able to add Tips' music catalogue to their posts and stories.



### Vehicle sales may take longer to recover

**New Delhi:** Commercial vehicle sales in India could take longer to recover than expected despite improving macro-economic indicators, according to India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra). The light commercial vehicles (LCVs) segment has started to recover as they provide last mile connectivity and because of increased e-commerce activities but medium and heavy commercial vehicle (MHCV) sales are unlikely to recover before the fourth quarter of 2021-22, it said. The ratings agency reiterated that MHCV sales could decline by 35-45 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) in FY21. "In FY22, the industry could see sales growth in double digits, especially due to the low base of FY20-FY21," it said in a statement.



### Seaways Shipping inks pact with MOL

**Mumbai:** Hyderabad-based Seaways' group flagship Seaways Shipping and Logistics on Monday said it has entered into a pact with the MOL Logistics (India) for providing end-to-end supply chain and turnkey logistics services to customers across the country. The partnership will also enable the two companies to associate in prospective bids and project proposals with various clients in India and abroad, a release said. Seaway group offers complete range of logistics services across the globe while MOL Logistics (India) is a part of the Japan-based MOL logistics. "We will now be able to offer our customers a wide range of shipping and logistics solutions that are more efficient and cost-effective across any part of the world," he said.



# India to benefit from shifting of global supply chains

To capitalise on the opportunities that could come India's way, there is need to strengthen its manufacturing ecosystem

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 28:** India could benefit from the likely shift in global supply chains from China to other economies in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a survey.

The Ficci-Dhruva Advisors Survey conducted this month covered more than 150 companies in India.

Another major outcome of COVID-19 is the likely shift in global supply chains away from China to other economies. Nearly 70 per cent of the survey participants have said India could benefit from this move and they expect a fair share of manufacturing to shift from China to India in the near future, said Ficci on the findings of the survey.

Moreover, the prospect of introduction of a vaccine against COVID-



19 early next year has improved the confidence level of businesses, with almost 74 per cent of the participants foreseeing a significant positive impact on their business once the vaccine is made available, the survey revealed.

However, to capitalise on the opportunities that could come India's way, there is need to strengthen its

manufacturing ecosystem. Under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package, the government has introduced several measures to address the immediate pain points of the economy as well as steps to improve India's manufacturing competitiveness.

These measures have been well received by the industry, with 45

per cent of the surveyed companies rating the latest set of announcements made under Aatmanirbhar Bharat package 3.0 as 'good to excellent'.

"The results of the survey are encouraging and highlight the ongoing industrial and economic recovery. This momentum needs to be built upon and now all eyes are on the upcoming Budget, Ficci President Uday Shankar said.

He observed that the context of this Budget is completely different due to an unprecedented social and economic challenge, excluding confidence that the government will take bold steps to respond to these challenges.

According to the survey, COVID-19-induced travel restrictions have limited the ability of companies to undertake business operations efficiently, as 74 per cent of the respondents have validated this.

To overcome this challenge and maintain business operations, companies have leveraged digital tools for communication. Given the benefits of use of technology, 64 per cent of the surveyed firms said moving forward, they will use a mix of travel and virtual meetings even after the situation becomes normal.

The results of the December 2020 survey also indicate that there has been a further improvement in the performance of companies compared to the situation in August.

With improvement seen in the economy, nearly 40 per cent of the surveyed firms are operating at a capacity utilisation level of over 70 per cent, vis-a-vis 30 per cent of the companies in August 2020.

Other indicators of improving business performance in the recent survey are related to order books and exports.

## Centre releases ₹6K cr to states

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

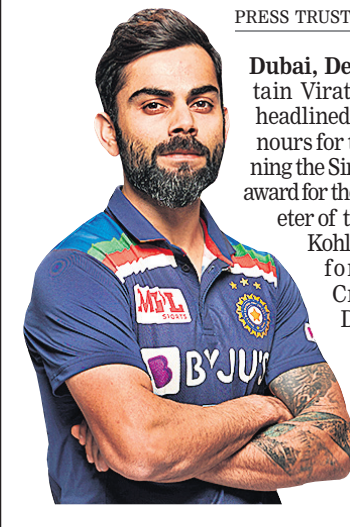
**New Delhi, Dec 28:** The Finance Ministry has released the ninth weekly instalment of ₹6,000 crore to the states to meet the GST compensation shortfall.

Out of this, an amount of ₹5,516.60 crore has been released to 23 states and an amount of ₹483.40 crore has been released to the three Union Territories (UT) with Legislative Assembly (Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir and Puducherry) who are members of the GST Council. The remaining 5 states - Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim - do not have a gap in revenue on account of GST implementation.

The government had set up a special borrowing window in October 2020 to meet the estimated shortfall of ₹1.10 lakh crore in revenue arising on account of implementation of GST.



# ICC Awards: Kohli named ‘Male Cricketer of the Decade’



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA


**Dubai, Dec 28:** India captain Virat Kohli Monday headlined the ICC top honours for the decade, winning the Sir Garfield Sobers award for the best male cricketer of the past 10 years. Kohli was also picked for the ODI Cricketer of the Decade award. Former India skipper MS Dhoni won the ‘ICC Spirit of Cricket Award of the Decade’, chosen by fans

for his gesture of calling back England batsman Ian Bell after a bizarre run out in the Nottingham Test in 2011. The International Cricket Council (ICC) made the announcements via twitter, bestowing the top honours on Kohli, who scored 66 out of his 70 international hundreds, in the ‘ICC Awards’ period. In the same period, he was also the batsman with most fifties (94), most runs (20,396) besides having the maximum average (56.97) among players with 70 plus innings. Overall, the 32-year-old has amassed 12,040 runs in ODIs, 7318 runs in Tests and 2928 runs in

**THE AWARD WINNERS**

**Sir Garfield Sobers Award for Male Cricketer of the Decade & Men's ODI Cricketer of the Decade**  
**Virat Kohli**  
  
Rachael Heyhoe-Flint Award for Female Cricketer of the Decade, Women's ODI Cricketer of the Decade & Women's T20I Cricketer of the Decade  
**Ellyse Perry**  
  
**MS Dhoni Spirit of Cricket Award of the Decade**  
**Steve Smith**  
  
Men's Test Cricketer of the Decade  
**Rashid Khan**  
  
Men's T20I Cricketer of the Decade  
**Kyle Coetzer**  
  
Men's Associate Cricketer of the Decade  
**Kathryn Bryce**  
  
Women's Associate Cricketer of the Decade

T20Is, averaging more than 50 across formats. Kohli was also part of the World Cup-winning India squad in 2011, something he will cherish for life. “Firstly, it’s a great honour for me to receive this award. The moments I hold closest to my heart in the last decade definitely has to be the World Cup win in 2011, the Champions Trophy win in 2013 and winning the series in Australia in 2018,” said Kohli in a statement. Kohli was the lone player to be named in teams of the decade across formats and was named captain of the Test all-stars. For the ODI honour, Kohli was the only player with 10,000 plus runs in the ‘ICC Awards’ period in-

cluding 39 hundreds and 48 fifties at an average of 61.83. The world governing body named Australian batting mainstay Steve Smith the Test Cricketer of the Decade and Afghanistan star Rashid Khan as the T20 Cricketer of the Decade. Australia’s Ellyse Perry swept the women’s awards, securing the ICC Female Cricketer of the Decade honours alongside ODI and T20 Cricketers of the Decade award. 

# ON CUSP OF EQUALISER

*Boxing Day Test: Bowlers put India in sight of series-levelling victory as they leave Australia reeling at 133/6 conceding only a two-run lead at stumps on third day*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Melbourne, Dec 28:** India marched towards a dominant series-leveling victory after their formidable bowlers scythed through the Australian batting, relentlessly pressing home the advantage of a sizeable first-innings lead on the third day of the second Test here, Monday. Australia were wobbling at 133 for six at stumps on the third day of the Boxing Day Test at the magnificent Melbourne Cricket Ground. Aiming to exorcise the ghosts of being bowled out for a lowest ever 36 in the series-opener, the visitors had put up 326 on the board for a 131-run lead in reply to Australia’s first-innings total of 195 all out. Australia were ahead by only two runs at close of play. Seeking to wipe out the deficit, Australia began their second innings on a disastrous note as Joe Burns (4) not only got out for a poor score, but also wasted a review after pacer Umesh Yadav (1/5) opened him up with the one that swung away very late. Introduced early into the attack, seasoned off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (1/46) once again showed his class when he bamboozled Marnus Labuschagne (28) with a slider that went straight with the angle. Ashwin let one slide across and with the batsman looking to defend. The ball went the other way and took an outside edge on its way to Rahane at first slip. Matthew Wade and Steve Smith survived the remaining overs prior to the tea break, which they took at 65 for two. At that break, the hosts trailed India by 66 runs. More misery awaited Australia in the final session when they lost four wickets for the addition of 68 runs, taking India closer to an equaliser in the four-match series after the humiliating defeat in the opener at Adelaide Oval. Smith’s horror run in the series



## Yadav hobbles off

**MELBOURNE:** India fast bowler Umesh Yadav hobbled off the field after suffering a calf muscle injury during the third day of the second Test against Australia here Monday and has been taken for scans. Umesh was in the middle of a fine spell when he experienced pain in his left leg and called for immediate medical attention. He later limped back to the dressing room. “Umesh Yadav complained of pain in his calf while bowling his 4th over and was assessed by the BCCI medical team. He is being taken for scans now,” BCCI media team released a statement. India are already missing the services of seasoned pacers Mohammed Shami and Ishant Sharma and the latest injury would add to the visiting team’s woes in the four-match Test series.

Ravindra Jadeja rejoices after dismissing Matthew Wade as the Australian opener looks dejected in Melbourne, Monday

PIC: ESPNCRICINFO

continued as he was bowled by Jasprit Bumrah (1/34) round his legs when the ball clipped the bails of the off-stump after the batsman had shuffled too much. Wade, looking the best among Australian batsmen, was trapped in front of the wicket by Ravindra Jadeja (2/25) at 98 for four. And while the score remained the same, Australia lost another wicket in Travis Head a couple of overs later. There was no encores of skipper Tim Paine’s battling knock in the first Test as he was caught behind off the bowling of Jadeja. Australia could have been seven down had Pant held on to a Pat Cummins edge off Ashwin. Earlier, riding captain Ajinkya Rahane’s classy hundred and Ravindra Jadeja’s 15th half century, India managed enough runs on the board to put Australia under pressure despite losing their five remaining wickets for only 49 runs after resuming the day on 277/5. Jadeja (57) added 123 runs for the sixth wicket with skipper Rahane, whose vigil came to an when he was run out, his first in Tests, after making a classy 112. The call was Jadeja’s and the run out was needless, but nevertheless, the all-rounder looked solid in the middle before he was set up by a Mitchell Starc (3/78).

On Day 3, MCG pitch that hardly contained any demons, the Australian bowlers failed to pose any serious threat to the well-settled Indian batting duo of Rahane and Jadeja. The hosts desperately needed a wicket and given how Rahane had been batting, it had to be a run out. Nearing his half century, Jadeja took off for a needless single after playing it towards short cover and Rahane responded positively in-

**SCORECARD**

**Australia 1st innings 195**  
**India 1st innings**  
(overnight 277/5)  
Ajinkya Rahane run out 112, Ravindra Jadeja c Cummins b Starc 57, Ravichandran Ashwin c Lyon b Hazlewood 14, Umesh Yadav c Smith b Lyon 9, Jasprit Bumrah c Head b Lyon 0, Mohammed Siraj not out 0;  
**Extras:** 22 (b-12, lb-6, nb-2, w-2);  
**Total: 326 all out (115.1 overs).**  
**Fall:** 1/0 (Agarwal), 2/61 (Gill), 3/64 (Pujara), 4/116 (Vihari), 5/173 (Pant), 6/294 (Rahane), 7/306 (Jadeja), 8/325 (Yadav), 9/325 (Ashwin), 10/326 (Bumrah).  
**Bowling:** Mitchell Starc 26-5-78-3, Pat Cummins 27-9-80-2, Josh Hazlewood 23-6-47-1, Nathan Lyon 27.1-4-72-3, Cameron Green 12-1-31-0.

**Australia 2nd innings**  
Matthew Wade lbw b Jadeja 40, Joe Burns c Pant b Yadav 4, Marnus Labuschagne c Rahane b Ashwin 28, Steve Smith b Bumrah 8, Travis Head c Agarwal b Siraj 17, Cameron Green batting 17, Tim Paine c Pant b Jadeja 1, Pat Cummins batting 15; **Extras:** 3 (nb-3); **Total: 133/6 (66 overs).**  
**Fall:** 4/1 (Burns), 4/2 (Labuschagne), 71/3 (Smith), 98/4 (Wade), 98/5 (Head), 99/6 (Paine).  
**Bowling:** Jasprit Bumrah 17-4-34-1, Umesh Yadav 3-3-0-5-1, Mohammed Siraj 12-3-0-23-1, Ravichandran Ashwin 23-4-46-1, Ravindra Jadeja 10-3-25-2.

stead of sending him back, but narrowly failed to make his ground at the striker’s end despite giving his best shot. That pegged India back as Australia looked to claw their way back. Nathan Lyon (3/72) and Josh Hazlewood (1/47) then polished off the tail.

## DAY 3 PLAY’S REACTION

**Ajinkya Rahane:** Captaincy is all about backing your instinct. You’ve got to back your gut feeling. (About Indian bowling) credit to the bowlers, they bowled in the right areas. (But) this game is not over yet, still have to get four more wickets  
**Mohammed Siraj:** The track on the first day was very helpful for bowling but it has become very slow today. Not much is happening and there wasn’t much swing on offer. The key is to remain patient and hit one area consistently. Jassi bhai told me that ‘don’t try anything different’. Bowl in one area and create pressure with dot balls and there should be equal focus on each ball  
**Matthew Wade:** We’ve only got ourselves to blame a little bit there, but

they’ve (India) been pretty much on the mark from the start. To be fair we haven’t gone deep enough yet to really cash in on tired bowlers late in the day. Our intent’s to go out and score obviously as a batting group and individually, but they’re making it quite challenging at times  
**Sunil Gavaskar:** (Rahane’s century is) important because it’s showing character, sending a message to the opposition that after being dismissed for 36 in the previous game, to come back in this manner, this Indian team is not going to just lie down and be walked all over. That is the message and that’s why I think this is going to be one of the most important hundreds in the history of Indian cricket

# NZ restrict Pak to 239 in first innings



Kyle Jamieson (C) celebrates a wicket with his teammates, Monday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Mount Maunganui, Dec 28:** New Test captain Mohammad Rizwan made 71 and Faheem Ashraf 91 to help Pakistan weather a top order collapse, then fight back on a day punctuated by lashing rain and hail to reach 239 before their last wicket fell in the last over Monday on the third day of the first Test against New Zealand. Rizwan came to the crease when Pakistan was 52/5 during a morning session in which it lost four wickets for 32 runs. He left when it was 186/7 in the final session, having done as much as a captain can to rescue his team from imminent peril. With Faheem, who made his highest test score and was the last man out, Rizwan put backbone into the Pakistan innings as it replied to New Zealand’s first innings of 431. Faheem outlasted Rizwan and played some elegant shots, some streaky to accumulate 15 fours and a six and ensure Pakistan avoided a follow on New Zealand likely would not have enforced late in the day. He carried Pakistan past the follow-on mark of 231 with a four

from the bowling of Neil Wagner 15 minutes before stumps which also took him past his previous highest test score of 83. The seventh wicket partnership of 106 between Rizwan and Faheem lasted 30 overs and begun to look almost unbreakable until a direct hit by Mitchell Santner from mid-wicket ran out Rizwan late in the day. It was unfortunate end for the Pakistan captain who proved his value as he stood in for the injured Babar Azam and who batted for three and a half hours and compiled his fourth half century. Rizwan and Faheem first had to establish themselves on a pitch which proved too difficult for most of Pakistan’s best batsmen, then keep their composure as three heavy rain showers and an abrupt hail storm interrupted their progress. New Zealand had consolidated its strong position in the match during the first session in which it captured the wickets of Abid Ali (25), Mohammad Abbas (5), Azhar Ali (5) and Haris Sohail (3). **Brief scores:** New Zealand 431; Pakistan 239 (Faheem Ashraf 91, Mohammad Rizwan 71; Kyle Jamieson 3/35). Match to continue.

# Jayaram helps JSL claim CCL title

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 28:** Jindal Stainless Limited, Jajpur emerged champions of the Charitable Corporate League (CCL) December 27 after overpowering Odisha Secretariat, Bhubaneswar in the final by 79 runs in Ghatikia here. Batting first, JSL rode on a superb 25-ball 100 runs (5x4, 12x6) by Jayaram to post 148 on the board in the allotted eight overs. In reply, Odisha Secretariat could muster



only 69 runs losing seven wickets in the process. Jayaram (2/17) also shone with the ball. Among the awards, Sports and Youth Affairs department, Government of Odisha were adjudged ‘Best Debutant Team of the Tournament’.

# Messi floats future US move

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Barcelona, Dec 28:** Lionel Messi won’t make a decision on his long-term future at Barcelona until the season is over, with the football great also raising the possibility of playing in the United States one day in a TV interview broadcast Sunday. “I am going to wait until the end of the season (to decide),” the 33-year-old Messi told private Spanish station La Sexta. About fifth-place Barcelona’s future prospects, Messi said “there is no money” and “it is not going to be easy to turn this around.” As of January 1, Messi could negotiate with other clubs as his contract with Barcelona is set to expire in June. In August, Messi stunned Barcelona by telling the club he



wanted to leave following a season without titles that ended in a humiliating 2-8 defeat to Bayern Munich. The club said no, and Messi backed down saying that he could not take his club to court. He has played as hard as ever since then, but has not said if he has changed his mind over wanting to leave. “Now I am focused on winning titles instead of other things,” Messi said in the rare interview. “I have always had the idea that I would like to have the experience of playing

in the United States, but this is not the time for it.” Messi also said he would not publicly support any of the candidates who plan to run in club elections set for January 24. Nor was he overly enthusiastic about the immediate prospects of the team. “Let the best candidate win,” Messi said. “Whoever does will find a very difficult situation, it is not going to be easy to turn this around. It is going to be difficult to bring in players. That requires a lot of money and there is no money. We need several important players to get back to fighting for titles.” Barcelona reported losses of 97 million euros (USD 118 million) last season and sold off several veteran players, including Messi’s strike partner and friend, Luis Suarez.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Goa, Dec 28:** It was yet another case of the Monday Blues for Bengaluru FC (BFC). This time, Jamshedpur FC (JFC) notched up a gritty 1-0 victory, courtesy Stephen Eze, over the former champions in their ISL game at the JL Nehru Stadium, Fatorda here Monday. Sunil Chhetri’s side fell to an Eze (79th minute) goal as the Men of Steel leapfrogged BFC to third spot with 13 points from nine matches. BFC stay fourth with 12 points from eight games. Bengaluru took just three minutes to register their first shot on target. Kristian Opseth’s free-kick nearly curled into the bottom corner, only to be kept out by a diving TP Rehenesh.



Stephen Eze wheels away in celebration after scoring the winner against Bengaluru FC, Monday

PIC: ISL

BFC continued to be on ascendancy but kept missing chances. Chhetri was set through on goal

by a brilliant Suresh pass, but the skipper’s shot from a good position was deflected behind. Off the re-

sultant corner, Dimas found Chhetri, but his effort sailed over the bar. Both teams kept knocking on the door with Chhetri missing another attempt for BFC while Gurpreet Singh denied Jackichand Singh with a brilliant save. But they went in goalless at the break. Jamshedpur were denied at the hour mark by two vital blocks. First Peter Hartley saw his weak shot saved by Gurpreet. The rebound fell into Eze’s path and his goal-bound shot was blocked by Bheke. JFC finally broke the deadlock through Eze, who scored his third goal of the season. Lima played a weighted pass to Aniket on the right and the latter floated a cross in the box. Eze got past his marker and dived low to score past Gurpreet.