



DARING ACT

Actor Disha Patani has lived her Aquaman fantasy standing on a surfboard in the water in a yellow bikini

LEISURE P2



SHOWDOWN BY FARMERS

Patna police resort to lathi-charge on protesting farmers during a massive showdown

TWO STATES P8



US HOUSE OVERRIDES TRUMP

The US House of Representatives has voted by an overwhelming majority to override Trump's veto of a \$741bn defence Bill

INTERNATIONAL P10

6 UK returnees test +ve for new Covid variant

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 29: Six persons who returned to India from the United Kingdom have tested positive for the new mutated strain of coronavirus, the Union Health Ministry said Tuesday. It said the UK variant genome of SARS-CoV-2 was detected in three samples in the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences Hospital (NIMHANS) Bangalore, two in the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad and

one in the National Institute of Virology (NIV) Pune. All these persons have been kept in single room isolation at designated health care facilities by respective state governments and their close contacts have also been put under quarantine, the ministry said. "Comprehensive contact tracing has been initiated for co-travellers, family contacts and others. Genome sequencing on other specimens is going on. "The situation is under careful watch and regular advice is being provided to the states for enhanced sur-



veillance, containment, testing and dispatch of samples to INSACOG labs," the ministry said. The presence of the new UK variant has already been reported by Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Italy, Sweden, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Japan, Lebanon and Singapore, so far. The ministry said that from November 25 to December 23 mid-

night, about 33,000 passengers disembarked at various Indian airports from the UK. All these passengers are being tracked and subjected by states and UTs to RT-PCR tests. So far 114 have been found positive for COVID-19. These positive samples have been sent to 10 INSACOG labs (NIBMG Kolkata, ILS Bhubaneswar, NIV Pune, CCS Pune, CCMB Hyderabad, CDFD Hyderabad, InSTEM Bangalore, NIMHANS Bangalore, IGIB Delhi, NCDC Delhi) for genome sequencing. "A total of 6 samples of 6 UK returnee persons have been found to be positive with the new UK variant genome," the ministry said. The Centre took cognizance of the reports of virus reported from UK and put in place a pro-active and preventive strategy to detect and contain the mutant variant. This strategy included temporary suspension of all flights coming from UK with effect from the midnight of

Genome sequencing of all Covid+ flyers

NEW DELHI: All international passengers who arrived in India between December 9 and 22 and tested positive for Covid-19 will be subjected to genome sequencing as part of the Centre's strategy to detect the mutated coronavirus strain that has emerged in the United Kingdom recently. Others will be followed up by the state and district surveillance officers and will be tested as per ICMR guidelines, even if they are found asymptomatic between fifth and the 10th day of their arrival. P9

23rd December till 31st December 2020 and mandatory testing of all UK returnees through RT-PCR test. The samples found positive in RT-PCR test to be genome sequenced by a consortium of 10 government labs.

BMC launches move to trace UK returnees

BHUBANESWAR: In the wake of several returnees from the UK going untraceable, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation launched an operation to trace the missing persons. The State Public Health Director Niranjana Mishra said, "A BMC team is tracing the untraced persons in the capital who recently returned here from the UK. Most of the persons who returned from the UK hailed from Bhubaneswar. The returnees from the UK have gone to 18 different districts of the state."

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Take my advice. If you want to avail world-class healthcare, join politics and become a CM!

SHORT TAKES

Bothra rewarded

Bhubaneswar: The state government Tuesday promoted three senior IPS officers including Arun Bothra to the rank of additional director general of police. As per a notification by the General Administration department Tuesday, along with Bothra, Sanjay Kumar Singh and Sunita Kakran have been promoted to the ADG rank. Bothra has recently cracked the sensational Nayagarh minor girl rape and murder case. All three officers are from the 1996 batch and their promotion will be effective from January 1, 2021.

Goods train derails

Bhubaneswar: At least 13 wagons of a goods train derailed inside a tunnel between Jarati and Maliguda railway stations in Odisha's Koraput district Tuesday, officials said. The incident took place early in the morning in the Waltair division of the East Coast Railway zone, when the train was on its way to Visakhapatnam from Kirandul, they said. Though there is no casualty, the railway track has been damaged, the officials said. Restoration work is underway, they said, adding, train services between Koraput and Visakhapatnam were disrupted.

Anubhav, Varsha put in appearance before SCW

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: Noted Odia movie star and Kendrapara BJD MP and his actress wife Varsha Priyadarshini Tuesday appeared before the State Commission for Women (SCW) in connection with the marital discord they find themselves in. Earlier, Varsha had approached the commission over the matrimonial dispute December 15. The commission had also issued notice to Anubhav and his parents to depose before the commission on the issue. However, Anubhav Tuesday reached SCW alone as his parents failed to appear reportedly due to health reasons.



The couple presented their sides in connection with the family dispute before chairperson Minati Behera. The closed-door counseling of the couple continued for more than two hours. Both Anubhav and Varsha reportedly engaged in heated arguments many times during the counseling. Anubhav, who first came out of the office of the chairperson, told the waiting media outside that the SCW has been created to redress the problems of womenfolk. He came here out of his respect for the commission. He refused to make public the facts he presented before the commission. Meanwhile, Varsha left the SCW without interacting with the reporters. Speaking on the issue, chairperson Behera expressed satisfaction over the result of the first round of talks between the couple over the matrimonial dispute. She voiced hope over some positive outcome of the discussions.

WILD BUT PLAYFUL



Leopards in a playful mood inside their enclosure at Nandankanan Zoological Park in Bhubaneswar. The zoo observed its 61st foundation day Tuesday. PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

CSS funds release to be tougher

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: The Centre will tighten the procedures for release of funds to the states and union territories (UTs) under various Central Sponsored Schemes (CSS). The revised norms will come into effect from next financial year (2021-22). The Department of Expenditure under the Ministry of Finance has sent the draft norms to the state finance department seeking its suggestions and observations. As per the proposed norms, the state government will have to designate a single nodal agency for implementation of a CSS and the fund will be transferred to a single nodal account in a public sector bank authorized to carry out the state government business. With an aim to avoid parking of public funds in different bank accounts, the Centre has decided to maintain the fund for a CSS account in one designated bank. Whenever a field level agency requires funds, it can draw the amounts from the nodal account.



"For the seamless management of funds, the main account and all subsidiary accounts will be maintained with the same bank. However, the state governments may choose different PSU banks for opening single nodal accounts of different CSS," the department of expenditure said in the letter. In the beginning of a financial year, the Centre will release maximum 25 per cent of the amount earmarked for a state for a CSS for the year in first phase. If any unspent balance of CSS (centre and state share) available with the state government, then the concern ministry will release the first instalment deducting the balance amount.

The second instalment will be released after utilization of 75 per cent of the sanctioned fund. However, this rule will not be applicable, if the Union Cabinet decided to release a specific quantum of fund under a scheme. Similarly, all implementing offices will have to refund balance amount of CSS to the state nodal account by April 1, 2021. The amount so refunded will be taken as the opening balance for that scheme and the concerned ministry will release the fund for the next fiscal accordingly. The state governments will have to release its share within 30 days from the release of the central share. Commenting on this, a senior officer of the finance department said, "We have forwarded the draft procedures to all departments for their comment on them. The draft procedure is a welcome step for proper maintenance of the public money. However, the single bank thing may create problem for our state as we don't have enough bank branches across the state."

UK flight suspension likely to be extended

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 29: India is likely to extend the suspension of passenger flights to and from the United Kingdom to check the spread of the new strain of coronavirus, Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said Tuesday. The ministry had last week suspended all flights between the two countries from December 23 to December 31 over the mutated variant of the virus which is more contagious. "I foresee a slight extension of temporary suspension of India-UK flights," the minister told a press conference here Tuesday. "In a day or two, we will find out if any additional steps need to be taken, or when we can start easing the current temporary suspension," he said. Earlier in the day, the Union Health Ministry said six persons

who returned to India from the United Kingdom have tested positive for the new strain of the virus. The presence of the new UK variant has already been reported by Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Italy, Sweden, and other countries. Meanwhile, Airports Authority of India Chairman Arvind Singh told the press conference the government is planning to hold the next round of privatisation of airports in the first half of 2021. "As far as the next round of airports' privatisation is concerned, we are at the final stages of obtaining government approvals. Once the approvals are received, I think we will start the process of bidding in the first quarter of 2021," he said. The AAI had in September recommended the Centre now privatise airports at Amritsar, Varanasi, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Raipur and Trichy.

MARKET WATCH			
INDEX		VARIATION	
SENSEX	47613.08	▲	259.33
NIFTY	13932.60	▲	59.40
DOLLAR	73.81	▼	₹0.14
EURO	89.83	▲	₹0.05
GOLD	₹50,015	▲	₹2
SILVER	₹68,153	▼	₹664

WEATHER			
BHUB		CTK	
MAX	30.2°C	29.4°C	Forecast Fog/mist in the morning
MIN	15.2°C	13.6°C	
Humidity	94%	90%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

AGENCIES

Chennai, Dec 29: Making a U-turn on his political plunge, superstar Rajinikanth Tuesday announced that he will not join politics and start a party as announced earlier, citing his frail health. He had first announced in 2017, after years of speculation, that he would indeed enter politics ahead of the 2021 Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu and field candidates from all 234 seats in the state. The veteran announced earlier this month that he will launch his political party in January and discontinue the specifics by December 31. The top star, promising his brand of spiritual politics, had then dra-

matically asserted that he was even ready to risk his life for the sake of people's welfare by making a foray into politics. Discharged from a Hyderabad hospital on Sunday after being treated for blood pressure fluctuations, the top actor expressed fears over those accompanying him in his possible political journey facing "mental and economic" problems in the due course over his possible health issues. After earlier acknowledging reports of him undergoing renal transplant in 2016, he recalled the hospitalisation for blood pressure fluctuation and said it could affect his kidney. He indicated that he did not want to sound chivalrous by saying he will join politics despite



I inform with great regret I am unable to come to politics by floating a political party. Only I know the pain behind making this announcement

RAJINIKANTH

his severe health concerns and that he did not want to "make a victim" of his supporters now. "Therefore, I inform with regret I am unable to come to politics by floating a political party. Only I know the pain behind making this announcement," the 70-year-old

actor said in a statement, days after declaring he will float his own outfit in January and face the polls. He, however said he will serve people in whatever ways he can without entering electoral politics. In the detailed statement, he recalled four of the crew members of

his current venture 'Annatthe' testing positive for coronavirus despite safety measures put in place and pointed out he had tested negative for the contagion. He had participated in the shoot, involving about 120 people, despite doctors advising him against it, he said adding, later he suffered from blood pressure fluctuations. "Clinically there should not be any fluctuation in my blood pressure as it would severely affect my alternate kidney and therefore I was under medical observation for three days," he said. "I see this as a warning given by God to me," he said and pointed out that the movie's producer, Kalanidhi Maran of Sun Pictures, had postponed the shoot. He said he cannot confine his

election campaign to media and social media and that it would not give the desired public 'resurgence' he had mentioned in March this year. In physical meetings, he would have to meet lakhs of people, he said, adding "I had to be hospitalised for three days after being in a group of 120 and now a new strain of coronavirus has also emerged." Though there may be a vaccine, he was, however, consuming "immuno suppressant", the actor said. Under these conditions amid the pandemic, if he suffers a health issue, those accompanying him on his political journey may have to face many issues and embarrassments besides "mental and economic" problems, he said.

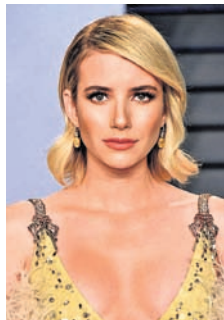


TATUM SET TO JOIN BULLOCK IN THE LOST CITY OF D

Hollywood star Channing Tatum is in final negotiations to star opposite Sandra Bullock in upcoming film, *The Lost City Of D*. In the film, to be directed by Adam and Aaron Nee, Bullock plays a romance novelist, while Tatum is set to act as a cover model, reports *variety.com*.

EMMA WELCOMES HER FIRST BABY WITH HEDLUND

Actress Emma Roberts has reportedly given birth to her first child, a baby boy. Emma and her partner Garrett Hedlund have reportedly named the child Rhodes. "Everyone is healthy," a source told *eonline.com*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Today, you may get to share your ideas and opinions with like-minded people. Ganesha says you may finally have a heart-to-heart chat with your beloved, and express your deep commitment. You may even talk of your long cherished dreams.

TAURUS

Logic may be your forte today, but in the game of life, sometimes the heart wins and sometimes the head. Your analytical skills will help you understand things better, in turn, making you wiser.

GEMINI

You will witness a marked improvement in your emotional quotient, says Ganesha. This change may either come through watching a film, listening to a song or just a simple insight. At the workplace, people will be lavishing praise on you for your excellent performance.

CANCER

You know how to make money, and you are even better in putting it to good use. Today, you will have your one eye on the developments in the stock market, and the other on brochures of tourism companies. Yes, you may plan to spend some money on leisure, entertainment and getting closer to your family.

LEO

It may be that the best daffodils bloom early in the morning, but good ideas can come any time of the day, says Ganesha. So spruce up your management skills, as you shall need them to help organise and cash in on the multitude of ideas that will bombard you today.

VIRGO

A la Sisyphus, you may realise the futility of your efforts and constant failure in achieving success. But do not despair, says Ganesha. Recharge your imagination, inquisitiveness and intelligence and focus on your long-term goals, says Ganesha.

LIBRA

Ganesha says today you will try to be adept in your favorite subject. Today you will be buying antique artistic things too. If there are any legal proceeding going on then the results will be in your favor. You shall be a success in everything that you touch today.

SCORPIO

There is a big black hole in your pocket, and it's high time you looked for remedies there. Loved ones will make use of your money as suntan cream - liberally and carelessly. You are most likely to burn the holes larger by spending lavishly, especially to impress a member of the opposite sex.

SAGITTARIUS

Get ready to rule hearts today. Your thoughtful insights into other people's psyche might just help you write a book on it! In the battleground of love, you will win over your sweetheart all over again, probably with a nice, slow dance coupled with a fantastic candlelit dinner.

CAPRICORN

Like you weren't already overworked, new responsibilities will keep you occupied throughout the day, says Ganesha. The excitement with which you work every day will weaken, and eventually die down by the end of the day.

AQUARIUS

You get a pat on the back due to your brilliant academic standing. People will admire your business acumen and may imitate your choices. But this doesn't mean you become haughty and unapproachable. Carry on the good work with a humble attitude, says Ganesha.

PISCES

Anticipation is all the fun. Sadly, this only alludes to your months-in-preparation travel plans that are most likely to be delayed today on one count or the other.

When Amitabh failed to imitate Michael Jackson

Mumbai: Iconic actor Amitabh Bachchan is looking back at the time when he tried to replicate late king of pop Michael Jackson in a film, and failed miserably. Big B posted a picture on Instagram taken on the set of Manmohan Desai's 1988 film Gangaa



Jamunaa Saraswathi, and shared trivia about the old film.

"When Manmohan Desai thought that I could replicate MJ in our film Gangaa Jamunaa Saraswathi. What a failure I was," Big B captioned the post.

In the film still, Big B is seen wearing a black leather jacket and leather pants, much in sync with Michael Jackson's signature style which was all about jacket, matching studded pants, a sequined shirt and matching gloves.

Directed by Manmohan Desai, the movie also starred Mithun Chakraborty, Jaya Prada, Meenakshi Sheshadri, Amrishi Puri, Nirupa Roy and Aruna Irani.



Maddy to take audience on 'magical journey'

Chennai: Actor R Madhavan, also known as Maddy, has unveiled the trailer of his next film *Maara*, which is set in a picturesque world.

Tweeting the trailer of the upcoming Tamil musical drama, Madhavan wrote: "A magical journey that fills UR heart with love, hope, N warmth. Trailer out now. Meet #MaaraOnPrime on Jan 8, 2021, @PrimeVideoIN."

The trailer showcases the life of Paaru (Shraddha Srinath), and how she finds a diary full of sketches and paintings in her new apartment. Awestruck by the paintings, Paaru heads out to find the artist, Maara (R Madhavan). Her journey traverses through a realm of art, music, drama, romance and hope.

"Maara extends from being a person to a world filled with pleasant people. The role of my character has been crafted with foremost importance given to the honesty in the relationships he shares with others. And that trait makes the person as somebody that the audience falls in love with instantly," said Madhavan.



Disha lives her 'Aquaman' fantasy

Mumbai: Actress Disha Patani lives out her 'Aquaman' fantasy in a new picture she posted on Instagram, where she looks stunning in a yellow bikini.

In the image, Disha stands on a surfboard in the middle of a water body holding a long wooden stick.

"Aquaman feels," she wrote alongside the image. Disha will next be seen in *Radhe*, co-starring Salman Khan and Randeep Hooda. The film is directed by Prabhudeva.

Disha also has the starring role in *KTina*, produced by Ekta Kapoor. The film also features Akshay Oberoi and Sunny Singh.

Rumours suggest the film could bear shades of Ekta's life. Disha will also be seen in *Malang 2*.

Recently, the *Baaghi* actress had revealed several secrets about her with fans on social media, and has also shared what she learnt during lockdown.

Doyle's The Hound of the Baskervilles parody comes to stage

THE PLAY IS A FUNNY AND INVENTIVE TAKE ON ONE OF THE CLASSICS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE WHICH HAS BEEN SHOT ON A SET, IN AN AUDITORIUM AND WITH A MULTI-CAMERA SET UP, SAYS FAMOUS ACTRESS AND ART DIRECTOR SHERNAZ PATEL

A whimsical parody of the murder mystery *The Hound Of The Baskervilles* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is all set to make its debut on the digital season of Aadyam, the theatre initiative by the Aditya Birla Group.

The play, directed by Aakash Khurana, will be screened via insider.in's online streaming service making it the second play of Aadyam's Digital Edition. Adapted by Steven Canny and John Nicholson, this is a comic take on the Sherlock Holmes story that turns a tale of terror into an engaging burlesque.

The cast features Vivek Madan as Sherlock Holmes, Arghya Lahiri as Dr Watson and Nadir Khan as Sir Charles Baskerville. Celebrating



Actors Nadir Khan and Arghya Lahiri enacting a scene

a cult novel from over a century ago, the artistes along with the entire production team have created a piece

that is thoroughly entertaining while delivering remarkable performances. The gloriously funny

parody of this famous story becomes special with greater reason - the three seasoned actors - Madan, Lahiri and Khan - play not 3 but a total of 15 characters.

In a display of pure virtuosity and prowess, the veteran actors take up multiple roles in the play also adding to the comic element of the show. At one instance, Vivek Madan is Sherlock, at another he is the guard, the scary lady, Mrs Barrymore, and several other characters. In similar fashion, Lahiri and Khan also essay multiple roles with brilliance.

According to Shernaz Patel, Aadyam's Artistic Director, "There is no better way to welcome 2021 than with laughter. Not the intellectual kind. The farcical, slap-

stick, gloriously silly kind. The kind you can enjoy with the full family, kids definitely included. This fun and inventive take on one of the classics of English literature has been shot the Aadyam way - on a set, in an auditorium, with a multi-camera set up. So if your New Year's resolution is to forget the blues and start afresh, then be sure not to miss this ridiculously funny spoof."

On his experience with creating a play for the screens, Director Aakash Khurana says, "It's certainly a very new experience but the actors and the entire crew have been extremely supportive through the making of this play."

The play will be staged Jan 9, 16 and 17 at 7 pm while the audience can get tickets on insider.in.

FUN post

PEANUTS



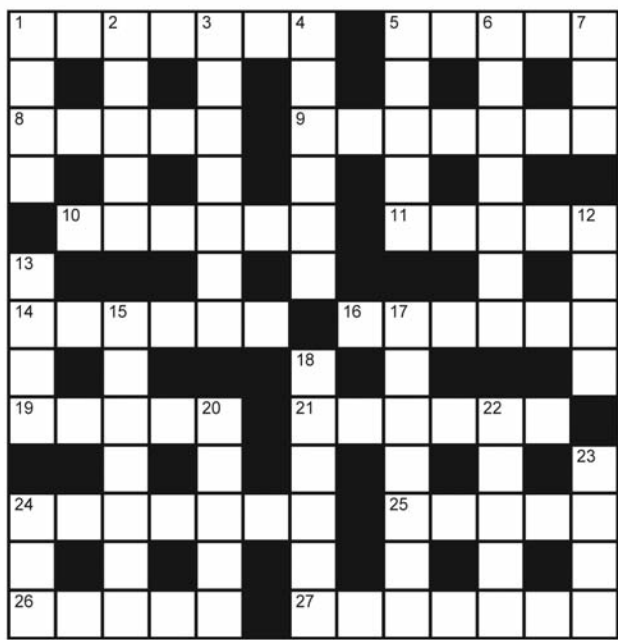
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



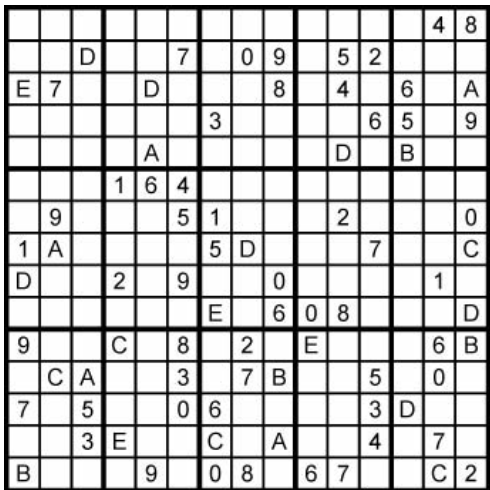
CROSSWORD



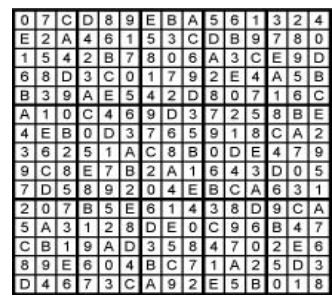
- Across
- 1 Colourful arc
 - 5 Explode
 - 8 Hotel employee
 - 9 Cricket hitter
 - 10 First-aid item
 - 11 Digress
 - 12 Be in charge
 - 16 Clean house (4,2)
 - 19 Have the throne
 - 21 Destroyed
 - 24 Unemotional
- Down
- 1 Four-star review
 - 2 Ice house
 - 3 Gambling
 - 4 Like geese feet
 - 5 Chomps
 - 6 Get hitched again
 - 7 Malaysian export
 - 12 Shril barks
 - 13 Fujairah bigwig
 - 15 Capital of Kenya
 - 17 Ridiculous
 - 18 Lark about
 - 20 Mother-of-pearl
 - 22 Outfit
 - 23 Passing remarks?
 - 24 Tree juice

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



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

Bodies of youth, girl found hanging

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sakhigopal, Dec 29: In a shocking incident, the bodies of a youth and a girl were found hanging from a tree at Jeepur village of Alagum panchayat under Satyabadi police limits in Puri district Tuesday.

The deceased were identified as Balabhadra Nayak, 24, and Narmada Nayak, 20, of Jeepur Pradhansahi. It is suspected that the duo was in a relationship. But, there is no confirmation whether the incident was a case of suicide or murder.

According to sources, a villager spotted the bodies near an orchard in the morning and informed the incident to the deceased's families.

On being informed, police reached the spot and recovered the bodies. Balabhadra's body was found hanging with a pair of trousers while Narmada's body was hanging with a dupatta. The hands of Balabhadra were found tied with a handkerchief while a bottle of pesticide was found from a nearby place, villagers said.

Family members of the deceased, meanwhile, revealed that they had no idea about the duo's relationship.

"We have sent the bodies to Puri district headquarters hospital for postmortem. The exact reasons for the duo's deaths can be ascertained after receiving the post-mortem reports," said Satyabadi IIC Debiprasad Patra.

Utkal varsity's focus on job-oriented courses

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: In line with the Vice-Chancellor's vision of adopting a student-centric approach and introducing job oriented curriculums, a students' employability enhancement programme was organised as the first step to achieve these goals.

Addressing the valedictory session of the programme, Tuesday, Utkal University's Vice-Chancellor Sabita Acharya, said, "Preparing our students for future job search and improving their sense of self-awareness are needed in the current scenario. Apart from such trainings, we are also working on collaborating with different academic institutions and organisations to introduce job-oriented courses like Bio Physics, Bio Chemistry, Cyber Security, Data Science, Artificial Intelligence, Clinical Psychiatry and several others for the development of our University."

Utkal University has stepped up its career guidance and placement services with the introduction of this type of training programmes.

CBI nabs 4 including 3 GST officials

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) sleuths Tuesday arrested four persons including three GST and central excise officials while receiving bribe from the staffers of a private technical institute at a prominent hotel here.

The accused were identified as Artabhanjan Kar, Pradip Kumar Acharya and NN Sahoo, all superintendents of GST & Central Excise department. The central agency

Most UK returnees from Capital city

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: The state government has claimed that a majority of the returnees from the United Kingdom (UK) to Odisha are from the Capital city.

The information was furnished by the State Public Health Director Niranjan Mishra. He interacted with the media Tuesday and tried to allay the fears of the common people from the new strain detected in UK and its overall impact on the Covid-19 scenario across the state.

The state government has asked the untraceable persons to report to the government about their return to the state and also get tested as soon as possible. This comes after several persons returned to the state from the UK in the wake of new strain of the virus came to the fore. Many of the contact numbers given by them are allegedly not working. The government also said that there was no need to panic about the new Covid strain.

"The team from the Bhubaneswar

The state govt has asked the untraceable persons to report to the government about their return to the state and get tested

Municipal Corporation (BMC) is tracing the untraced persons in the state capital who recently returned to the state from the UK. Most of the persons who returned from the UK hailed from Bhubaneswar. On the other side, the returnees from the UK have gone to 18 different districts of the state," Mishra said.

He also said that there are some phone numbers, given by them which are not getting connected or not working. "But we are trying our best to reach out to them. All those who have come to the state after December 23 must inform the government about the same. This is in the interest of the nation and they must act accordingly," he said.

He also added, "I request all of them to come forward and get tested. There is no need to be afraid. Not a single death has been reported nor there is any rise of death rate or hospitalisation in the countries where the new strain was detected. If there is no rise in death rate, there is no need to panic."

Nandankanan to be made world-class zoo: Sharma

61st foundation day of the zoological park marks inauguration of the rejuvenated exit path and a safari stand at the nature's paradise



Dignitaries at the 61st foundation of Nandankanan Zoological Park OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Barang, Dec 29: If things go well, Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) here will soon become a world-class zoo with the authorities planning to develop it with technical knowhow from the Auckland Zoo in New Zealand.

The revelation from the NZP came during the 61st foundation of the zoo. The event marked inauguration of the rejuvenated exit path and a safari stand of the nature's paradise.

It was in 1960 when Nandankanan began its journey with just 11 wild animals. Currently, the zoo hosts around 3,787 varieties of animals and birds in as many as 212 enclosures.

"NZP houses 13 species of mammals, 15 species of reptiles, 71 species of birds and 85 species of butterflies among others. Nandankanan will soon introduce more animals and birds. NZP authorities have prepared a 20-year mega development plan and submitted with the Central Zoo Authority for its approval," said a zoo source.

Attending the foundation day as chief guest, Forest and Environment Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha said that the zoo will soon have a children's train and a multi-level parking.

Additional Chief Secretary to Forest and Environment department, Mona Sharma, informed the

media that Nandankanan will be developed in accordance with the technology used at Auckland Zoo, a 16.35-hectare zoological garden, at Auckland in New Zealand.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Harisankar Upadhyaya welcomed the 'adopt an animal' initiative of Nandankanan.

"People from across the country, especially schoolchildren, adopted many species at NZP during the pandemic. This is definitely a noble gesture," Upadhyaya said.

According to Nandankanan director Shashi Paul, NZP will soon start animal exchange programmes with zoos in Mizoram, Jaipur, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Sources said that the cubs of tigress 'Sneha' were named as 'Laba' and 'Kusha' on the basis of suggestions received online. Annual magazine and calendar were also inaugurated on the occasion.

Jatni MLA Suresh Kumar Routray, Bhubaneswar (North) MLA Susant Kumar Rout, State Bank of India's Chief General Manager (Bhubaneswar Circle) Ruma Dey and key functionaries of Jindal Steel and Power Limited were present on the occasion.

4 ANMs suspended for visiting the Trinity

Puri: Puri CDMO Nilakantha Mishra Tuesday suspended four auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs) for visiting Srimandir December 27 in violation of the guidelines laid down by Puri administration. The ANMs were deployed near the shrine to conduct thermal screening of the devotees, sources said. "The ANMs visited Srimandir without producing any identity proof. Moreover, they did not have any tokens issued by the administration to visit the shrine," said a source.

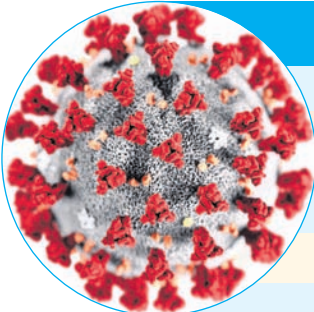
more number of homeless.

At present, the BMC has seven SUHs – Ghatikia, Baramunda Bus Terminal, Unit VI, Ashok Nagar, Chandrashekarpur, Bhimpur and Kharavel Nagar. While the Ashok Nagar SUH is exclusively built for the elderly, the Chandrashekarpur SUH caters to female refugees only. Meanwhile, Bhimpur SUH has been exclusively made as a de-addiction centre. While two agencies have been deployed to mobilize the urban homeless, the civic authority has also claimed to formulate a dedicated WhatsApp number for resolving issues within hours.

Furthermore, the H&UD department has revealed that a ULB-wise survey will soon be initiated to measure performances of the urban shelteries in rehabilitating the urban poor.

MURMU CALLS ON CM

CAG of India, Girish Chandra Murmu, calls on Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at the latter's residence in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday. They discussed issues related to Odisha



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	8,18,23,212	5,79,50,217	17,84,652
India	1,02,25,062	98,06,777	1,48,194
Odisha	3,29,001	3,24,775	1,868

Lawyer nabbed for raping son's friend

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: There is no let-up in sexual abuse of minor girls in the state despite the efforts by the police. In yet another shameful incident, Commissionerate Police arrested a lawyer for raping a 7-year-old girl under Lingaraj police limits here.

The accused identified as Rabi Dash of Ganjam district has been staying in Lingaraj police station area.

The victim resides with her family near the lawyer's residence. She used to visit the house of the accused to play with his minor son.

Police claimed that the lawyer sexually abused the girl when his wife was away Monday evening. He also allegedly threatened the girl not to reveal the matter before anyone.

However, the victim revealed the whole incident before her mother who enquired after spotting blood stains on her dress.

Subsequently her parents lodged



Police claimed that the lawyer sexually abused the minor girl when his wife was away Monday evening

a complaint with the police in this regard. Police swung into action and arrested the accused late Monday night.

He was produced before the court after medical examination Tuesday afternoon. The POCSO court later sent the accused to 14-day judicial custody.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Hike in incentives likely for marrying specially-abled

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: The Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) department is contemplating to increase the incentive for normal persons tying knot with differently-abled partners.

Earlier, there was a provision of Rs 50,000 incentive for marrying specially-abled, but now the state government is planning to increase it to Rs 2.50 lakh. The proposal has been sent to Finance department for approval. The SSEPD department claimed that this would help the vulnerable section of the society.

"The State Government has been pleased to approve the enhancement of incentive for marriage between persons with disabilities and other persons, irrespective of category of disability, from the existing quantum of 50,000/- to 2,50,000/- so as to bring to the mainstream the persons with disabilities in the society and enable them

to lead a normal and dignified life and also to encourage other persons to marry the persons with disability," the SSEPD department said in the proposal.

Earlier, there was an annual budget provision of Rs 2 crore with Rs 50,000 per couple. Now, it would require a budget of Rs 50 crore in five years for the same whereas Rs 10 crore would be required annually for implementation of the scheme. The department said that the plan has been made in order to mainstream persons with disabilities in the society and achieve inclusive development as mandated in United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and National Policy for the differently-abled.

The department has decided to implement the above scheme out of the State Sector scheme. The scheme is likely to be implemented at state level by Director, SSEPD and at the district levels by District Social Security Officers (DSSOs).

Reopen Ghatgaon temple: Niranjan

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) President Niranjan Patnaik Tuesday urged Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to consider opening the Maa Tarini temple in Keonjhar.

"I would like to draw your attention to the fact that there are many shrines in every corner of Odisha which are not only the seats of public faith and trust, but also the source of income for many families. One such ancient shrine is that of Maa Tarini at Ghatgaon in Keonjhar district," he said.

"Devotees from all corners of Odisha pay homage to Maa Tarini every day. As a result, the whole of Odisha is bound by the goddess," he wrote in his letter.

Patnaik expressed displeasure over the closure of the temple. "Devotees from different parts of Odisha are unable to send coconuts to the shrine. As a result, the day-to-day rituals of the temple are being affected and the shopkeepers and traders associated with the temple are incurring losses. My request is that immediate steps be taken to ensure that devotees visit the Ghatgaon Tarini Mandir like the Srimandir and Lingaraj temple," he said.

MeT predicts chilly weather as NYD nears

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 29: The prevailing cold-wave situation is likely to intensify further during the New Year's Day celebrations, director of Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre, HR Biswas, said here, Tuesday.

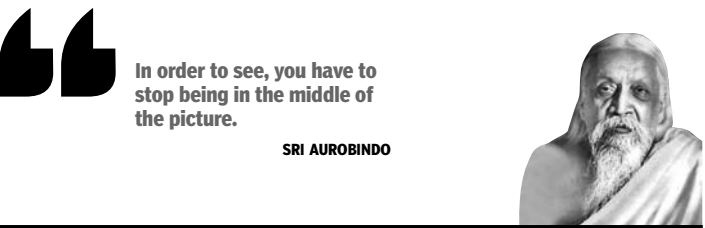
The cold-wave will intensify mainly in interior pockets of the state from the night of December 30 till December 2, he said. The minimum temperature is likely to fall by 3 to 4 degrees Celsius in interior areas and by 2 to 3 degrees



Celsius in coastal Odisha, Biswas said. Predicting intense cold-wave situation in next three days, the Met Centre has issued yellow warning for Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Deogarh, Angul, Boudh and Kandhamal. As per a bulletin issued by the Met Centre, the lowest tem-

perature of 5.5 degrees Celsius was recorded at Phulbani, while Daringbadi in Kandhamal district recorded 6.5 degrees.

The places recorded a minimum temperature of below 15 degrees Celsius include are: Balasore (12.6), Chandbali (13), Cuttack (13.6), Angul (12.6), Baripada (10), Jharsuguda (11.2), Keonjhar (11.2), Sambalpur (13.7), Sundargarh (10.5), Hirakud (13.2), Talcher (12.7), Bhawanipatna (11.2), Balangir (12.2), Koraput (10), Titlagarh (13), Malkangiri (12.5), Sonepur (13), Nayagarh (13.5), Boudh (10.5) and Rayagada (10).



Mission Possible

The State Government has, in a Cabinet meet held 28 Dec 2020, decided to reserve seats in Engineering and Medical courses for students passing out of government schools. This has been done to encourage government school students who are currently dropping out in large numbers. This is a very welcome step. However, improving government schools in Odisha is a long and arduous task. There is a belief that to build a tall and sturdy structure, one needs to dig deep foundation. The government education system in the state is in complete disarray. A lack of physical infrastructure like classrooms, labs, toilets and in many cases playgrounds may not be the only hindrance. The major issue that is noticeable is the non availability of qualified teachers in sufficient numbers. Most schools in rural areas of the state are pitifully understaffed. Many a school has a single teacher teaching multiple subjects in different grades. The involvement of the teaching staff can safely be assumed as nonexistent. Most of the schools that previously had private management were aimed at creating wealth for those who established the institutions. Today, in changed circumstances, government appointed managing committees comprising local residents have not helped improve the standard of education. Most of the members of these committees are eyeing the benefits as they are supposedly temporary members. To put all the problems related to school education into one nutshell, it must be accepted that primary and secondary education system in the state has been a miserable failure. While government can obviously be blamed for the present situation, it is also important to note that local residents and guardians also play a major role in the decline in the level of education in government schools.

It may be exciting to claim that there will be reservations in state run engineering and medical colleges for students passing out of these government schools. The ocean of students appearing for Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) may give an impression that the old rut of education is still alive and kicking. This impression may not be completely wrong. However, reality is that a lot of students are now opting for courses such as liberal arts and humanities. No doubt, there still are enough parents forcing their wards to go in for competitive exams to join government service. On the other hand, with prosperity has come a desire to do something independent. As opportunities for jobs are shrinking, the course of education too has to be modified. Students and especially girls need to be academically and emotionally equipped to face modern challenges of society and individual life. Although girls of middle and upper class families perform well in academics, the lower middle class and poor sections of society accept their daughters dropping out early in school. With this female workforce remaining uneducated and untrained, it will become impractical to expect balance in society.

Admittedly, the reach and spread of government primary and secondary schools cannot be matched by private schools. For most of rural India including Orissa, the only choice for schooling is government operated institutions. Therefore, the state government's intention of giving a fillip to the students from these schools may be considered a noble thought. But a thought is not enough. Government schools desperately need simultaneous focus on infrastructure, teaching staff as well as curriculum. This is a very difficult job but not unattainable. The example of the efforts of the Kejriwal government in Delhi is a point to ponder. In its first term, the Aam Aadmi Party government scrutinized and improved Delhi government schools as a core mission. The schools not only got improved infrastructure but also an overhaul of curriculum and teaching staff. Resultantly, many parents are now shifting their wards from private to government schools. Interestingly, this drive of the AAP benefitted Kejriwal politically also and it is said that the improvements in education led to the second time massive win of the party.

Orissa also needs focus to be laid on primary and secondary education. Baby steps need to be taken in revamping teachers' training and testing their abilities. Once the human resource improves in quality, other aspects will slowly fall in line. This requires a missionary zeal of few individuals. Finding these individuals to lead this movement is of prime importance.

WISDOM CORNER

- Hope in reality is the worst of all evils because it prolongs the torments of man. **FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE**
- Let come what comes, let go what goes. See what remains. **RAMANA MAHARSHI**
- You were born to win, but to be a winner, you must plan to win, prepare to win, and expect to win. **ZIG ZIGLAR**

WORDSWORTH

■ Whilom

This adjective is one of four — the others being erstwhile, quondam and umquihle — with the same meaning: formerly, in the past. All are unfamiliar and un-English in appearance, though whilom is not the least odd. None is common but whilom is rare enough today to the extent that current dictionaries mark it as archaic. This may not be a surprise to the writer of this letter, an expatriate professor of English and Irish Literature in a German university: As a whilom Irishman since 1961, I follow the news rather seriously. (The Irish Times, 18 May 2010) It was once part of the vocabulary of literate English speakers, such as JM Barrie, who wrote in The Little White Bird of 1903: "Whom did I see but the whilom nursery governess sitting on a chair in one of these gardens." He meant that that the lady had once been a governess, but was one no longer. Barrie wrote that at what proved to be the peak of the word's popularity. By the time of this next appearance, it had been rapidly falling away from favour for a couple of decades: His might have been, as his whilom playmate, the Hon. Galahad Threepwood, had made so abundantly clear in Chapters Four, Seven, Eleven, Eighteen, and Twenty-Four of his immortal work, a frivolous youth, but in his late fifties he was taking life extremely seriously. (Heavy Weather, by P G Wodehouse, 1933) The word dates to Old English, at a time when the language was heavily inflected — adjectives, nouns, and verbs taking different endings depending on the job they were doing. Whilom — then spelt hwilom — was the dative plural of hwil, the same word as our modern while. As English progressively lost its inflections, the word became a fossil, with its ending stuck to it permanently; at the same time the meaning shifted to mean something of a former time, a change that was complete by the fifteenth century.

LOL

Investment counsellor

An investment counsellor decided to go out on her own. She was shrewd and diligent, so business kept coming in, and pretty soon she realised that she needed an in-house counsel. The investment banker began to interview young lawyers. "As I'm sure you can understand," she started off with one of the first applicants, "in a business like this, our personal integrity must be beyond



question." She leaned forward. "Mr. Mayberry, are you an honest lawyer?" "Honest?" replied the job prospect. "Let me tell you something about honest. Why, I'm so honest that my father lent me \$15,000 for my education, and I paid back every penny the minute I tried my very first case." "Impressive. And what sort of case was that?" asked the investment counsellor. The lawyer squirmed in his seat and admitted, "He sued me for the money."

A POST-NATIONALIST BIDEN

FOCUS POLITICAL CULTURE



Kaushik Basu

WE HAVE REACHED A STAGE WHEN WE MUST LEARN TO REGARD OUR HUMAN IDENTITY AS THE MOST IMPORTANT

The first step in establishing an authoritarian culture in a country is to train its citizens to misread statistics. This is actually not hard to do; the rest is smooth sailing. Luckily for the United States, President Donald Trump will leave the White House in January before the curriculum could be completed.

To be sure, the Trump administration's handling of the statistics and science of the COVID-19 pandemic severely harmed people's health and the economy. But President-elect Joe Biden is expected to reverse many of Trump's follies and foibles and boost the economy — starting with helping those on the bottom rungs of the income ladder, who have been hit hardest by the pandemic.

But as this dismal year draws to a close, I want to dwell on a larger and harder task facing Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. With his narcissism and hyper-nationalism, Trump has not only polarised America, but also fueled right-wing authoritarianism around the world. And his supporters' identification with him has spawned an obsession with material wealth to the neglect of basic human decency, empathy, and the environment, along with a xenophobic disdain for the "other" that should have no place in our globalised world.

Most hyper-nationalist citizens do not realise that they are excellent fodder for greedy and unscrupulous politicians and financial leaders. I have argued elsewhere that many of the goals we strive for in life are not innate cravings, as mainstream economics assumes, but rather "created targets" like sporting success. Nationalism also belongs in this category.

With this in mind, there might even be a business opportunity in drumming up excitement about how your country's richest people are faring against other countries' richest people. Whip up the competition through commercials and pliant reporting, and hyper-na-



Most hyper-nationalist citizens do not realise that they are excellent fodder for greedy and unscrupulous politicians and financial leaders. I have argued elsewhere that many of the goals we strive for in life are not innate cravings, as mainstream economics assumes, but rather "created targets" like sporting success. Nationalism also belongs in this category

tionalist citizens will soon be waiting with bated breath to see if their country's richest person will top the global list.

Then, once this excitement reaches a certain level, start a fund to which all citizens can contribute in order to boost their national champion's chances. Whether or not they win the race, some of these very rich people will now be able to sit back and become even richer by the folly of their country's nationalists.

These propensities are already at work in subtle ways, and are creating global strains that will continue to cause considerable damage unless they are reversed. For the sake of America and the world, the Biden administration must take up this challenge. The aim

must be not just to make America genuinely great again (although four years of Trump have created ample scope for doing that). To put US presidents' global reach to good use and address some of the world's ills, Biden should adopt an internationalist mindset.

In ancient economies based on hunting and foraging, people's lives were defined by their tribal allegiances, and that worked fine. As our ancestors learned farming, and work became more specialised, they moved from those narrow loyalties to the broader categories of race and caste.

As economies of scale in production and manufacturing grew even greater and whole regions specialised in different kinds of economic activities, our allegiances

broadened and changed again, and nationality became our pivotal identity. We learned to take pride in our country in the way we once took pride in our tribe, race, or other marker of identity and belonging.

Today, we think of racial or caste supremacy as shameful. And I believe that a time will come in the not-too-distant future when we will feel as embarrassed about national pride as we now do about white supremacy and caste- or religion-based cliques that exclude and exploit others.

We have reached a stage when we must learn to regard our human identity as the most important. Fortunately, philosophers, a few good politicians, and even some religious leaders have taken the view that racial, religious, and even national supremacy is morally unacceptable.

Quite apart from the moral urgency of elevating this larger identity, we are approaching a point in our history when narrow nationalism will no longer be viable. Globalisation has advanced rapidly since the end of World War II, and the rise of digital technology over the last three or four decades has flattened the world even more. This economic globalisation is no longer compatible with the political balkanisation that hyper-nationalism underpins.

America's foreign-policy record is not blemish-free. But America can be a catalyst if it actively engages with the world once again — and not with a view only to its own interest this time. Biden and Harris should show vaulting ambition and set their sights high. They need to restore America's status in the world not for its own sake, but to make the world a better place.

The writer, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution.

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IN JEST THIS

Make resolutions that you'll actually keep



Melvin Durai

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS CAN INDEED TRANSFORM OUR LIVES, BUT USUALLY NOT AS DRAMATICALLY AS WE'D LIKE TO BELIEVE

I have always loved this time of the year, mostly because it allows me to dream of all the possibilities that the New Year will bring. This is a time to make New Year's resolutions and transform our lives. It's amazing what a difference a few resolutions can make. For example, a few years ago, I was determined to change the shape of my body, so I resolved to "exercise for 90 minutes a day" and "avoid all forms of junk food." After one month, I evaluated my progress and realised that I had spent 90 minutes a day eating junk food and avoided all forms of exercise. My body had indeed changed.

What had I done wrong? I had set my goals too high. This is a mistake I've made many times in my life: set high goals and set myself up for failure.

New Year's resolutions can indeed transform our lives, but usually not as dramatically as we'd like to believe. If there's one piece of advice I want everyone to heed, it's this: Don't aim high — aim low. Aiming high is how most people fail. Some people have never exercised in their entire lives, yet they somehow convince themselves that



they're going to run for an hour a day, beginning on Jan. 1. This usually results in a long line at the doctor's office on Jan. 2.

First patient: "Ouch, my foot!"

Second patient: "Ouch, my back!"

Third patient: "Ouch, my wallet!"

Trust me, you are better off running for 10 minutes a day consistently than aiming for something longer and wishing you had married a doctor. But here's what usually happens to people: they aren't happy with 10 minutes, so they try 20 minutes, then 30, then 40. Before long, their body resists this big change, perhaps through a muscle strain or illness, and they

go from 40 minutes of exercise all the way down to 40 seconds of excuses.

It's important to keep your goals realistic. Remember: small goals help you achieve big goals. If you're hoping to compete in the Hyderabad marathon, don't try to run 26 miles right away. Begin by running 26 laps around your coffee table. If you collapse halfway, don't worry. You can try again tomorrow.

Over a period of weeks, perhaps months, you can turn your small goals into bigger goals. Just say you want to write a 350-page novel in 2021. All you need to do is write one page a day, right? That's about

300 words per day, which is quite achievable. Eventually you may want to increase your daily output from 300 words to 500 words, but don't do it until you've written 300 words a day for at least 21 days. That's three weeks, which is apparently how long it takes for a habit to stick. After three weeks, the "new habit" is now the "new normal." And soon you'll have publishers telling you to slow down and give Chetan Bhagat a chance.

It's also important not to give up on your resolutions easily. If your resolution to run for 10 minutes a day crumbles, create another resolution right away to run for five minutes a day. If that fails, try three minutes a day. You will eventually be successful, even if you're running for just 30 seconds a day.

If that doesn't seem like a big achievement, just take a look around you. How many people do you see running for even 10 seconds when there isn't a dog chasing them?

The average person in big cities like Mumbai or New York runs for only 20 seconds a year — just long enough to take a photo for their annual "I ran the marathon" post on Facebook.

Social media honey traps

Sir, With evolving technology we are stumbling upon new faces online these days. Social media allows us to interact with people from different fields and different parts of the world. The best part is we become friends easily with new people. But relationships based on technological ties can sometimes put one in trouble if the person is not cautious about the way one conducts with others. The number of honey trap gangs has increased these days. The gangs target men and interestingly, women are enlisted to set the trap. The gangs extort money by threatening men after taking their nude pictures through video calls. In the beginning, the honey trappers send friend requests from profiles of women. Once their friend requests are accepted, they start sending messages to the victims' inboxes. They make friends through obscene conversations. The trust of the victims is gained by exposing nudity through video calls. Meanwhile, the victims also share their nude pictures. Once the victims fall into the trap, the women would vanish from the scene. Then men take over and demand large sums of money by threatening to send the images and videos to family members and friends. With their reputation at stake, the victims don't file police complaints. The police have warned that incidents of honey trap, targeting prominent people have been on the rise. Even if the culprits were tracked down, the chances of retrieving the money were bleak, they say. All honey trap cases exploit basic human weakness. In most cases, the video being played to arouse a victim is either a pre-recorded one or completely fake. There are enough online tools available to stream a fake webcam video. These criminals buy details of potential victims before trapping them. They also target people by hacking their email accounts and accessing personal details. Before it is too late every social media user must be careful about unknown friends and should report to the nearest cyber police station in case of urgency.

K Ravi, BHUBANESWAR

Jolt to BJP

Sir, Tamil Nadu's ruling AIADMK asserting that EK Palaniswami will be the chief ministerial face of the alliance for the 2021 Assembly elections while ruling out any chance of a coalition government must come as a jolt to the BJP. The AIADMK launched a veiled attack on the saffron party by alleging that a few national parties are trying to 'discredit' the 50-year rule by Dravidian parties. The BJP which is toying with the idea of a coalition government in Tamil Nadu would do well to revisit its strategy. **NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE**

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

No electricity for farmers in Angul

As over 200 lift irrigation points remain defunct due to short supply of electricity in Angul, farmers continue to suffer

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Dec 29: Defunct lift irrigation points have left the farming sector in mess in the industrial Angul district. Farmers continue to suffer while no efforts are being made by the concerned departments to set things right in the larger interests of the farmers, a report said.

According to the report, over 200 lift irrigation points are lying unutilized for lack of electricity supply.

Farmers in some areas have been struggling for water.

On the other hand, industrial units in the district allegedly suck water away, making water crunch for the agriculture sector. As a result, the farming sector in the district has taken a beating, the report said.

Angul district has many dams, rivers, underground water sources. Lift irrigation projects are being executed to feed water from these sources to the farmlands. The irrigation points aim to irrigate 22,146 hectares of land in the district.

There are 897 lift irrigation points, but 205 of them have been lying defunct due to the alleged negligence of the departments.

With help of 692 lift irrigation points, 16,488 hectares of farmlands are being irrigated.

It is alleged that lack of power infrastructure is the major reason



Due to non-cooperation of the Electricity department, lift irrigation points are going defunct. After privatisation of the electricity distribution, such problems have increased

SANTOSH MISHRA | EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, LIFT IRRIGATION DEPT

Many lift irrigation points were set up near creeks and rivers. Many have become defunct. As the district is industrially rich, the agriculture is being sidelined by the administration

MANAS KUMAR PAL | FARMER

for lift irrigation points becoming defunct. Due to disasters or technical reasons, supply has been disrupted or transformers have gone out of order. Farmers alleged that they have been exhausted from frequenting to the local lift irrigation offices to set things right, but no corrective measures have been taken. They said that when they com-

plain about it before the officials, the latter always plead for their helplessness.

There are two systems working in lift irrigation sector. Farmers can have deep bore wells on their own efforts with certain amount of deposits at the department.

BPL farmers will have to pay Rs10,000 while general farmers have



Sorry state

There are 897 lift irrigation points, but 205 of them have been lying defunct

The irrigation points aim to irrigate 22,146 hectares of land in the district

With only 692 lift irrigation points, 16,488 hectares of farmlands are being irrigated

to pay Rs20,000. A farmer can irrigate an acre of land while four farmers can form a pani panchayat and use water from any source.

In rainy season, farmers fail to get benefits of lift irrigation scheme for lack of electricity. Farmer Manas Kumar Pal (Angul) said, "Many lift irrigation points had been set up near creeks and rivers. Many have become defunct. As the district is industrially rich, the agriculture is being sidelined."

Another farmer Ramani Ranjan Pradhan of Kishorenagar said as the faulty management of the Lift Irrigation department is not set right, farmers are not getting subsidies. Ranjit Pradhan of Chendipada alleged that after pani panchayat, lift irrigation points have been left in a mess and ultimately farmers have to suffer.

Farmer critical in jumbo attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, Dec 29: Two days after two persons were killed in an elephant attack in Galeri forest range under Ghumusar north forest division in Ganjam district, another farmer was rendered critical in jumbo attack in Jagannathprasad forest range, Tuesday.

The injured farmer was identified as Surendra Nayak of Hariipur village. He has been admitted in Bhanjanagar hospital from where he will be shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital for advanced treatment, Wednesday. The incident has sparked panic in the area as jumbo menace continues unabated with pachyderms camping in the area with their herd members. Forest officials advised people not to venture into the area where presence of elephants has been sighted.

The incident occurred when he had lit a bonfire near his farmland and guarding his crops. A tusker suddenly approached him and threw him to a distance with its tusk.

ICDS goes for a toss in Kalahandi district

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, Dec 29: Given the way Anganwadi centres are functioning in parts of Kalahandi district, it is apparent that the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) has gone for a toss, a report said.

According to the report, most of the Anganwadi centres are either run in rented houses, under trees or with temporary arrangements, even though the government is providing a lot of funds for infrastructural development.

Anganwadi centres play a crucial role in pre-school education, nutrition, vaccination of kids and even healthcare, nutrition and vaccination of expectant and post delivery women.

There are 2,268 Anganwadi and mini Anganwadi centres in the district.

Of them, about 1,000 AWCs do not have houses of their own.

In remote areas under T. Rampur, Lanjigarh, and M Rampur, most of the AWCs are functioning from rented houses, under trees and verandahs of schools.

It was learnt that the district

administration has provided funds for construction of buildings of many Anganwadi centres. But due to apathy of the Women and Child Development department, build-ings of these centres have remained incomplete over years.

A case in point is the Juanga Anganwadi centre in Karlapata panchayat. The Rural Development department provided Rs5 lakh for its building five years ago.

The work of the building has not progressed beyond the plinth level foundation.

As the AWC has no building of its own, it is run on the verandah of a person's house in the same village.

Locals lamented on the sorry state of the AWCs while the department concerned has failed to carry forward the work.

They suspected that the AWC building might have been shown as complete in official records while funds might have been misappropriated.

The villagers have demanded an investigation into the utilization of the funds.

Same is that condition of scores of other AWCs in the district.



Representative pic

Goods train derails in Koraput dist

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Dec 29: A major tragedy was averted on the railway line between Maliguda and Jarti rail-way stations in Koraput district as 13 wagons of a goods train derailed in the early hours of Tuesday.

Sources said the train was heading towards Visakhapatnam from Kirandul. It had left Maliguda railway station at 4.30 am.

The derailment could have resulted in a major mishap but thankfully no injury was reported in the accident. But the railway track got damaged in the mishap, affecting traffic on the route.

Kirandul-Visakhapatnam Express was learnt to have returned to Koraput as it could not proceed on the route due to the derailment.



As part of Fit India programme, BSF Jawans of 76 Battalion take part in a walkathon at MV-79 village in Malkangiri Tuesday

OP PHOTO

THEY LEFT A NEEDLE IN HER, NOW SHE DEALS WITH PAIN EVERYDAY

LATA WAS ADMITTED TO A MEDICAL FACILITY TO DELIVER HER BABY BUT LITTLE DID SHE KNOW POST THAT SHE WILL BE DEALING WITH EXCRUCIATING PAIN DAILY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Dec 29: A woman has been going through excruciating pain for the last five days due to alleged negligence of a staff nurse in the Khandapada health centre in this district.

The woman is identified as Lata Bahuka, wife of Prabhat Bahuka, of Gochhabari village under Khandapada block. The staff nurse is alleged to have left a needle in her womb while performing a stitch after her delivery in the hospital, December 25, a report said. The negligence of the nurse in performing the stitch has sparked resentment among the family members and residents in the area. She has become bed-ridden even though she had a normal delivery.



Lata Bahuka

The woman from an economically poor background was admitted to the hospital December 25. There she delivered a baby girl under the supervision of a doctor. However, a staff nurse allegedly left a needle while performing a

Proper steps will be taken to get her treated at Cuttack or Bhubaneswar. There is no problem

SHAKTI MISHRA | CDMO, NAYAGARH

stitch in her womb. She was discharged from the hospital after her delivery but experienced pain after her arrival at home. Family members rushed her to the hospital from where she was shifted to the district headquarters hospital after the doctors tried to take out the needle but in vain. Doctors at the district headquarters hospital referred her to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. But, they also proved unsuccessful in taking out the needle.

Her husband Prabhat with little money in hand finds it difficult to take his wife to Cuttack with her health condition remaining critical. He has alleged that the doctors have opened the stitch a number of times to trace the needle but in vain. Moreover, they are yet to issue him discharge certificate referring her to Cuttack. He has become apprehensive of his wife's health with money and time running out of hand.

A doctor at the Khandapada hospital said that steps will be taken after holding consultations with the chief district medical officer. When contacted, CDMO Dr Shakti Mishra said proper steps will be taken to get her treated at Cuttack or Bhubaneswar and ruled out any problem.

Eco tourism boost for Talsari-Udaipur beach

50 ACRES OF FOREST LAND TO BE HANDED OVER TO REVENUE DEPT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhograi, Dec 29: Eco tourism is going to get a boost in Bhograi area of Balasore. About 50 acres of forest land will be handed over to the Revenue department so that various infrastructures will be developed along Talsai-Udaipur beach.

Collector K Sudarshan Chakraborty visited Talsari-Udaipur beach Tuesday and held a review meeting with members of Belabhoomi Unnayan Parishad, officials of Irrigation and Drainage, Energy and Rural Development departments at OTDSC here.

The meeting was presided over by Bhograi MLA Ananta Das. He expressed his displeasure over tardy pace of development work of the tourist spot.



File photo

He observed that Digha beach in West Bengal, which is close to Talsari-Udaipur beach, has become a major tourist hub while this beach's development has lagged behind.

He pressed for a special package for its development.

The MLA asked the Forest depart-

ment to hand over 50 acres of land to the Revenue department as soon as possible.

It was learnt that 506 high mast light posts will be set up at Talsari-Udaipur beach, Sahabajipur and Chandaneswar-Subarnadweep main road.

At the meeting, the officials discussed on a deer park at Bichitrapur eco tourism centre, cottages and construction of a foot-fly bridge from Talsari to Subarnadweep.

The MLA revealed that the state government has sanctioned Rs3.05 crore for restoration of famous Chandaneswar temple.

The Collector and the MLA laid stress on a demand of Bajitpur and Huguji sarpanchs for appointment of eight staff for sanitation of beaches.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. ST-OT-TELE-ZONAL-HQ-205, Dated : 18.12.2020
Name of Work : TELECOM ZONAL SERVICES (ATTENDING BREAK DOWN, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRING OF TELECOM SERVICES BY OUTSOURCING AGENCY) FOR EAST COAST RAILWAY HEAD QUARTER'S EXCHANGES AT RAIL SADAN, RAIL VIHAR & MAICHESWAR AND ITS OUTDOOR SUBSCRIBERS IN THE SECTION OF SSET/HEADQUARTERS/ BHUBANESWAR UNDER SSTE/TELE/HEADQUARTERS/ BHUBANESWAR OF EAST COAST RAILWAY FOR A PERIOD OF TWELVE MONTHS.
Tender Value : ₹ 1,10,16,010.25, EMD: ₹ 2,05,100/-, Cost of tender document: ₹ 5,900/- (including 18% GST).
Bidding start date : 28.12.2020, **Tender closing date & time :** at 1100 hrs. of 11.01.2021.
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: <http://www.irops.gov.in>
Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/issuance issued for this tender.
Divisional Railway Manager (Signal & Telecom), PR-450/L/20-21, Khurda Road

ZILLA SWASTHYA SAMITI, KEONJHAR
CHIEF DISTRICT MEDICAL & PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER , KEONJHAR
HEALTH OFFICER , KEONJHAR
(DISTRICT PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT UNIT, NHM)
Advt No.: 4709 Date:- 28/12/2020
TENDER CALL NOTICE
No. E-484:- Sealed tenders are invited from the travel agencies/individuals for **hiring of vehicles on monthly basis** for DPMU, Keonjhar, O/o- CDM & PHO, Keonjhar. Details regarding the terms and conditions of tender may be downloaded from the District NIC website i.e. www.kendujhar.nic.in up to dt.18/01/2021. The tender document should reach to the office of the undersigned by **18/01/2021 till 5.30 P.M.** through Regd. Post/Speed Post/ Courier Service only along with all the relevant documents and E.M.D. The tenders will be opened on dated **19/01/2021 at 11.00 A.M. at DTU, Keonjhar** in presence of the bidders/ their authorized representatives.
The undersigned has reserves the right to reject or cancel any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
Sd./- Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, Keonjhar
OIPR-10033/11/0032/2021

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION, PURI, ODISHA
Phone: 06752-223447/e-Mail: eephuri@gmail.com
No. C-265
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)
Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. 56 of 2020-21 Dated 28.12.2020
1. Name of the Work:- Laying of gravity sewer pipeline & civil works.
2. Estimated Cost:- **Rs.23.27 lakhs**
3. Period of Completion:- **4 (Four) Months**
4. Date and time of availability of bid documents in the portal:- **06.01.2021 (11.00 A.M.) to 15.01.2021 (5.00 P.M.)**
5. Last Date/Time for receipt of bids in the Portal:- **5.00 P.M. of 15.01.2021**
6. Date and time of opening of bids:- **12.30 P.M. of 18.01.2021**
7. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid:- **Executive Engineer, P.H. Division, Puri**
Phone: 06752-223447, Fax: 06752-223447
E-Mail: eephuri@gmail.com
8. The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only.
Sd./- 28.12.20
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (P.H., PURI)
OIPR-1301/11/0006/2021

The year 2020 was marked by the might of microbial forces, but it was nothing less than a spectacle in terms of exercise of power by elected representatives and mass leaders. Be it the US presidential elections or the application of force to contain dissent in India, Hong Kong and elsewhere, we saw new faces entering the power corridors and the incumbents exercising their authority. For Odisha too, it was a Herculean task to make the citizens follow Covid norms, and the most difficult of all— conducting the Rath Yatra amid the protocols. **Orissa POST** takes a look at the 'Most Powerful Personalities of the year'....



NAVEEN PATNAIK
CHIEF MINISTER



VK PANDIAN
5T SECRETARY



DHARMENDRA PRADHAN
UNION CABINET MINISTER FOR PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS AND STEEL



PRANAB PRAKASH DAS
BJD GEN SECY (ORGANISATION)



SURESH CHANDRA MOHAPATRA
CHIEF SECRETARY DESIGNATE



KRISHAN KUMAR
SITA CHIEF



ARUN BOTHRA
NEWLY APPOINTED ADGP



MANAS MANGARAJ
BJD GENERAL SECRETARY (MEDIA ADVISOR)



SUDHANSHU SARANGI
POLICE COMMISSIONER



PRAMOD KUMAR MISHRA
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO PM



AJIT DOVAL
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR



YOGI ADITYANATH
CHIEF MINISTER, UTTAR PRADESH



AMIT SHAH
UNION HOME MINISTER



UDDHAV THACKERAY
CHIEF MINISTER, MAHARASHTRA



JAGAT PRAKASH NADDA
PRESIDENT, BJP



MUKESH AMBANI
RIL, CHAIRMAN & MD



MAMATA BANERJEE
CHIEF MINISTER, WEST BENGAL



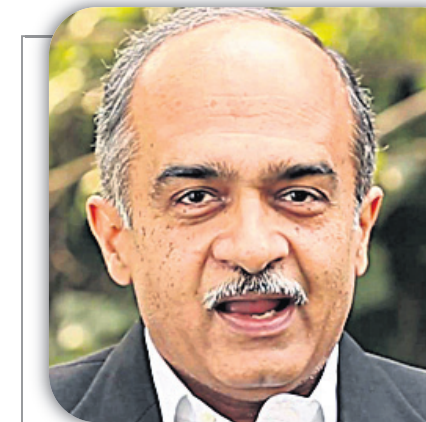
JUSTICE SHARAD ARVIND BOBDE
CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA



RAHUL GANDHI
CONGRESS LEADER



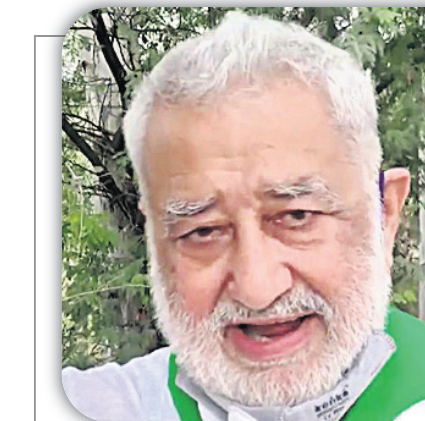
GAUTAM ADANI
ADANI GROUP, FOUNDER-CHAIRMAN



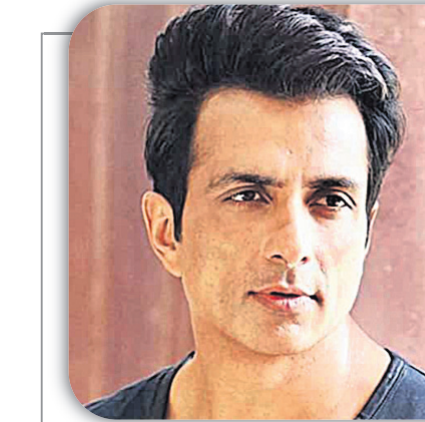
PRASHANT BHUSHAN
SENIOR LAWYER



MOHAN BHAGWAT
RSS CHIEF



DARSHAN PAL
PRESIDENT, KRANTIKARI KISAN UNION



SONU SOOD
ACTOR



NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER



JOE BIDEN
PRESIDENT-ELECT, USA



XI JINPING
PRESIDENT, CHINA



KAMALA HARRIS
VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT, USA



DONALD J. TRUMP
PRESIDENT, USA



VLADIMIR PUTIN
PRESIDENT, RUSSIA



BORIS JOHNSON
PRIME MINISTER, UNITED KINGDOM



JOSHUA WONG CHI-FUNG
OPPOSITION LEADER, HONG KONG



EMMANUEL MACRON
PRESIDENT, FRANCE



JEFF BEZOS
CEO, AMAZON



RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN
PRESIDENT, TURKEY



VIKTOR ORBÁN
PRIME MINISTER, HUNGARY



JUSTIN TRUDEAU
PRIME MINISTER, CANADA



ELON MUSK
FOUNDER, CEO AND CTO, SPACEX



HASSAN ROUHANI
PRESIDENT, IRAN



JACK DORSEY
CEO, TWITTER

Cops resort to lathi-charge during farmers’ showdown

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, Dec 29: Hundreds of farmers reached Patna Tuesday and assembled near the Gandhi Maidan before they took out a mega march to the Bihar Raj Bhawan.

District administration had placed barricades at Gandhi Maidan to prevent those already camping there for the last few days. Now with the added reinforcement more barricades were set up to block the farmers march from the historic ground.

However, the farmers already huge in numbers, quickly gained strength with every passing minute and broke the barricades between Gandhi Maidan and Dak Banglow Chowk.

Police had to resort to baton-charge the farmers on Frazer Road in a bid to disperse them from the area. The tussle between farmers and police has been underway at several places apart from the city’s famous Dak Banglow Chowk.

The Patna administration has deployed a large number of police personnel at every road connecting Gandhi Maidan to Raj Bhawan, including the Bailey road to prevent their march.

Farmers under the umbrella of Kisan MahaSabha came out on streets to protest against three



Police personnel baton-charge on All India Kisan Khet Mazdoor Sangathan (AIKKMS) members during their protest march towards Raj Bhawan against the new farm laws, in Patna, Tuesday.

contentious farm laws passed in Parliament by the Narendra Modi government in September.

This is the first ever major agitation started by a non-political unit apart from some supporters of left parties in Bihar. Earlier, RJD, JAP and Congress have taken out marches in solidarity with the farmers.

“We are only demanding a roll back of the three farm laws passed

in Parliament. The NDA government is trying to impose these legislation on farmers. We will not allow that to happen. We will not withdraw the agitation until the Centre rolls back these three laws,” said one of the farmers Sudhakar Mahto, who came from Darbhanga last night.

“We are standing by the farmers agitating at the borders of Delhi. Centre wants to grab lands through

We are standing by the farmers agitating at the borders of Delhi. Centre wants to grab lands through these farm laws to benefit corporates

RAMESH YADAV | FARMER

these farm laws to benefit corporates. We have no faith on the Centre’s promises. The intention of the Modi government is not right. They want monopoly in the agriculture sector as well after privatising the Indian Railways, telecom sector, aviation sector and others. We will not let that happen,” Ramesh Yadav, a farmer from Nalanda district said.

“It is not a fight for the rights of farmers only but it is a fight for every poor person, salaried class, middle class, small traders and businessmen. If the NDA government is successful in this, we will face huge consequences in terms of price hike of every commodity and it will subsequently affect other sectors. For example, we are buying wheat at the rate of ₹35 per kg, which will then be available at ₹80 to 100 per kg and the price will be controlled by corporates,” said Rahul Kumar, another protester of Sampatchak in Patna district.

Fluoride in water cripples many in Agra

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra, Dec 29: Amid all talks of development in India in the 21st century, hundreds of residents of Pachgai Patti village – just a few kilometres from the iconic 17th century monument of love, Taj Mahal – are still forced to lead the lives of cripples in the absence of safe potable drinking water.

These villagers move around with crooked limbs or with other physical deformities due to the ill-effects of excess fluoride in underground water they are forced to consume and use it for other routine chores as they have no other alternative.

The village, situated in Agra district, is said to have the dubious distinction of reporting maximum number of disabled persons from the area. More than seven decades after Independence, this village with a population of more than a 1,000 faces shortage of potable drinking water.

For the past several days now, the villagers have been on a relay fast to demand piped Ganga Jal, which is planned to be supplied to the neighbouring urban clusters on the Shamshabad Road.

Advocate Girish Chandra Sharma, who is leading the agitators, told IANS that the underground water in the entire area is affected by fluoride and thus highly



Picture used for representation

Imagine, a whole village full of physically challenged persons with no hope or light at the end of the tunnel

GIRISH CHANDRA SHARMA | ADVOCATE

toxic for human consumption.

“A large number of people have fallen victims to the malady, leading to their physical deformities. Many cannot even walk straight,” he pointed out.

“The Prime Minister had launched a ₹4.18 crore water project for the area January 9, 2019, but we do not want underground water through handpumps or overhead water tanks, as such water is unfit for human consumption. The Ganga Jal pipeline should be extended to our villages, which is not too far from here.”

Sharma pointed out that high fluoride content in groundwater had reduced its residents to “walking skeletons.”

Efforts by various government agencies to treat water have run aground for want of proper monitoring and follow-up action.

“Imagine, a whole village full of

physically challenged persons with no hope or light at the end of the tunnel,” he quipped.

Last winter, 50-year-old Than Singh, a daily wage, died in agony due to his physical deformities. He had not stirred out of his modest home since 2012, except for a few visits to the doctors. His last day was spent on a cot, as his wife fed him to keep the flame of life flickering.

Than Singh had told IANS a few months before his demise: “Someday, I will hang myself or throw myself before an oncoming truck to end the agony of my existence.” He showed a bagfull of medicines which he was forced to consume to remain alive.

Like Than Singh, there are scores of other villagers who cannot move around due to their physical disabilities. Women in their 30s look older than their grandmothers. A few move around with hunched backs.

Nitish plays another gamble by appointing new JD-U chief

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, Dec 29: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar’s decision to hand over the reins of Janata Dal-United to his most trusted aide Ram Chandra Prasad Singh to focus on Bihar only and not the party’s overall organisation is his new political gamble, experts said.

By appointing Singh as JD-U national president, Nitish has sent out a clear message to other regional parties that his party does not promote dynastic or family rule politics.

JD-U spokesman Abhishek Jha asserted that with RCP Singh spearheading the party, it would hopefully move forward. “Nitish Kumar understands the party’s strengths during this transition phase, which is why he has entrusted the party’s responsibility



to an experienced political leader,” he added.

BJP spokesperson and former party MLA Manoj Sharma said that Singh’s appointment was an internal matter of the JD-U, adding

that even the saffron party had always been against promoting family and dynastic rule from the very start. RCP Singh has been considered a close confidant of Nitish Kumar from the start. For

the last few days, questions were raised about who the ‘number two’ in the party after Nitish Kumar was.

With Singh’s appointment, Nitish has given an answer -- Singh is in the forefront of his most trusted leaders.

Political analyst Kanhaiya Bhelari said that it is usually seen that a party assigns the top post to a leader who is seen as a skilled party organiser. Singh has not only been a trustworthy colleague of Nitish Kumar, but has also played a key role in strengthening

Nitish Kumar understands the party’s strengths during this transition phase, which is why he has entrusted the party’s responsibility to an experienced political leader

ABHISHEK JHA | JD-U SPOKESMAN

the JD-U’s overall organisational structure, he added.

It is also said that Nitish -- a master of ‘social engineering’ in politics -- has played the caste card well by handing over his party’s command to a person from his own Kurmi community.

Bhelari said that all leaders nowadays play caste, ethnic and regional cards and Nitish is no exception.

RCP Singh, a former IAS officer, is also said to be an expert in stitching alliances with other political parties. It is said that Nitish Kumar interacted earlier for maintaining alliance with BJP leaders, but now will pass on the responsibility to Singh and himself take charge of Bihar.

Kanpur post office issues stamps featuring gangsters



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kanpur, Dec 29: The Kanpur postal department has ordered an inquiry after stamps featuring underworld don Chhota Rajan and slain gangster Munna Bajrangji were issued by the main post office in the city, officials said Tuesday.

Twelve stamps each of Rajan and Bajrangji were printed under the ‘My Stamp’ scheme, which was launched by the department a few years back, an official added.

Calling it was a lapse by the person manning the ‘My Stamp’ desk, Postmaster General VK Varma said, “A probe has been launched.”

It has been found that the request for these stamps having face value of ₹5 was made anonymously by a person who paid ₹600 for them, he added.

Without asking for identification papers, which is essential, the person manning the ‘My Stamp’

desk released 12 stamps each with the pictures, Varma said.

Philately department in-charge Rajneesh Kumar, who was prima facie found guilty, has been placed under suspension, he said.

“We have also issued show-cause notices to some other employees in this regard,” the postmaster general said. “Efforts are on to zero in on the person who got the photographs of the criminals printed under the ‘My stamp’ scheme,” he added.

It has been decided to take strict measures in the future to ensure such errors are not repeated, Varma said. Under the ‘My Stamp’ scheme, anyone paying ₹300 can get stamps with their photos or that of their family members printed and released.

Rajan is currently in a Mumbai prison, and Bajrangji was murdered in UP’s Baghpat prison in 2018.

STF probe into ‘unverified’ teachers in Uttar Pradesh

The department intensified the digitisation process after a ‘fake’ teacher scam was reported in June this year, in which a full-time science teacher named Anamika Shukla was found working at 25 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas simultaneously for 13 months

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 29: The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has decided to order a Special Task Force (STF) probe into the ‘unverified’ teachers issue if they do not verify their service books by January 4.

At least 16,838 teachers in the state have not verified their service books by the December 17 deadline on the ‘Manav Sampada’ website which is an online database of teachers, created for the digitisation of records.

The deadline has now been extended to January 4.

According to an official spokesman, the government will ask the STF to probe the cases of teachers who have not verified their service books.

Over 6.1 lakh teachers, appointed in the basic education department, were asked to verify their service books. The process was followed by around 5.9 lakh teachers, which is around 97.2 per cent of the total verifications sought by the department. During this exercise, teachers were required to make corrections, if any, in a Google sheet. They also had to upload their educational documents - from high school to degree level.

The education department has intensified the digitisation process after a ‘fake’ teacher scam was reported in June this year, in which a full-time science teacher named Anamika Shukla was found working at 25 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV) simultaneously for 13 months and taking home approximately ₹1 crore as salary.

A STF probe was then initiated to identify fake teachers in the state and more than 350 primary teachers working on the credentials of other teachers, were arrested.

Purvanchal as centre of religious, cultural tourism

The region in Uttar Pradesh is culturally rich, but it has been beset with lack of basic facilities, proper rural education and employment since the beginning



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 29: The Purvanchal area in Uttar Pradesh will now be developed as a centre of religious, spiritual and cultural tourism, government sources said Tuesday.

According to a government spokesman, an action plan has been drawn up to develop the possibilities of tourism in Purvanchal, which is ideally an area spanning the eastern end of Uttar Pradesh in

continuity with the western part of Bihar. The area will be the focal point of Buddhist tourism as almost 65 per cent of the tourists coming to Uttar Pradesh prefer to visit Kushinagar and Varanasi.

In a recent presentation made before Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, it was suggested that places of Buddhist interest be connected to other tourist places in Purvanchal.

Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord

Ram, and Gorakhpur, the seat of Guru Gorakhnath, are also a big draw for both domestic and international tourists.

It was also said that small fairs and cultural events of Purvanchal, on the lines of Deepotsav and Dev Deepawali, be held to promote tourism. Purvanchal is a very culturally rich region, but it has been beset with lack of basic facilities, proper rural education and employment since the beginning.

The government spokesman said that the Purvanchal Expressway on the one hand, and the development of tourism on the other will end unemployment and the basic problems of the area.

The presentation suggested improvement of the road, rail and air connectivity in the area, promotion of local festivals like ‘Saawan Mela’, setting up of film shooting destinations in Mirzapur and Sonbhadra and also re-branding of the ‘Magh Mela’ in Prayagraj.

4 held for siphoning off ₹6L from Ram Mandir Trust’s bank account

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ayodhya, Dec 29: Four people were arrested Tuesday for allegedly siphoning off ₹6 lakh from the Ram Mandir Trust’s bank account in September, police said.

The amount was transferred to Punjab National Bank in Maharashtra from State Bank of India here using two cloned cheques

worth ₹2.5 lakh and 3.5 lakh with forged signatures of the trustees, Ayodhya DIG Deepak Kumar said.

This scam was busted after a third cloned cheque of ₹9.86 lakh was intercepted at an SBI clearing house in Lucknow. This cheque was presented in Bank of Baroda.

A senior bank official contacted Trust secretary Champat Rai to verify whether he had signed on the

high-value cheque. The transaction was stopped in the nick of time when Rai confirmed he did not approve of any withdrawals and the account was seized. An FIR was lodged at the Ayodhya Kotwali in this case on September 10. The Ayodhya police Tuesday arrested four accused, the residents of Bombay and Thane, however, the mastermind behind the fraud is still absconding.





The government brought farms laws, but the farmers are out on the roads protesting in chilly winter. If the laws are not accepted by the farmers, can they be beneficial to them. If you bring laws which are not acceptable to people, you are disrespecting the Constitution of the country

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

DELHI SHIVERS

Cold wave conditions intensified in north India on Tuesday with fresh snowfall reported from hill areas and Delhi recording a minimum temperature of 3.6 degrees Celsius



of the day quote

The BJP government has crossed all limits of injustice and atrocities. Whoever raises their voice, the government muzzles it. Democracy will be safe only when this government goes



AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY PRESIDENT

Delhi has witnessed three waves of coronavirus and the third wave was an intense one when cases went up to 8,500 (fresh cases reported daily) but we managed to control it. We are fully prepared to deal with it



ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

We want the farmers to stay in touch with their family. We have identified a few spots to install the WiFi hotspots. This is an initiative of Arvind Kejriwal and the party



RAGHAV CHADHA | AAP LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Gujarat MP quits BJP

Bharuch: Gujarat BJP MP and former Union minister Mansukh Vasava Tuesday quit the party and said he would also resign from Lok Sabha in the budget session of Parliament. In his resignation letter, Vasava (63) did not specify any reason for quitting the party, but sources said the six-term MP, who is vocal on tribal issues, has been critical of BJP's policies after he was dropped as Union minister in 2016.

Ex-Himachal CM's wife dies

Shimla: Two-time Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister and BJP veteran Shanta Kumar's wife Santosh Shailja, 83, died of a heart attack in a hospital early Tuesday. She was earlier diagnosed with coronavirus, doctors said. She was undergoing treatment along with her husband at Dr Rajendra Prasad Government Medical College in Tanda in Kangra district.

Suvendu Adhikari holds roadshow

Kolkata: BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari Tuesday led a grand roadshow in East Midnapore's Nandigram, and claimed that people of his old Assembly constituency supported his decision to leave the Trinamool Congress and join the BJP. People thronged to greet Adhikari by showering him with flower petals and flags, as he began his roadshow from Tengua to Nandigram.

Sanjay Raut's wife skips ED summons

Mumbai: In an anti-climax of sorts, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut's wife Varsha Raut Tuesday skipped the summons issued to her by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for appearance and questioning and sought more time. "We have sought four more days. We have full respect for the central agencies," Raut, who is Executive Editor of the Saamana Group of publications, told media persons.

FARMERS' STIR

Govt finalises stance ahead of talks



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 29: A day before the next round of talks between the Centre and the farmers protesting against the three new agri laws, Union ministers Narendra Singh Tomar and Piyush Goyal met senior BJP leader and Home Minister Amit Shah.

Sources said they discussed and finalised the government's position for the Wednesday meeting, a source said.

Agriculture Minister Tomar, Railway Minister Goyal and MoS Commerce and Industry Som Parkash have been representing the Centre in dialogues with the farmers. It has been over a month now that thousands of farmers, especially from Punjab, Haryana and parts of Uttar Pradesh, are camping at Delhi's borders seeking repeal of the three farm laws enacted in September by the Centre. They have threatened to intensify their stir in the coming days if their demands are not fulfilled. The government has invited 40 protesting farmer unions December 30 for the next round of talks on all relevant issues to find a "logical solution" to the current impasse over the three laws. The govern-

ment's invite followed a proposal made by the unions last week to hold the talks on Tuesday on agendas including modalities for the repeal of the three new laws. So far, five rounds of formal talks have remained inconclusive. The last round was held on December 5, while the sixth round of talks originally scheduled for December 9 was called off a day after an informal meeting of Home Minister Shah with some union leaders failed to reach any breakthrough.

The government has presented these laws as major agriculture reforms aimed at helping farmers and increasing their income, but the protesting unions fear that the new legislations have left them at the mercy of big corporates by weakening the MSP and mandi systems.

Meanwhile, protesting farmer unions Tuesday wrote to the Centre on the talks scheduled between the two sides on Wednesday, saying the discussion will only be on the modalities of repealing the three legislations, giving a legal guarantee on the MSP and on two other issues they proposed earlier this week for a resumption of the dialogue. The government has invited the protesting farmers for the sixth round of talks Wednesday.

BJP can buy a few MLAs, but not TMC: Mamata

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Dec 29: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday said that the Trinamool Congress would win the 2021 Assembly elections, showing the way ahead to the people of Bengal. Launching a pointed attack at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for welcoming Trinamool renegades, the CM said: "You can buy a few MLAs, but you cannot buy Trinamool Congress. The defec-

tions will not impact the party at all as the people are with us." Banerjee held a party meeting at Jambuni ground in Bolpur before holding a mega roadshow Tuesday. She said that outsiders are coming to Bengal and insulting the life's philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore and Nazrul Islam. "Conspiracies are being hatched to destroy the culture of Bengal. I genuinely feel bad when I see efforts being made to pursue communal politics at Visva Bharati," she said.

Genome sequencing of infected flyers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 29: Samples of all international passengers who arrived in India from December 9 to 22, if symptomatic and tested positive, will be subjected to genome sequencing," the document stated.

The presence of the new UK variant of the coronavirus has already been reported by Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Italy, Sweden, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Japan, Lebanon and Singapore so far.

The health ministry has established the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) for laboratory and epidemiological surveillance and to expand the

whole genome sequencing of the coronavirus in the country, aiding in the understanding of how the virus spreads and evolves. India has put in place a pro-active and preventive strategy to detect and contain the mutant variant of the virus. It includes temporary suspension of all flights coming from the UK with effect from the midnight of December 23 till December 31 and

mandatory testing of all UK returnee air passengers through RT-PCR test. Ten regional laboratories have been identified by the Centre where states will send five per cent of their COVID-19 positive samples for genome sequencing to detect the new coronavirus variant. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for

genome sequencing of the coronavirus in the country, aiding in the understanding of how the virus spreads and evolves. India has put in place a pro-active and preventive strategy to detect and contain the mutant variant of the virus. It includes temporary suspension of all flights coming from the UK with effect from the midnight of December 23 till December 31 and

NEW COVID STRAIN



A man clears snow from the roof of his house after heavy snowfall at Bhaderwah in Doda district

PTI PHOTO

'Men account for 70% of nCoV deaths in India'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 29: About 45 per cent of all COVID-19 deaths in the country have been reported in those below 60 years of age while 70 per cent of total fatalities from the infection were registered in men, the Health ministry said Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said 63 per cent of the total cases were reported in males and 37 per cent cases in females.

"Eight per cent cases have been reported below the age of 17 years, 13 per cent in the 18-25 years age group, 39 per cent in 26-44 years group, 26 per cent in 45-60 years group and 14 per cent cases above 60 years,"



he said. Bhushan further said 45 per cent of the COVID-19 deaths so far have been reported in those below 60 years of age and 70 per cent of total fatalities from the infection were registered in men.

About 55 per cent COVID-19

deaths were reported in those aged 60 and above, 33 per cent in the age group of 45 to 60 years, 10 per cent in the age group of 26-44 years and one per cent each in those aged between 18-25 years and in those below 17 years, according to the data presented by Bhushan.

He said the number of active cases of COVID-19 has been registered at 2.7 lakhs, sliding to a low after six months. The cumulative positivity rate stands at 6.02 per cent while the positivity rate during last week was 2.25 per cent.

Bhushan further said India's rate of cases per million population -- at 7,408 -- is among the lowest in the world while the number of deaths per million population stood at 107.

MAJOR ORDERS PASSED BY SC IN 2020

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, December 29: The year 2020 saw major changes in the functioning of the Supreme Court. Battling the Covid-19 pandemic, the apex court heard thousands of cases in virtual mode and passed significant judgements in 2020.

Here are some of the prominent orders passed by the Supreme Court in 2020.

■ Right to Internet

In the first month of 2020, the Supreme Court, while hearing a batch of petitions on the blackout of Internet services in Jammu and Kashmir, held that right to access Internet is a fundamental right by extension. Therefore, it can be demanded as such before a Constitutional court. Further, every blackout order must specify reasons and has to be reviewed regularly by the authorities concerned, the court had said.

■ Reservation not a fundamental right

In February 2020, the Supreme Court, in a significant judgement, ruled that reservation is not a fundamental right. The top court held that there is no fundamental right to claim reservation in government jobs. It also held that it is within absolute discretion of a state government to decide whether or not to provide for reservation and also there is no obligation on the states to mandatorily do so. The apex court order came in a batch of petitions seeking reservation for SCs and STs in promotion.

■ Permanent commission to women

In another significant judgment, the Supreme Court in February granted permanent commission to women in Defence forces. The Supreme Court directed the government to give permanent commission to all serving women officers who have completed 14 years of service and to also give pension benefits to those who were retired on account of not being granted the commission.

■ NEET is constitutionally valid for



medical exams

The Supreme Court in April upheld the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admission in graduate and post graduate medical and dental courses in the country. A three-judge bench of the apex court made it clear that NEET will be only the test for admissions in medical courses and institutes cannot hold separate test for the same.

Suo Moto PIL on migrant crisis

Initially refusing to pass any direction to the government with regard to plight of migrant labourers returning to home, the Supreme Court took suo moto cognisance in May and passed slew of directions to the Union and state governments. The court asked the state governments to identify migrant workers and transport them to native their states within 15 days. The court also asked the state governments to open help desks to

provide employment to migrant workers. The court also asked the Union government to provide trains within 24 hours of the demand.

■ Daughters' right to paternal property

The Supreme Court in August ruled that daughters would have equal rights in Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) properties. The apex court held that a daughter is for a life time and held that daughter will remain coparcener (one who shares equally with others in inheritance of an undivided joint family property) throughout life even if the father was not alive at the time of the 2005 amendment to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956. In 2005, an amendment was made in the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 to give daughters the same rights in the coparcener (parental) property as the sons.

■ AYUSH docs restrained from prescribing for Covid-19

The Supreme Court upheld the order of the Kerala High Court that restrained AYUSH doctors

from giving prescriptions to Covid-19 patients.

■ SC exempts factories from paying overtime wages

The Supreme Court quashed a notification of the Gujarat government that exempted factories from paying overtime wages to its workers. The top court held that pandemic cannot be an excuse to junk statutory provisions that ensure dignity and right to proper wages to workers.

■ SC refuses to direct transfer of fund from PM CARES to NDRF

The Supreme Court had refused to direct the transfer of fund collected under PM care to National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) citing that contributions to the PM Cares fund are voluntary and there was no statutory prohibition on contributions made to the NDRF. "The funds collected in the PM CARES Fund are entirely different funds which are funds of a public charitable trust and there is no occasion for issuing any direction to transfer the said funds to the NDRF.

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Right now, we just aren't getting all the information that we need from the outgoing administration in key national security area(s)
JOE BIDEN | US PRESIDENT-ELECT

GENES LINKED TO COMMON BRAIN DISORDER IDENTIFIED

Researchers have found that a common brain disorder called Chiari 1 malformation can be caused by variations in two genes involved in brain development



of the day quote

With the implementation of the CPEC, Pakistani seaports will be better connected with land routes and the country's exports would be able to reach international markets
IMRAN KHAN | PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER



I welcomed the importance of the UK/EU Agreement as a new starting point for our relationship, between sovereign equals
BORIS JOHNSON | UK PRIME MINISTER



The Secretary-General reiterates the UN continued support to the people and Government of Niger in their efforts to further consolidate democracy and sustainable development in the country
ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL



SHORT TAKES

Republicans sue Vice Prez Pence

Washington: Several Republicans have sued US Vice President Mike Pence in an improbable bid to overturn President-elect Joe Biden's victory, according to media reports. The last-ditch legal effort, filed on Sunday, came from Representative Louie Gohmert, an eight-term congressman from Texas, along with 11 Arizona residents who had been nominated by that state's Republican Party to serve as electors. The Hill reported. It comes over a week before Pence is scheduled to preside over a joint session of Congress where the Electoral College votes for Biden and President Donald Trump will be tallied.

4 killed in firing in Pakistan

Peshawar: At least four persons were killed in an exchange of fire between two groups over a land dispute in Pakistan's restive northwestern tribal district Tuesday, the police said. The incident took place in North Waziristan tribal district. All the four deceased are close relatives, the police said, adding that one person was injured in the incident. The police rushed to the spot following the incident.

Strong quake hits central Croatia

Zagreb: A strong earthquake hit Croatia Tuesday, with some injuries reported as well as considerable damages to roofs and buildings southeast of the capital. The European Mediterranean Seismological Center said an earthquake of 6.3 magnitude hit 46 kilometers southeast of Zagreb. Initial reports said the earthquake caused wide damage, collapsing roofs, building facades and even some entire buildings.

Global Covid-19 cases top 81.2mn

Washington: The overall number of global coronavirus cases has topped 81.2 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 1.77 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update Tuesday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 81,249,028 and 1,772,912, respectively. The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 19,299,960 and 334,830, respectively.

US House overrides Trump's veto of defence Bill

The Democratic-controlled House voted 322 to 87 to override Trump's veto of the \$740.5 billion defense Bill with 109 members of the President's own Republican Party siding with Democrats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 29: Delivering a powerful blow to President Donald Trump, the US House of Representatives has voted by an overwhelming majority to override his veto of a \$741 billion defence Bill.

Trump last week vetoed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2021, which had bipartisan support, arguing it had provisions that would damage national security.

In the Democratic-controlled House, as many as 109 Republicans broke from Trump to vote in support of overriding the veto, delivering a 322-87 defeat to Trump only weeks before he leaves office.

The bill that funds the annual American defence spending now moves to the Republican-controlled Senate, which also needs to override the presidential veto by two-thirds of votes.

Both the House and the Senate, early this month, had voted overwhelmingly to pass the NDAA.

"With this overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, the House has upheld our sacred Constitutional responsibility to keep our country and our people safe. The National Defense Authorization Act has been passed on a bipartisan and bicam-



eral manner for sixty years, and it will become law, despite the President's dangerous sabotage efforts," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said.

The vote puts it on track to be the first legislation to become law over Trump's objections.

"The president's reckless veto would have denied our service members hazard duty pay; our families paid family leave, child care, housing improvements and health protections; and our veterans their benefits," she said.

"It would have senselessly deprived our allies and country of key protections for global peace and security—including for cyber-security, following a massive attack on our country," she added.

Targeted killings of journalists surged in 2020, says Report

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, Dec 29: More journalists are being killed outside of war zones, and the overwhelming majority of this year's grim total of at least 50 dead was deliberately targeted, many of them murdered while investigating organized crime, corruption and environmental degradation, Reporters Without Borders said Tuesday.

Its tally of journalists and media workers killed in connection with their work by mid-December was just slightly lower than in 2019, when the press freedom group counted 53 dead, even though many journalists reported less from the field in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The group said 68% were killed outside of war zones this year. That confirms a trend noted by the group since 2016, when only four out of 10 deaths were in countries not at war.

Targeted killings of journalists surged in 2020, accounting for 84% of deaths, sharply up from 63% in 2019, the group said. It again listed Mexico as the

deadliest country for media workers, counting at least eight journalists killed there in connection with their work in 2020. Among them was Julio Valdivia, a newspaper reporter whose decapitated body was found in September in an area ridden with organized crime.

Among six media deaths that the group counted in Iraq was the killing in July of Hisham al-Hashimi, a leading expert on the Islamic State and other armed groups, who was shot dead outside his Baghdad home. Reporters Without Borders also noted an increase in the killings of investigative journalists, including four who were looking into organized crime groups, 10 who were reporting on corruption and the misuse of public funds and three who were working on environmental issues including illegal mining and land grabs.

Reporting on civil unrest also proved particularly deadly, the group said, with seven journalists killed while covering protests—four of them in Iraq, two in Nigeria and one in Colombia.



BREXIT ENDS BRITONS' RIGHT TO LIVE AND WORK IN EU

Though the UK left the European Union January 31, it follows the bloc's rules until the end of this year as part of a transition period to the new economic relationship

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 29: So far, the large majority of British and EU citizens have not felt the realities of Brexit. Though the UK left the European Union January 31, it follows the bloc's rules until the end of this year as part of a transition period to the new economic relationship.

That's all set to change.

On January 1, Britain embarks on its new, more distant relationship with the EU after nearly five decades of closer economic, cultural and social integration. The change for Britain's economy and people is the most dramatic since World War II, certainly more so than when the country joined what was then the European Economic Community in 1973.

"It's a far bigger shock to our

economic system and it's going to happen instantaneously," said Anand Menon, director of The UK In a Changing Europe think tank and a professor of European politics and foreign affairs at King's College London.

"All of a sudden you wake up in a new world at the start of January." Here are some of the changes to movement that people will start to feel almost overnight.

WHAT'S CHANGING?

Even though the coronavirus pandemic has led to a collapse in the numbers of people traveling between Britain and the EU, the end of freedom of movement from Jan. 1 will represent the most tangible Brexit consequence so far.

Under the divorce deal agreed by the two sides December 24, the roughly 1 million British citizens who are legal residents in the EU will



have broadly the same rights as they have now. The same applies for more than 3 million EU citizens who are in the UK.

But British citizens will no longer have the automatic right to live and

work in the EU, and vice versa. People who want to cross the border to work and live will have to follow immigration rules and face other red tape such as ensuring their qualifications are recognized.

WELCOMING THE NEW



A food delivery courier rides a bicycle past 2021 numbers installed to celebrate the upcoming New Year in Moscow, Russia

PTI PHOTO

Pandemic severe, but not necessarily the big one: WHO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Geneva, Dec 29: The novel coronavirus has had a devastating impact around the globe, but the World Health Organization warned Monday that worse pandemics could lie ahead, urging the world to get "serious" about preparedness.

"This is a wake-up call," WHO emergencies chief Michael Ryan told reporters at a briefing marking a year since the UN agency first learned of the new virus spreading in China.

Since then, Covid-19 has killed nearly 1.8 million people around the world, out of over 80 million

infected.

"This pandemic has been very severe," Ryan acknowledged.

"It has spread around the world extremely quickly and it has affected every corner of this planet, but this is not necessarily the big one."

He stressed that while the virus is "very transmissible, and it kills people... its current case fatality (rate) is reasonably low in comparison to other emerging diseases."

"We need to get ready for something that may even be more severe in the future."

WHO senior advisor Bruce Aylward also cautioned that while the world had made huge scientific

progress to address the coronavirus crisis, including developing vaccines at record speed, it remained far from prepared to ward off future pandemics.

"We are into second and third waves of this virus and we are still not prepared to deal with and manage those," he told the briefing.

"So while we are better prepared... we are not fully prepared for this one, let alone the next one."

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus meanwhile voiced hope that the Covid-19 pandemic had helped the world become more prepared to tackle future threats.

"In terms of awareness, I think we are now getting it," he said.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Dec 29: Russia's federal penitentiary service has given top Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny one day to report to its office or face imprisonment, if he comes back to Russia after the deadline.

Navalny is convalescing in Germany after his August poisoning with a nerve agent, which he has blamed on the Kremlin.

Russian authorities have denied their involvement.

The Federal Penitentiary Service issued a statement on Monday saying that an article by doctors from Berlin's Charite hospital and published in medical journal The Lancet indicated that Navalny has fully recuperated.

The prison service demanded that Navalny report to its office in line with the terms of a 3 1/2-year suspended sentence he received for a 2014 conviction. If he misses the deadline, he could be imprisoned, the statement said.

Navalny's lawyer, Vadim Kobzev, tweeted that the agency told the politician to show up at its office on Tuesday morning.

Navalny, who previously said that he planned to return to Russia once he fully recovered, scoffed at the demand, saying that the



Federal Penitentiary Service's reference to the article in The Lancet amounted to the government accepting he was poisoned.

"That means that the state has officially recognized the poisoning," he tweeted.

And where is the criminal case then? Navalny fell into a coma while aboard a domestic flight from Siberia to Moscow August 20.

The plane made an emergency landing, and he was transferred from a hospital in Siberia to the Berlin hospital two days later.

Labs in Germany, France and Sweden, and tests by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, established that he was exposed to a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

Scandals sap public support for Suga

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tokyo, Dec 29: Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga came to office on a wave of popularity, pledging to combat the coronavirus and fix Japan's languishing economy.

Three months after he took over from his former boss Shinzo Abe, a more charismatic leader from an influential political family, Suga seems to be struggling to find his feet. His support ratings have sunk amid flaring virus outbreaks and scandals within the ruling party, even as the economy appears to be recovering.

On Monday, the Nikkei financial newspaper said its latest survey found approval ratings for Suga's government had sunk more than 30 points to 42% from 74% in late September. The 48% of those questioned who disapproved mainly cited a lack of leadership and poor handling of the pandemic.



One big source of trouble has been the government's "GoTo Travel" campaign, which provides steep discounts for domestic travel.

The programme was launched in the summer, before Suga took office. It was suspended as of Monday, but many Japanese believe it helped spread the virus and should have been halted sooner.

Experts said Suga's insistence on continuing GoTo promotions until recently sent a muddled message at a time when the government is urging people to scale back activity.

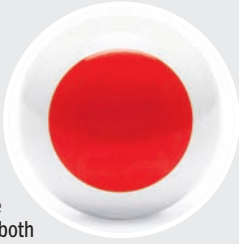
INDIAN ECONOMY IN DOLDRUMS

Data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation showed that India's Gross Domestic Product had contracted by 23.9% for the April to June quarter. In gross value added terms, the economy had contracted by 22.8%, showed the data. The numbers quantified what was evident all around: the Indian economy is in doldrums. To make matters worse, it is likely that the numbers will further worsen when the estimates are revised with better-quality data. Things have never been this bad in recorded history. India has never experienced an economic contraction in at least four decades.



BATTERED BEFORE OLYMPICS

As of July 2019, it was expected that the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics would have a positive economic impact on Japan. It was estimated that the economic impact would be approximately 20 trillion Japanese yen in Tokyo Prefecture alone. Increase in demand in Tokyo Prefecture alone, the government expected an increase in general demand of around 14 trillion yen, both as an immediate and long term result of the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics. Economic ripple effect along with this estimate of increase in demand, the government calculated the overall economic ripple effect of around 32 trillion yen as mentioned.



RECORD-BREAKING US PLUNGE

Having endured lakhs of deaths during the raging pandemic, the US economy faces a dim outlook as a resurgent coronavirus intensifies doubts about any sustained recovery. A huge plunge in consumer spending as people stayed home and avoided shopping, traveling or gathering in crowds as the virus raged is estimated to have sent the economy sinking at a roughly 32 per cent annual rate in the April-June quarter. That would be more than triple the previous worst quarterly economic fall, a 10 per cent drop set in 1958. Depressed activity in such areas as business investment and government spending also likely contributed to the worst quarterly contraction on records.



ITALY BRACES FOR THE WORST

Italy is starting to plan for what could happen to its economy if the coronavirus pandemic worsens significantly. In a worst-case scenario, the Italian government sees gross domestic product dropping 10.5% this year and expanding only 1.8% in 2021, according to a draft budget outlook document. The scenario draws on a study by Oxford Economics to factor in the impact of a renewed virus outbreak on the global economy. Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's cabinet signed off on the budget outlook. Its baseline scenario forecasts that the economy will expand 5.1% in 2021, which might rise to 6%.



VIRUS COST WORLD \$11.7 TRILLION

Out of this global cost, \$9.8 trillion (83%) has been spent by 36 rich nations against just \$42 billion (0.4%) by 59 low-income countries to cope with the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic

FUEL DEMAND SOARS

India, the world's third-largest oil importer and consumer, turned from the worst-performing demand market in July into one of the fastest-growing fuel demand markets in November, lending support to oil prices together with strong demand in China and progress with vaccine development and rollout. India's demand for all types of petroleum products has nearly reached pre-COVID levels, prompting domestic refineries to crank up crude oil processing rates. The rebound in one of the world's biggest oil growth drivers before the pandemic highlights the two-speed global oil demand recovery, with Asia driving higher consumption and consequently, oil prices, while Europe and the United States are reeling from renewed restrictions to fight record COVID-19 infections. India's recovery is also indicative of the immediate support that strengthening oil demand in the key Asian markets, China and India, gives to oil prices, unlike vaccine news, which contains more forward-looking expectations of mass vaccinations boosting economies and hence, oil demand. In India's case, fuel demand has been boosted by one of the effects of COVID-19 on customer preferences—people avoid public transportation and prefer the comfort and relative isolation from other people in their own vehicles. India continues to fight the pandemic and still has some restrictions in place on domestic bus and airline travel. This additionally boosts demand for gasoline and diesel for private vehicles. In four months, the trend in India's fuel demand has dramatically changed. In July, Indian refineries were cutting processing rates because fuel demand—up from the lows in April and May—had slowed as fuel prices were higher and parts of India were again under local lockdowns, while the monsoon rain season was also stalling economic activity and transport.



The coronavirus pandemic has cost the world's economy an additional \$11.7 trillion this year. Out of this (global) cost, \$9.8 trillion (83%) has been spent by 36 rich nations against just \$42 billion (0.4%) by 59 low-income countries to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

On additional cash poured specifically into social protection programmes, Oxfam stated that 28 rich nations have spent at the rate of "\$895 per person", while, low-income and emerging nations, in contrast, have spent "at a per capita rate of between \$28 to as low as \$4."

Meanwhile, to make matters worse, the organisation added that rich countries have only increased their aid to developing nations for social protection by \$5.8 billion, which is equivalent of less than five cents for every \$100 raised to tackle COVID-19.

"The coronavirus united the world in fear but has divided it in response," said Oxfam Executive Director Gabriela Bucher. "The pandemic sparked a laudable global effort that reached more than a billion more people with social protection support over 2020 but, as of today, more people still have been left behind entirely. That need not be so," she added.

The need

fort that reached more than a billion more people with social protection support over 2020 but, as of today, more people still have been left behind entirely. That need not be so," she added.

for better social protection programmes to help people is huge. Half a billion people are now under-employed or out of work with twice as many women affected as men. Workers in low-income countries have suffered the most, losing 23% of their working hours.

"People are falling into debt, skipping meals, keeping children from

school and selling their assets. Remittance flows from migrants to reliant families back home has collapsed. Global poverty and

coronavirus still spreading and the economic prospects of countries across the world looking muted. According to Dun and Bradstreet's Country Risk and Global Outlook Report, that covered 132 countries, the wider global context remains sombre and the global economy will not reach pre-pandemic levels of activity again before 2022.

"D&B is currently forecasting that the global economy will contract by 5.2 per cent in 2020 - the biggest decline since the Second World War and a far stronger contraction than the 1.7 per cent recorded in 2009 during the global financial crisis," the report said.

The Asia Pacific region is unlikely to shake off the economic effects before the end of 2020, it added. "Widespread quantitative easing means that financial asset prices globally are not reflecting the shock to fundamentals. But with many countries easing their lockdowns, a more varied picture of upgrades and downgrades has emerged," Dun & Bradstreet Chief Economist Arun Singh said. Singh further noted that "worryingly, a sharp recession is still forecast, and we expect that the

world economy will not attain pre-pandemic levels of activity before 2022."

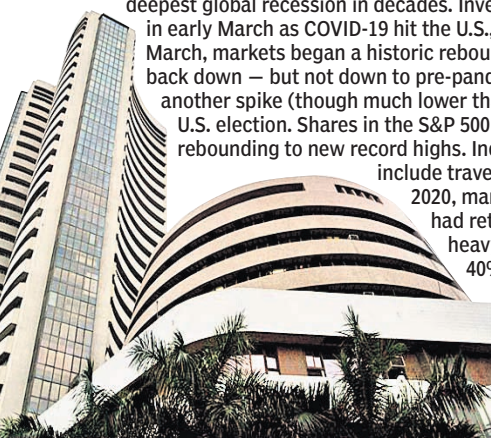
The report said any recovery into 2021 (even without a second bout of the pandemic) is going to be curtailed by several factors. Foremost will be the presence of degrees of social distancing (despite the easing of lockdowns) and higher levels of post-lockdown unemployment and poverty.

hunger are rocketing," it noted. Furthermore, Oxfam said that over a third of the world's population - some 2.7 billion people - have not received government aid during the coronavirus pandemic, with gaping differences between rich and poor nations.

The global economy is likely to contract by 5.2 per cent in 2020 with the

Markets see roller-coaster ride

The pandemic plunged most countries into recession in 2020, with per capita income contracting in the largest fraction of countries globally since 1870.9 The World Bank's baseline forecast predicts a 5.2% contraction in global GDP in 2020 — the deepest global recession in decades. Investors saw a massive spike in the VIX in early March as COVID-19 hit the U.S., prompting markets to tumble. In late March, markets began a historic rebound and recovery that brought the VIX back down — but not down to pre-pandemic levels. In June, the VIX had another spike (though much lower than in March), and again around the U.S. election. Shares in the S&P 500 dropped 31% in March before rebounding to new record highs. Industries that took the hardest hit include travel and leisure and retail. By the end of 2020, markets had rebounded and the S&P 500 had returned more than 12%. The tech-heavy Nasdaq soared to returns of over 40%. The global coronavirus pandemic has brought one of the greatest human and economic consequences the world has ever seen. Stock markets have rocketed on hopes of a potential breakthrough in the search for a vaccine against COVID-19.



Pharma: A dose of change

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted supply chains across the world. Every sector, including pharma, is suffering from supply chains coming to a grinding halt. Prices of raw materials have shot up amid limited supply, production schedules have been interrupted, factories have been shut down and shipping costs are sky-high in most countries. The impact on the Indian pharma sector is typically evident, given that most raw materials are procured from China, the epicentre of the outbreak. With the movement of people and goods restricted amid lockdowns, manufacturers of generic drugs are unable to launch products or conduct clinical trials. As a result, timelines for drug filings have got stretched. Furthermore, cash flows from new generic drug launches have either been wiped out or delayed. Indian drug manufacturers face other challenges as well. An Indian pharmaceutical facility can sell drugs in the US only after it has been inspected and approved by the US FDA.

The pandemic has also forced generic drug manufacturers, both contract and captive, to delay their plans for new product launches. When product launches and clinical trials by large global pharma companies are delayed, the drug companies from which they source materials face the heat. Low sales, therefore, pose another major concern for Indian drug manufacturers supplying globally. Some Indian pharma facilities had to be shut as workers tested positive for the virus.



Heavy toll on tourism industry

Before COVID-19, travel and tourism had become one of the most important sectors in the world economy, accounting for 10 percent of global GDP and more than 320 million jobs worldwide. In 1960, at the dawn of the jet age, just 25 million people took foreign trips. By 2019, that number had reached 1.5 billion, and the travel and tourism sector had grown to almost too-big-to-fail proportions for many economies. The global pandemic, the first of its scale in a new era of interconnectedness, has put 100 million jobs at risk, many in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises that employ a high share of women, who represent 54 percent of the tourism workforce, according to the United Nations World Tourism



Organization (UNWTO).

Tourism-dependent countries will likely feel the negative impacts of the crisis for much longer than other economies. Contact-intensive services key to the tourism and travel sectors are disproportionately affected by the pandemic and will continue to struggle until

people feel safe to travel en masse again. "There is no way we can grow our way out of this hole we are in," Irwin LaRocque, secretary-general of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said at a virtual event in September. From the white sand beaches of the Caribbean, Seychelles,

Mauritius, and the Pacific to the back streets of Bangkok, to Africa's sweeping national parks, countries are grappling with how to lure back visitors while avoiding new outbreaks of infection.

The solutions range from wooing the ultrarich who can quarantine on their yachts to inviting people to stay for periods of up to a year and work virtually while enjoying a tropical view. In the first half of this year, tourist arrivals fell globally by more than 65 percent, with a near halt since April—compared with 8 percent during the global financial crisis.

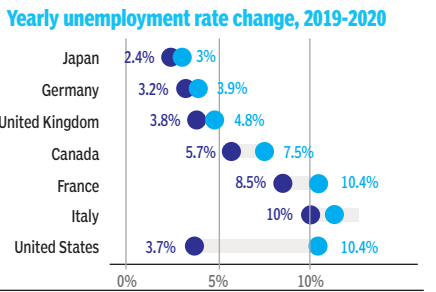
State's economy shrinks

India bore the brunt of the pandemic that engulfed the world in no time, with economic growth getting badly hit. The mineral-rich state of Odisha was no exception. Starting from automobile and farming, to MSMEs and tourism, all sectors were affected, literally bringing life to a standstill for millions who became jobless and were made to stay indoors owing to the raging pandemic. Following the "Janata curfew" in March, India was locked down for almost a month, which resulted in all the core-sector industries getting hit in terms of production. The small and medium enterprises (SMEs) were badly hit, resulting in numerous layoffs and shutting down of factories.

Keeping in mind the decelerating economy, the government of Odisha maintained considerable relaxations for the business firms, startups, small and medium enterprises (those that were located in the orange and green zones), so that they don't get shutdown. The industrial sector, particularly the MSMEs located across Mancheswar and Rasulgarh areas of Bhubaneswar had to incur severe loss. Debasish Das, director of Alfa electricals, said that his company witnessed a loss of Rs 2.5 crore during lockdown. "Since BMC is declared as a red zone, the SMEs in Mancheswar Industrial Estate will remain closed for a period of time," Das said. Odisha plunged into a new low with a severe drop in tourist footfall. The Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) stated that all operations of hotels and restaurants across the state were affected due to the lockdown resulting in an immense revenue loss of Rs 800 crore.

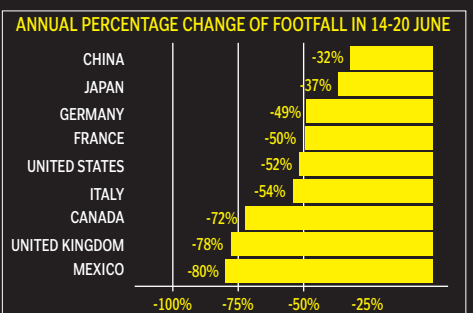
RECORD UNEMPLOYMENT

India's massive work force was hit hard by coronavirus. As many as 21 million salaried jobs have been lost, according to a recent report by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). Economists say a swift recovery looks unlikely. The job losses cross sectors and skill levels, and include services, manufacturing and industry, and white-collar jobs, the report said. Hospitality, aviation, media, entertainment and automobile parts manufacturers are among the sectors seeing the most job cuts. The informal economy is also feeling the heat with thousands of small-scale traders and hawkers shutting shop. The CMIE, an independent think tank that hosts the largest database covering the Indian economy, said India's economic downturn is putting pressure on government finances, as revenues fall short of projections and Indian states struggle to pay their bills. Government figures show that India's GDP contracted by 23.9% from April to June, as coronavirus lockdowns brought key industries to a halt and rendered millions of people jobless.



LITTLE HOPE FOR SHOPPING MALLS

Even as the retail sector is gradually picking up aided by pent-up demand and festival offers, retailers still expect recovery to stretch across 2021. Many in the industry fear the scenario could compel mall tenants to ask for more rental waivers from developers and landlords post-March 2021. However, mall owners, many of whom have extended slab-wise discounts till March, say that rents are already down by as much as 25% in some places and rentals as well as footfalls would now be determined only after government rolls out the immunisation programme to check the pandemic. The uncertainty on rental negotiations in FY22 is due to Covid altering shopping decisions as job and income uncertainty and movement restrictions are feared to further impact consumer and household spending. BCG, in a December report on how India shops, spends and saves in the new reality, said, "In apparel, purchase decision was primarily triggered by social/celebratory occasions (accounting for 42% of triggers). However, due to social distancing norms, the social/celebratory occasions no longer hold much sway in purchase."



THE \$10 TRILLION RESCUE

The COVID-19 crisis is one of the worst health emergencies the world has witnessed for a century, and its economic impact could be just as steep. While it took several quarters for unemployment to peak in other crises, the economic shock of the COVID-19 crisis has been larger than that of any previous crisis—and it materialised within weeks. Five weeks into the crisis, the weekly number of jobs lost in the United States continues exceeded any pre-COVID-19 record. In some sectors, demand came practically to a halt in a matter of days as a result of lockdown measures. Governments' economic responses to the crisis is unprecedented, too: \$10 trillion announced just in the first two months, which is three times more than the response to the 2008-09 financial crisis. Western European countries alone have allocated close to \$4 trillion, an amount almost 30 times larger than today's value of the Marshall Plan. Governments have included all shapes and forms in their stimulus packages: guarantees, loans, value transfers to companies and individuals, deferrals, and equity investments.

COUNTRY	STIMULUS PACKAGE
BANGLADESH	\$11.6 BILLION
USA	\$2.3 trillion
Japan	\$1.09 trillion
China	\$169.7 billion
Germany	\$383.96 billion
United Kingdom	\$496.23 billion
Italy	\$822.78 billion
India	\$26.42 billion
Pakistan	\$7.5 billion

