

AUAHAR TIES THE KNOT

Actor Gauahar Khan marries beau Zaid Darbar on Christmas Day and shares photographs of the wedding **LEISURE** P2

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RREGULAR by MANJUL

Yes, much before we bring a Bill, corporates come to know about it. You see, ours is a transparent govt.

MAN KILLS PARENTS

NUAGAON: A man killed his parents over a land dispute at Bishupur under Nuagaon block in Sundargardh district Friday. The deceased were identified as Monbas Singh (65) and his wife Lila Singh (60). In the morning, he scolded his parents over a land issue when his younger brother Somen (35) opposed him. The accused lost his cool and attacked the couple with a vegetable-cutting instrument killing the two on the spot.

	WEAT	HER					
		BHUB	СТК				
-	₽ MAX	28.2°C	27.8°(
	[₽] MIN	24.0°C	12.4°(Forecast			
	Humidity	93%	77%	Fog/mist in the			
	Rainfall	Nil	Nil	in the morning			

*T&C apply. Offer valid till 10th January 2021

Centre contradicts itself on PM-CARES

PM-CARES IS CONTROLLED BY GOVERNMENT, BUT DOESN'T COME UNDER RTI ACT, SAYS CENTRE IN NEW RESPONSE

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 25: In a new RTI reply, the Centre has said that the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) fund is "owned and established" by the government. This is in sharp contrast with the government's recent claim that the fund was private.

The government made the announcement while responding to RTI applicant Commodore (retired) Lokesh K Batra's query. However, it said that the fund does not come under the RTI Act as it is funded by private sources.

"This Fund (PM CARES FUND) is completely financed by donations received from individuals organizations, CSRs (corporate social responsibility), foreign individuals, foreign organization PSUs and not at-all financed by the appropriate government and administered by the private individual as Trustees, which is a compulsory condition to invoke section 2(h) of the Right to information



DODGING RT The controversy over PM-CARES'

ownership erupted after the fund's trust deed was made public A clause in the document called the

fund a private entity, exempting it from RTI scrutiny However, the fund has been registered with the Revenue dept of

Delhi, with the PM as chairperson Act, 2005 and therefore, PM CARES Fund cannot be considered as a public authority," the government's

response stated. The controversy over PM-CARES erupted earlier this month after the fund's trust deed was made public. A clause in the document de-

scribed the fund as a private entity, exempting it from RTI scrutiny. The fund has, however, been registered with the revenue department of Delhi, with the prime minister as chairperson and senior ministers as trustees.

BHUBANESWAR | SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26 | 2020

OLI GOVT SHOW-CAUSED

Nepal's Supreme Court issues a show-cause notice to Prime Minister KP Oli-led government on

dissolution of Parliament INTERNATIONAL P10

Opposition parties have repeatedly raised questions about the fund's transparency, and have questioned the need to create the reserve when Prime Minister's National Relief Fund already existed. This is not the first controversy surrounding the fund. The trust was registered March 27 this year and on the next day, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs issued an office memorandum qualifying PM-CARES as a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative to receive corporate donations.

According to documents accessed by RTI activist Anjali Bhardwaj, PM-CARES was defined as a "fund set up by the central government", in the corporate affairs memorandum. But the trust deed said it was not government-run, and thus was not eligible for corporate donations

Mohapatra appointed state's chief secretary

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The state government Friday appointed senior IAS officer Suresh Chandra Mohapatra as the new Chief Secretary and Chief Development Commissioner, the CMO said. Mohapatra, a 1986 batch Indian Administrative Service officer, was currently serving as Development Commissioner of the state and working chairman of Temple Management

Committee. He will succeed Asit Kumar Tripathy, who will retire from government service December 31.

Born February 4, 1962, Mahapatra started his career as Nuapada sub-collector in 1988. He has served as a collector

in Bhadrakh, Kandhamal and Puri, chief administrator in Srimandir, MD of OMFED, CEO Asit Tripathy will

partment. "I will try my best for

the overall development of all people and areas of the state. I will work for revival of the livelihoods of the people in the post Covid-19 scenario," he said. Tripathy, a resident of Bolangir district in western Odisha, will be the new chairperson of the Western Odisha Development Council (WODC). He will be the first non-political person to hold the crucial post.



After Adelaide humiliation, India have made four changes in the team for the 2nd Test against Australia SPORTS P12

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Vaccine dry run in 4 states next week

AGENCIES New Delhi, Dec 25: To as-

sess readiness of the mechanism laid out for the COVID-19 inoculation drive, a dry run has been planned by the Centre December 28 and 29 in four states --Puniab. Assam. Andhra

Pradesh and Gujarat. The exercise will include be the new necessary data entry in Co-WIN, an online platform for Western Odisha monitoring of vaccine de-Development livery, testing receipt and allocation, deployment of Council (WODC) team members, mock drill of session sites with test beneficiaries, as well as reporting and evening meeting, the Union Health

Ministry said Friday. It will also include testing of cold storage and transportation arrangements for



review at block and district levels Focus will be on any possible

adverse events following immunisation

COVID-19 vaccine, management of crowd at session sites with proper physical distancing, the ministry said. Each state will plan it in two districts and preferably in five different session-type settings -- district hospital,

community health centre (CHC) or primary health care centre (PHC), urban site, private health facility and rural outreach.

Royal. Radiant I ACICIICII IL. Rare.

of CESU and CMD of GRIDCO. He also served as sec-

retary in the departments of Energy, Water rechairperson of the sources and additional chief secretary in Forest and Environment de-

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KERRY WOULDN'T WISH COVID-19 ON ANYONE

Singer Kerry Katona and her fiance Ryan Mahoney are currently battling Covid-19. Katona says she would not wish the virus on anyone.

GAL GADOT DEFENDS HER CASTING AS CLEOPATRA

Israeli origin Hollywood star Gal Gadot has responded to criticism over her casting as Cleopatra in a new film on the life of the Egyptian queen. In an interview with BBC Arabic, Gadot was reminded that a section of Egyptian viewers were of the opinion that her casting as Queen Cleopatra is another instance of whitewashing in Hollywood.



FORTUNE FORECAST



ARIES

You may decide upon a bold approach at work. You may even come up with innovative ideas and opinions. But by afternoon, you will again be at a loss Ganesha suggests that you take time of from work and recharge yourself

TAURUS

Your loved ones may cause a financial setback today, says Ganesha. You

may have arguments with siblings regard ing sharing property. You will tend to be impatient and belligerent with them in the afternoon. Keep a check on your negative emotions, advises Ganesha

GEMINI

You have a penchant for organising family functions and social programmes. Today, you are likely to organise one more. You plan to reno vate your house in the afternoon. By evening, you will be back to your social ising self and may hang out at a popular local joint with a childhood friend

CANCER

It's time to meet friends. family members, neighbours, acquaintances, and people in general. Now that you are meeting so many peo ple, you will also pay a visit to the Almighty. So a visit to a nearby temple

mosque, church or any other religious place is likely.

LEO There are rough patch-

es that all families must deal with. Ganesha savs there are chances that today, you may disagree with your siblings and other members of the family Money and property will be your key

VIRGO

areas of concern

Be the crab who wants to get out of the basket, and make bold. brave moves at work. especially in the way you accomplish your tasks. Also, contribute with bril liant, refreshing ideas. You shall, how ever, in all probability, remain at sea ir the afternoon. But, don't despair, take a break from work and recharge those sodden batteries, says Ganesha

LIBRA

Sharing is the key to joy, and today, you shall be

Gauahar and Zaid say 'qubool hai' Mumbai: Actress Gauahar Khan got married to beau Zaid Darbar on Christmas Day, and the couple shared accounts.

photographs of the wedding on their verified Instagram 'Qubool Hai' they wrote as caption, and fans showered love and blessings. Gauahar and Zaid chose to twin with their

wedding outfit colour. While Gauahar wore a heavily embroidered ivory-hued Sharara along with traditional bridal jewellery, Zaid chose a sherwani and churidar in the same colour.

Gauahar and Zaid recently announced their wedding date on social media and kept fans updated with photographs of their preparations as well as their lockdown love story.

On Thursday, a day before the wedding, Gauahar shared photos of her mehndi ceremony for fans and followers.

Noted music composer Ismail Darbar's son Zaid also shared photographs clicked after the mehndi ceremony and wrote: "Writing our love story on each other's hearts forever with the blessings of our family and friends and above all Allah.

Remo's wife thanks 'angel' Salman Khan

Mumbai: Choreographer-filmmaker Remo D'souza was hospitalised for a cardiac problem earlier this month. His wife Lizelle has now thanked superstar Salman Khan for providing support during ordeal.

Sharing a photo of her hugging Remo, she posted on Instagram: "My

best Christmas gift ever ever ever .. this moment I'll always cherish

..... hugging u after a week of the worst emotional ups and downs. I know acc to u am a superwoman but I suddenly felt like a small little child lost... only one thing I knew and trusted was ur promise to me that u will come out as a fighter and the lord above."

"Really would love to thank the drs and staff @kokilabenhospital #dr Sunil Vani for being the best thanks Dennis for the patience I know everyone made u mad thanks to @mounmounamzali and @bobbykhan18 for being at my side and not leav-

there till discharge. Her thank you list also included ing me for the 48hrs and the Salman, who had worked with Remo on Race 3. end Thanks

"I really from the bottom of my heart want to thank @beingsalmankhan for being the biggest emotional support u are an angel thank you so much bhai for always being there," she wrote. 'Thanks to all my friends and

chityagi my lil elf for being the

biggest support and handling

everything at the hospital so that

I could mentally function and ves

even for capturing such moments

that I will cherish forever thanks

@salmanyusuffkhan I always

knew what Remo and I meant to

u but saving and showing are two

opposites u proved it what it

meant thanks a ton for being

family for emotionally being there and thanks to people all over praying @remodsouza I love u to the moon and back..... pls now u need to stop making me prove it to u time and again cmon let the joy of Christmas festivities begin...... Happy Holidays," she concluded

Kareena reveals son Taimur loves turkey

social

Mumbai: Actress Kareena Kapoor with his family and friends. Khan has revealed that her son Taimur

In an Instagram image Kareena posted, she poses for the camera along Kareena gave birth to with husband Saif Ali Khan, while their first-born, Taimur, who is fondly called Tim by Taimur, in 2016. his parents, gorging on She is currently exturkey.

Ali Khan loves turkey.

"Someone loves

Saif

а

turkey," Kareena

Kareena

wrote

and

hosted

Christmas eve dinner pecting their second baby, and she often shares photographs of her baby bump on media.

"That warm, fuzzy feeling... Merry Xmas people," she wrote as caption. The couple got married in 2012 and

Kareena and Saif had announced on August 12 that they are expecting their second child. The actress recently completed her shoot for the upcoming film Laal Singh Chaddha co-starring Aamir Khan in Delhi.

Kiara: Don't think I'm a very content kind of a person

New Delhi: Actress Kiara Advani has had a satisfying year. She was among the rare Bollywood stars to have releases on OTT as well as theatres, in a year

that has been fraught by the pandemic. This year, she was seen in the OTT-released films Guilty and Laxmii. while Indoo Ki Jawani opened theatri-

cally across India earlier this month. Kiara,

has impressed in hit films as M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story, Kabir Singh, and Good Newwz, as well as the digitally released anthology Lust Stories. She is, however, not in a mood

to rest on her hits. "I am yearning for more. I don't think I am a very content kind of a person - (I am) somebody who always wants to push and try doing better. I think the drive is very much alive and it should be that way. So, yeah that is how I am as a per-_ son,"Kiara told IANS.

The actress has three films lined up over the next months --Shershaah opposite Sidharth Malhotra, the Kartik Aaryanstarrer Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2, and



her post.

with that key as you reveal your innermost feelings. Share them unabashedly with your family mem bers. You are backed up with high energy levels that will soar as the day proceeds

SCORPIO

Though not like in an X-Files series, expect to find yourself open to the unknown and the super-

natural today, says Ganesha. Time spent at your work station will be troublesome You may end up spending a small fortune on your health. You shall achieve your short-term targets, predicts Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

Your mood is high on expectations today. You shall plan meticulously before noon, and then in the afternoon, your plans shall fall in place, and deliver expected results. The opposite sex will find you intellectually stimulating and attractive.

CAPRICORN

The day will be spent juggling work and meet ing personal demands, says Ganesha. It may vir tually be a tug-of-war, in which your friends and relatives will emerge victorious as you will end up spending more time with them. You will catch up with gossips that you missed while trying to impress your boss.

Good news about a loved one will bring on a festive mood. You only need an itsy-bitsy excuse to party, and that's what you'll do today! You will make new friends, and they will prove helpful in times of need

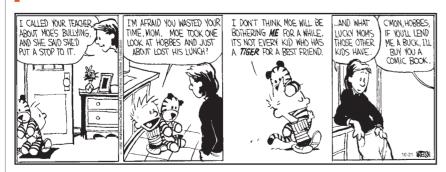
PISCES

Today will find you resolute and unwavering in everything that you pursue, and it is a good thing to be, for you will find yourself making substantial progress come afternoon. New relationships could be in the offing today as well, savs Ganesha

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES







CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

in Jug Jugg Jeeyo" co-starring Anil nev Bollywood Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor and Varun with Fugly Dhawan. IANS in 2014

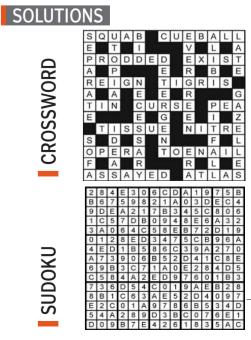
SUDOKU

who started

her jour-

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

	0				1			3				1		Γ
	1	2				С				Е		1		0
D											В	С	8	9
8		6		5			7		С		4			
		5			D			6			7		Е	
					3	9								
	7	9			С		6					1 - 11 2 - 21	4	В
1	8			В				Е	6			0	С	
А				4			3	D		5	8		2	7
4	3						В			9			А	D
	4		А			6	0		Е			8		
							Е			6		2		3
С			8	2					9					
7	Е			1			5		В		D			С
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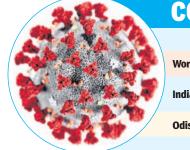






FOR YOUR KIDS

A vendor sells dolls and soft toys near the **Exhibition Ground in** Bhubaneswar, Friday



FOR SMOOTH DARSHAN

COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
rld	7,99,54,769	5,63,03,049	17,53,032
ia	1,01,47,468	97,17,198	1,47,128
sha	3,27,867	3,23,378	1,853

Nuapada farmer thanks Modi for PM-Kisan

The PM interacted with farmers virtually after releasing over ₹18,000 crore to more than nine crore farmer families under PM-Kisan

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Naveen Thakur, a farmer from Nuapada district, Friday told the Prime Minister that the Kishan Credit Card helped him in getting loan at a nominal interest rate of 4 per cent. Thakur thanked the Prime Minister for his farmers' welfare schemes amidst nationwide agitation demanding withdrawal of the three farm laws.

Thakur got the opportunity to interact with the PM through videoconferencing during a farmers' outreach programme.

The PM began the interaction greeting Thakur by saying, "Jai Jagannath, Naveen ji! Tell me, how has the PM-Kisan scheme benefited you?'

On his part, Thakur appreciated the scheme and said, "I have received Rs 10,000 in five instalments through PM-Kisan and utilised it to buy fertiliser and necessary things for farming.

Replying to the Prime Minister's question on the Kisan Credit Card, Thakur said, "I received a Kisan Credit Card March 12, 2019. I have availed a bank loan of Rs 27.000 at the rate of 4 per cent interest.

"Earlier, we used to take loan at 20 per cent interest from Sahukars, now we are able to take loan at a nominal interest of 4 per cent from the banks due to the Kisan Credit Card.'

The Odisha farmer told Modi that the loan amount availed through the Kisan Credit Card is being utilised in purchasing, fer-

No respite from cold-wave in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The prevailing cold-wave situation will continue in the state for the next few days including the Zero Night, as per local Met office forecast.

Night temperature, which is below normal, will continue to remain the same, it said. Meanwhile, the minimum temperature fell below 10 de-



Earlier, we used to take loan at 20% interest from Sahukars. now we

are able to take loan at a nominal interest of 4% from the banks due to the **Kisan Credit Card** NAVEEN THAKUR I NUAPADA FARMER

tiliser, seeds, pesticide and other requirements for cultivation. He also thanked Modi for the PM-Kisan Nidhi scheme and Kisan

Credit Card. 'The twin schemes have completely changed my life," he said. The PM interacted with farmers virtually after releasing over Rs 18,000 crore to more than nine crore farmer families under the 'Pradhan

Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi' (PM-KISAN). Modi released the instalment of

Rs 2,000 to every farmer on the birth anniversary of the former PM and BJP stalwart Atal Bihari Vajpayee, which is every year celebrated as 'Good Governance Day by the saffron party.

Outfit to beat utensils during 'Mann Ki Baat'

BHUBANESWAR: The state-based Naba Nirman Krushak Sangathan has vowed to oppose the controversial farm Bills during the Mann Ki Baat speech of Prime Minister Narendra Modi this week.

The farmers' outfit has decided to ring bells and beat utensils on December 27 when Modi will be speaking during the weekly porgramme. The outfit has planned to organise the protests across the state. This comes after the Sanyukta Kisan Morcha, the national union formed for the protest against the legislations, called for a nationwide stir.

We have decided that when the PM will be delivering his Mann ki Baat, we would be beating utensils and ring bells to mark our protests against the controversial Bills of the Union government," Sesadev Nanda, state convenor of the outfit, said.

He said that his outfit has around 7 lakh members across the state and would rise to the occasion to mark their presence felt and protest though this way against the farm Bills. It has been planned that the event would be organised in different blocks and panchayats across the state to magnify the event. The outfit also had taken part in the national level protests at the state capital raising their apprehensions on the ramifications of the disputed Bills.

GOVT OPTIMISTIC AHEAD OF **BLACKBUCK CENSUS IN FEB**

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The state Forest department is now gearing up for the latest round of blackbuck census.

The census exercise will be taken up by the department in February 2021. The Forest department is optiment official said. He also said that several special initiatives have been undertaken by

the department to conserve the animal species and give them the necessary support for the growth of their population. "We have started growing pulses on farmlands near vil-







The Puri district administration and the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration have made elaborate arrangements to facilitate smooth darshan of the deities for the residents of the Holy City. The locals of Puri are allowed to visit the shrine from December 26 to December 31. The police Friday conducted a mock drill to manage the crowd. Metal detectors have been installed at the entrance while cabins have been set up to verify the visitors' identity proofs

Fire breaks out at SCB

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 25: A fire broke out at the Telemedicine department of the SCB Medical College and Hospital here Friday afternoon, but there was no report of any casualty, a senior Fire official said.

According to Fire official Sushant Das, a major mishap was averted, thanks to the swift SCB as well as Fire officials



"SCB officials who spotted the inferno in the afternoon alerted the Fire authorities. A team from SCB's fire station reached the spot and began the operation after the power supply to the department was snapped. The team managed to douse the blaze within a few

6 nat'l spokespersons in BJD's newly-constituted media team **BJD** foundation day today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: After reconstitution of various wings of the party, BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Fridav reconstituted the media team of the party

The party has appointed six leaders as national spokespersons while 16 have been named as state spokespersons and 14 as panelists. BJD general secretary (media affairs), Manas Mangaraj, said in a press note here, Friday.

Senior BJD leaders and MPs-Prasanna Acharya, Pinaki Mishra, Achvuta Samanta, Amar Patnaik, Sasmit Patra and Sarmistha Sethi have been appointed as the national spokespersons of the party. Former principal AG Patnaik will specifically speak on economic issues and foreign affairs while other issues will be handled by five others. Similarly, Berhampur MP Chandra Sekhar Sahu, Nabarangpur MP Ramesh Chandra Majhi, legislators Pratap Keshari Deb, Snehangini Chhuria and Byomakesh Ray along with



THE TEAM CONSISTS **OF SIX NATIONAL SPOKESPERSONS. 16** SPOKESPERSONS AND **14 PANELISTS**

BHUBANESWAR: The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is all set to observe its 24th foundation day Saturday at its party headquarters here and in all constituencies across the state while adhering to Covid

guidelines. Party president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will address the leaders and party workers through videoconferencing.

As per the direction of party president, the foundation day will also be celebrated in all constituencies and municipalities of the state. As the party has now changed his stand against BJP and party leadership started targeting the

grees Celsius at seven places, Friday. Phulabani and Daringbadi were the coldest places in state recording 6 degrees Celsius each, while Sundargarh and Bhawanipatna recorded 8 degrees and 9 degrees, respectively. The minimum temperature at Jharsuguda was 9.4 degrees, Boudh 9.5 degrees and Koraput 9.6 degrees.

mistic about the rise in the number of blackbucks owing to community participation and steps taken by the department to protect the threatened species.

'We are readying for the Census which is scheduled in February. We are optimistic that the population of blackbuck will rise in Ganjam district," a Forest depart-

lages where they go. This is to ensure that they do not destroy the crops of other villagers," he said.

Several parts of Ganjam district like Bhetanai, Buguda, Balipada, Khallikote and other areas. In 2011, the blackbuck population was stated to be 2,194 while it increased to 3,806 in 2015 census.

minutes," Das said, pointing out that the fire was seemingly caused by an electrical short circuit.

Notably, the Telemedicine wing of the premier state-run facility has been playing a key role in connecting the patients and the healthcare experts, especially during the pandemic, reducing the footfall at the outdoor of SCB.

Lopamudra Buxipatra, Lenin Mohanty, Sanjay Baboo, Sulata Deo, Srimavee Sweta Snigdha Mishra. Chinmaya Sahoo, Elina Dash and Harish Choudhury were appointed as state spokespersons.

Raseswari Panigrahi, Kasturi

Mohapatra, Anubhab Patnaik,

Besides, Chandrani Murmu, Priyabrata Majhi, Chakradhar Dash, Om Prakash Sahu, Madhusmita Nayak, Ipsita Sahoo, Jyotshnamayee Parida, Sofia Alam,

Central government, all eyes are now on Naveen's speech.

Tumbanath Panda, Prasanta Kumar

Sahoo, Amit Mallick, Chhabi

Mahali, Maheekshita Mishra and Smruti Nanda have been appointed as panelists of the party to attend debates in media.

Pandemic takes sheen off Christmas celebrations

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The Covid-19 pandemic and its protocols took sheen off several festivals in the state and Christmas was not any different. There was no big midnight ceremony or mass with carol singing by devotees to welcome baby Jesus.

The St Vincent's Pro Cathedral church in the city was in darkness at the midnight of Thursday while some devotees were seen lighting candles outside the church. The Union church didn't celebrate the Christmas this year fearing virus spread. They had only virtual masses. On the other hand, the St Vincent Pro Cathedral church celebrated the Christmas with limited gathering.

John Barwa, Archbishop of St Vincent's Pro Cathedral Church, said, "Only 140 persons were allowed for each mass and all had to wear mask and sanitise their hands before entering the church. Only three persons were allowed to sit on a bench. If we all remain safe then we will celebrate next Christmas in a grand way.'

The church set different timings for masses throughout the day. The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) allowed the city churches to celebrate Christmas with limited number of participants and prior permission.

"Christmas is not about external decoration, it should be celebrated as a spiritual festival. This year's restrictions are part of the



People offer Christmas prayers at a church in Satya Nagar area of Bhubaneswar

God's plan to make people realise the true meaning and importance of Christmas," John Barwa added. Santa turns green

Meanwhile, city-based Bakul foundation made the Red and White Santa turn green this year as he joined hands with DediLoku (Tree Man in the Kui language), the green superhero, to give tree gifts to the city people. Instead of the sledge pulled by the reindeer, the Santa had a bullock cart which carried the

(Do you want saplings? Santa is

saplings as well. The bullock cart with Santa Claus and DediLoku moved from the Bakul Library at Satyanagar to Janpath amid shouts of 'Gachha Neba Gachha, Santa Deuchi Gachha'

providing the same) by about 30 college students, all volunteers of Bakul Foundation. Santa himself was heard shouting and singing, 'Santa Ho HoHoHo' (to the tune of

Ramba Ho HoHo Ho) Founder of Bakul Foundation,

Sujit Mahapatra, said, "This initiative is important now. The risk of Covid-19 is higher in urban areas, where the pollution is more, ventilation is less and trees are fewer. Moreover, in winter, the polluting particulate matters such as nitrogen dioxide remain suspended for longer.'

Trees and natural greenery have an important role as they sequester carbon and other pollutants and release oxygen. It is

claimed that an average tree sequesters about 1 tonne of carbon in its lifetime. But in winter, they



OP PHOTOS

Saplings being distributed by volunteers in Capital city

LOW-KEY AFFAIR

THE ST CATHEDRAL CHURCH IN THE CITY WAS IN DARKNESS AT THE MIDNIGHT OF THURSDAY WHILE SOME DEVOTEES WERE SEEN LIGHTING CANDLES OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

THE UNION CHURCH IN CITY DIDN'T CELEBRATE THE CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR FEARING VIRUS SPREAD

THE ST VINCENT PRO CATHEDRAL CHURCH CELEBRATED THE CHRISTMAS WITH LIMITED GATHERING

become less effective as they shed leaves. There have been significant researches establishing the role of trees in reducing respiratory diseases, he added

Free filming allowed at 46 **ASI-protected monuments**

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Following a Central government directive, Friday, filming and shooting will be allowed for free at 46 ASI-protected monuments of Odisha, barring the iconic sites like Konark in Puri.

Commemorating the 75th year of India's Independence, the Culture Ministry in an official statement said that people or agencies working on projects involving the heritage and culture will be exempt from paying fees for shooting photographs or videos at the monuments maintained by the ASI.

"The exemption commences from the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Late Atal Bihari Vajpayee December 25 till next Independence Day (August 15, 2021). Online permission is needed to carry out such shooting activities. This waiver will, however, not be applicable at the iconic sites that include world heritage sites," the statement said.

It can be mentioned that Sun temple at Konark and Fatehpur Sikri in Uttar Pradesh are among the 27 sites across the country listed, which are exempted from the relaxation. "The sites named in the list were the ones where the filming or shooting will not be allowed during the relaxation period," an official of superintending archaeologist Bhubaneswar circle said.



THE EXEMPTION IS **ALLOWED FROM DECEMBER 25 TO** AUGUST 15, 2021

There are about 46 monuments where rates are charged for filming or shooting. Out of these 46 monuments, there are about six ASI protected monuments in the capital city including Raja Rani temple, Mukteswar temple and Lingaraj temple among others.

The ministry in its statement further maintained that the ob- ২ jective to permit other than the world heritage monuments is to promote the lesser popular monuments and encourage people's engagement with them. "Earlier, the process of issuing permission forshooting at ASI sites has already been fast tracked," it said.





downtown

62ND SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS' CONFERENCE

Bipin Rawat to address senior cops

NAYAGARH HORROR **Hearing of PILs seeking CBI probe deferred** PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Dec 25: The Orissa High Court has deferred to January 11 the hearing on the petitions, seeking a CBI probe into the kidnapping and murder of a five-yearold girl in Nayagarh.

A division bench of Justice BR Sarangi and Justice Pramath Patnaik adjourned the hearing on two public interest litigations (PILs) after the Special Investigation Team (SIT) chief submitted a status report on the investigation into the case.

The two PILs, seeking the CBI inquiry into the case, were filed by an advocate Padmalaya Mohapatra and Bharatiya Vikash Parishad, a social organisation. The fiveyear-old girl was kidnapped and murdered in July. The Odisha government ordered a high courtmonitored SIT investigation keeping in view the gravity of the case and the failure of the police to make any headway even after five months since the incident.

The SIT has recently arrested a person, who is a resident of the victim's village, in connection with the case.

D Prakash Rao hospitalised

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 25: Noted social worker and Padma Shri awardee D Prakash Rao was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) of SCB Medical College and Hospital's Covid Hospital here as his health deteriorated, hospital sources said Friday.

"Rao, who had tested positive for Covid-19, has multiple complications like high blood sugar and blood pressure levels. As his health deteriorated Friday morning, Rao has been admitted to the ICU of SCB's Covid Hospital. His condition is critical," SCB Medicine head Javant Panda told the media.

Action against forest ranger recommended

BHUBANESWAR: The principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) Odisha wrote to the state government Thursday seeking disciplinary action against Sadar forest ranger on charge of dereliction of duty in connection

with a recent jumbo death in Sambalpur. PCCF, Harishankar Upadhyay, took serious note of the incident and said despite a fullfledged squad to track the jumbos straying into human habitats and railway lines, the Sadar forest

ranger failed to conduct thorough patrolling. Absence of patrolling in the area is the key reason behind the deaths of elephants by train accidents and electrocution, Upadhyay said. A jumbo was killed December 6 after it was hit by a train near Gargadabahal village between Jujumura and Hatibari area in Sambalpur district.

CHIEF MINISTER NAVEEN PATNAIK TO ADDRESS THE VALEDICTORY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The annual conference of senior officials of Odisha police for 2020 will be held online between December 27 and 30 here. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will address the officers on the valedictory function of the '62nd Senior Police Officers' Conference-2020'.

SESSION

The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Bipin Rawat is scheduled to deliver the keynote lecture during the virtual conference of top cops in the state.

TACKLING LAW & ORDER Brainstorming sessions will be held on various issues like law and order, crime scenario, left-wing extremism, organised crime, drug trafficking, quality investigation,

during the four-day conference The officers will hold discussions on important issues related to State Vigilance, Prisons, Home Guards & Fire Services and Odisha Police Housing and Welfare Corporation

road safety, paperless policing

The Superintendents of Police (SPs) of all the districts, DCPs, Commandants of all Armed Police Battalions, Range IGPs, DIGPs, and Senior Police Officers of various Police Establishments will participate in the conference going to be held virtually. Senior Officers of

Home Guards, Fire Services and Civil Defence Organisation, State Vigilance, OPH&WC, Prison Organisation and others have been invited as guests to the conference. Speaking to mediapersons, ADGP, Law and Order, Y K Jethwa stated that brainstorming sessions will

The officers will get the

of policing, anti-terrorism

forensic science

operations, cybercrime and

opportunity to obtain tips from

many domain experts in the field

be held on various issues like law and order, crime scenario, left-wing extremism, organised crime, drug trafficking, quality investigation, road safety, paperless policing during the four-day conference.

Similarly, the officers will hold discussions on important issues related to State Vigilance, Prisons, Home Guards & Fire Services and Odisha Police Housing and Welfare Corporation.

The officers will get the opportunity to get tips from many domain experts in the field of policing, anti-terrorism operations, cybercrime and forensic science. Several dignitaries including Director of IIT Kanpur, Director Interpol from Singapore are scheduled to share their rich and enriching experiences with the senior officials of the state during the virtual conference.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The state government has asked various departments to submit new project proposals for socio-economic development of 'Swabhiman Anchal' (erstwhile cut-off region) of Malkangiri district.

Planning and Convergence department has asked 10 departments-Rural Development (RD), Health & Family Welfare (H&FW), Water Resources (WR), Women & Child Development (W&CD), School & Mass Education (S&ME), Panchayati Raj & Drinking Water, Energy, SC & ST Development, Fisheries & Animal Resources Development (F&ARD) and Works—to submit their proposals to be taken during financial year 2021-22 under Socio-Economic Transformation and Upliftment (SETU) scheme.

Swabhiman Anchal devpt Out of the provision made for 2020-21 under the scheme, the Planning and Convergence department is having a balance amount of Rs 23.69 crore. Therefore, the 10 administrative departments were also asked to submit new proposals for the current year (2020-21).

State seeks proposals for _

The state government has so far sanctioned Rs 129 crore during three years under the SETU scheme for the development of Chitrokonda block of Malkangiri district.

According to official sources. Rs 49.23 crore was sanctioned in the first financial year 2018-19, while Rs 3.77 crore was released during FY 2019-20 and over Rs 76 crore in the current financial year.

In July 2018, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had inaugurated Gurupriya Setu over Janbai River and announced Rs 100 crore for development of the area on the other side of the bridge.

4-yr-old UK returnee Covid +ve

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Friday, revealed that a four-year-old girl, who had recently returned from the United Kingdom (UK) was tested positive for Covid-19.

BMC Additional Commissioner, Suvendu Sahu, stated that the child along with her parents had returned to Odisha from the UK, December 20. Though, the Covid-19 reports of the girl's parents turned out to be negative, she has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, he added.

According to Sahu, the girl's parents will undergo Covid-19 test again Saturday. At present, all the family members are in institutional quaran-**THE FAMILY** tine as per the **MEMBERS OF**

proto-**THE GIRL** cols, he added. **CHILD ARE IN**

It can be men- INSTITUTIONAL tioned QUARANTINE that a 34 year-old **AS PER THE** man PROTOCOLS

from the Capital city had tested positive for the virus following his return from the UK,

December 18. As per sources at the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA), about 61 returnees from the UK, including 45 to the Capital city, had transited through the British airport.

Odisha is the 11th state in the country where a UK returnee had tested Covid-19 positive. The BPIA had issued fresh SOP to the air-Apart from 1,853 fatalities report staff and airlines to tackle any ported so far, 53 Covid-19 positive untoward situation. patients have also died in the state The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation had also swung into action initiating intensive contact tracing after the United Kingdom returnee was tested positive of Covid-19. (138) and Puri (114).

State registers 325 fresh nCoV cases, 3 fatalities

Boudh, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri and Rayagada did not report any new positive case in the last 24 hours

he state Friday reported 325 new Covid-19 cases, pushing the coronavirus tally in Odisha to 3,27,867, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) de-

partment official said. Meanwhile, the Covid-19 death toll in the coastal state rose to 1,853 with three fresh fatalities in the last 24-hours, said the official, adding that the three fatalities were reported from Balasore, Dhenkanal

and Khurda districts. The new Covid-19 cases were detected in 24 of the 30 districts of Odisha, with 187 reported from different quarantine centres and the remaining 138 were local contact

cases Khurda district of which the state capital Bhubaneswar is a part recorded the highest number of new cases at 36, followed by Sundargarh (33) and Angul (32).

Six districts-Boudh, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri and Rayagada-did not report any new positive case in the last 24 hours, the official pointed out.

Taking to Twitter, the H&FW department said, "Regret to inform the demise of three numbers of Covid positive patients, while under treatment in hospitals."



in a nutshell

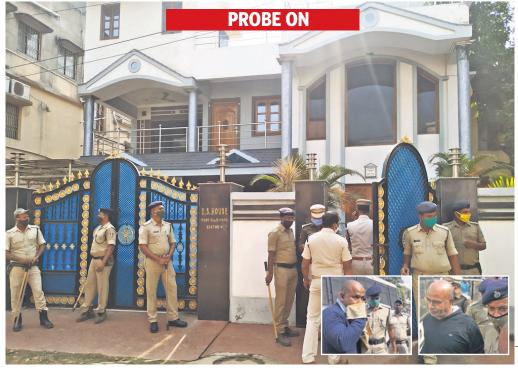
Khurda recorded the highest number of new cases at 36, followed by Sundargarh (33) and Angul (32)

The three fatalities were reported from Balasore. Dhenkanal and Khurda districts

Khurda alone accounted for 318 deaths followed by Ganjam (246), Sundargarh (163), Cuttack (138) and Puri (114)

The state has tested over 67.70 lakh samples for Covid-19 so far including 32,782 Thursday

Odisha's positivity rate stands at 4.84 per cent



The twin city Commissionerate Police raids the residence of Dhalasamanta brothers at CDA Sector VI area in Cuttack. Friday, in connection with illegal arms trade. (Insets) The gangster siblings being brought to their home as part of the ongoing investigation

Trade licence of litterbugs to be scrapped

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Acting tough on shopkeepers and street vendors who are littering the capital city, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) directed officials to cancel their trade licences.

Informing the media, BMC Commissioner Prem Chandra Choudhary said that despite repeated warnings and awareness drives, there are some habitual offenders who make it a habit to throw waste in front of their shops making the atmosphere unhealthy for commuters. He also mentioned that strict implementation of the directive will begin December 28. "The erring shopkeepers will not only be fined, their trade licences will also be revoked. If needed, their shops can be sealed



Launched under 'Mu Safaiwala' campaign, the civic authority in November had passed an official – order banning littering in public

The BMC has installed dustbins at strategic ор рното Spaces locations in the City

due to comorbidities, said the H&FW department official. Khurda district alone accounted for 318 deaths followed by Ganjam (246), Sundargarh (163), Cuttack

As many as 25 other districts reported casualties below 100. The state has tested over 67.70 lakh samples for Covid-19 so far, in-

cluding 32,782 Thursday. Odisha's positivity rate stands at 4.84 per cent, the data released by the H&FW department said

as well. We had discussed with the shopkeepers and street vendors to keep two types of bins - one for dry waste and another for wet garbage. But as the move did not yield any fruitful results, we have decided to cancel licences of the erring traders," stated Choudhary. Launched under 'Mu Safaiwala'

has asked the Collector to inter-

vene in the matter and remove the

illegal structures to reduce any

Taking up the issue suo motu, the

chance of threat to the river.

campaign, the civic authority in November had passed an official order banning littering in public spaces

The BMC had also begun its crackdown on littering in public places and collected about Rs 10,000 fine in three days earlier last week

CP to launch bail monitoring system Plea seeks removal of encroachments on Mahanadi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: In an attempt to put an end to the habitual offenders getting bail in just a few days after their arrests, the Commissionerate Police will launch a system soon to monitor the conditions under which the antisocials succeed in getting bails so quickly.

These criminals, after getting released on bail, involve themselves in various nefarious activities again. This has turned as one of biggest headache for the twin-city police.

A helpless police usually slap National Security Act (NSA) against such accused persons as a last resort to put the history-sheeters behind the bars for the sake public order.

Recently, the Commissionerate Police slapped NSA against gangster Raja Acharya who had succeeded in getting bail in an extortion case December 18.



As many as 16 antisocials have been detained under NSA during 2020.

In order to tackle the situation, the CP will launch a system soon to monitor the conditions under which the dreaded and habitual criminals succeed in getting bails so quickly.

Speaking on the issue, Deputy Bhubaneswar Commissioner of Police (DCP) Umashankar Dash said, "The investigating officers rarely receive the bail orders. So, they are unable to go through the orders to find the loopholes that help the accused seUnder the bail monitoring system, the police officials will look into various lacunae that are used by the offenders to get bail

cure bail. We will monitor the bail conditions through the system." Under the bail monitoring system, the police officials will look into

> various lacunae that are used by the offenders to get bail. Recently, a court granted bail to

some fake journalists arrested for extorting money from a businessman as the IO failed to submit the charge-sheet in time.

The officials will go through the documents produced by the bailers. Many bailers were also found producing fake properties and other documents to help the under-trials release on bail.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: A petition has been submitted to the Cuttack Collector and District Magistrate to remove illegal construction works on Mahanadi riverbed.

The petition was filed before the Collector seeking removal of a temple structure and others which are illegally build on the riverbed near Ratilo in Kisannagar tehsil in Cuttack district.

The case was earlier filed before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) where it was alleged that illegal construction works were being carried out on the Mahanadi riverbed. causing threat to the natural ecosys tem of the area

The NGT had earlier asked for inspection of the area. A joint inspection report of the state government also admitted that a Panchamukhi Hanuman temple was built in the area illegally.

However after the orders of NGT,



the panel admitted the illegality. The tribunal had also asked for an action-taken report (ATR) in the case, which the petitioner claimed has not been filed

The petitioner, Dilip Samantaray, NGT asked the state government to

THREAT TO ECOSYSTEM

THE PETITION WAS FILED BEFORE THE COLLECTOR SEEKING REMOVAL OF A TEMPLE STRUCTURE AND OTHERS WHICH ARE ILLEGALLY BUILD ON THE RIVERBED NEAR RATILO IN KISANNAGAR TEHSIL IN CUTTACK DISTRICT

THE NGT HAD EARLIER ASKED FOR INSPECTION OF THE AREA. A JOINT INSPECTION REPORT OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ALSO ADMITTED THAT A PANCHAMUKHI HANUMAN TEMPLE WAS BUILT IN THE AREA ILLEGALLY

THE TRIBUNAL HAD ALSO ASKED FOR AN ACTION-TAKEN REPORT (ATR) IN THE CASE, WHICH THE PETITIONER CLAIMED HAS NOT **BEEN FILED**

form a panel to frame laws to prevent encroachments on Mahanadi floodplains.

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Mining in state now reduced to extraction & sale

POST NEWS NETWORK

OMM, DMF push millet farming in tribal pockets

Keonjhar, Dec 25: As millet is a traditional staple food for tribals in hilly and forested areas, the Odisha Millet Mission in collaboration with the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) fund has been pushing this mission in many areas of the tribal-dominated district.

The efforts are on to ensure successful comeback of this traditional farming in Keonjhar, Bansapal, Harichandanpur, Jhumpura, Joda, Champua, Hatadihi blocks. Geo climatic conditions of these areas are favourable for millet farming. The OMM is encouraging tribal farmers to adopt Sri Method to boost harvest

Notably, millet was fast fading from agricultural landscape of the district. The nutrient-rich cereal has been revived and is getting the much-needed attention across the state because of its high nutritional value. Millets such as ragi, gurji and kosla (small millet), kodo, kangu (foxtail millet) and jowars are age-old traditional food of the hill dwellers.



Farmers are provided financial assistance. In the first year, each farmer is provided Rs 5000 and in second year Rs 3000 and in third year Rs 1500.

Those adopting line sowing are provided input incentives of Rs 2500 each per acre in the first year. Rs 1500 in the second year and Rs 100 in the third year. Improved technologies like transplantation are being adopted with less seeds and root intensification in these areas.

Besides, the government has made a provision of mandis to procure millets from farmers after harvest so as to prevent distress sale.

The objective is to increase millet production with marketing support and to promote milletbased food processing entrepreneurs, said an official.

Millet farming assumes importance now as the state government has laid stress on millet meals which are being served as 'khichhdi' and 'upma' under the ICDS and MDM programmes in

state

INDUSTRIALISTS WHO HAVE INVESTED BIG HERE DON'T GET RAW MATERIAL ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS RESULTING IN THEIR UNITS FALLING SICK

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, Dec 25: Post leasing out of mines, the mining sector in the state is reduced to mineral extraction and sale only. According to reports, the Joda mining circle has high quality iron ore which have high demand abroad but the local industries have become sick.

Given high profits in mineral business, all lease holders and traders generally raise the prices of minerals depending on demand. When demand for iron ores goes up, lease holders lower mineral extraction and create an artificial raw material shortage for industries and seek exorbitant prices from industries

As many as 106 iron ore mines in Joda are known for high quality iron ore. All Steel Authority of India Ltd mines are included in it. In Joda mining circle, there are 98 merchant mines and eight captive mines.

The merchant mines can extract minerals from their mines and transport them abroad or sell them to industries at their own will. On the other hand, captive mines are supposed to extract ores for use of their industries only and they are

not permitted to sell the ore in the open market.

About 90 per cent of mines in Joda area are merchant mines who sell iron ores to industries outside the state at a premium. However, industrialists who have invested in the state are unable to get the raw material according to their requirement, resulting in their units falling sick.

Investors who came to the state from all over the country and set up iron ore-based units had initially dreamt of cheap and easily accessible raw material. Their idea was they would get sufficient raw material either through captive mines or from merchant mine owners. However, with the new method of auctioning and licencing adopted by the government which has little consideration for existing plants, their future is bleak. With imminent closure, unemployment looms large on the horizon for thousands of local workers during this pandemic when other avenues of income have vanished. Requesting anonymity, the owner

of a steel unit said during the signing of MoUs, the state government agreed to provide mines or provide iron ores to industries from the public sector undertaking mines



as per the requirement of industries. However the government is unable to provide minerals to industries based on their actual needs. On the other hand, merchant mines supply high quality iron ores to industries outside the state. To evade taxes they show low quality iron ores, he revealed.

Industries in the state are facing an artificial shortage of raw material, leading to their falling

sick or closing down. Due to tax evasion in the form of poor revenue payment, the state govern-

ment incurs huge losses. It is also heating the employment prospect of youths. According to AITUC state secretary Maheswar Rout most of the

mineral based industries set up in the state use iron ores. "There are scores of sponge iron, pellet and other small plants in the state. They

are on the verge of closure for shortage of iron ores. The state government should provide raw material to

them through its PSUs. Or else, they will face closure. Thousands of staff and workers will be rendered jobless. The government should take steps to operationlise the closed iron and manganese mines. About 50 per cent of the iron ores being extracted by merchant mines should be earmarked for industries in the state only," Rout observed.

Kapil Mohanty, secretary of

Keonjhar mines and forest work-ers union, said the state government had no idea on how the industries should operate and from where

Champua MLA Meenakshi Mohanta said the state government is committed to development of industries and removal of unemployment problem. She however, refused to speak more on mines and industries.

(PCC) President Niranjan Patnaik

BJP leader Murali Manohar

employed youths in the state is in-

creasing, he added.

Sharma said for

shortage of raw

materials, in-

dustries in the

state have fallen

sick. Steel in-

dustries have

closed while the

number of un-

said he has in-

formed the

Chief Minister

about this in writing before

the start of the

auction process

for mines.

Pradesh Congress Committee

Covid-19 worries haunting Ganjam people once again

POST NEWS NETWORK

Ganjam, Dec 25: With the emergence of a new strain of coronavirus in England, the Ganjam district administration has put a ban on government officials and employees leaving the district headquarters.

Initially when the Covid-19 pandemic was at its peak. Ganiam district remained at the top of the list by reporting maximum number of positive cases continuously for months. However, the district administration's effective handling of the situation bore fruits and the pandemic has now been controlled in the district.

Having experienced the sting of Covid-19, the Ganjam administration seems to be in no mood

to take the recent case of a new strain of coronavirus emerging in the UK casually. Sensing the seriousness of the situation, Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange has

put a ban on government officials leaving the district headquarters. He also directed his officials to ensure zero gatherings at pic-

3 UK returnees in Berhampur

BERHAMPUR: Even as the mutated coronavirus strain in the UK is causing worldwide panic, the district administra-

tion Friday confirmed that at least three persons have returned to Berhampur from the UK.

On the sidelines of launching 'Covid Sachetanata Rath' which will cover two blocks every day till December 29, District Collector Vijay

Amruta Kulange Friday informed about the Britain returnees

'We have already traced one of the three returnees who is in home quarantine. However, there is no need to

The family of the woman

booked a 102-ambulance.

Although the ambulance

and hilly terrains it could

with villagers carried her on a cot

and waded through a stream and

hilly terrains to reach the ambulance

which was stationed two kilometres

She was immediately rushed to

Nandapur Community Health

Centre (CHC) in the ambulance

where she is undergoing treatment

and is stated to be stable now.

from Debasandhagura village.

arrived, due to streams

not reach the woman

was conducted twice and reports came out negative for Covid-19.

Efforts are underway to trace out the other two returnees," he said, adding, people should not let their guards down. Rather, the emergence of the new strain of coronavirus has meant we are more vigilant to keep the virus at bay.

Referring to people of Ganjam district, he said the district has won the battle against coronavirus in its first phase and it was possible due to the cooperation of people. The same cooperation is required to triumph over this in the second phase.

Since it is suspected that the mutated coronavirus has already reached cities like Delhi, Karnataka and Maharashtra, all have to be extra cautious, he added.

The district reported tw

Haldhar's poems in Gulzar's book

the Kosali poet also expressed his

Bharat' - a collection of short sto-

ries, exploring India's art, culture,

music, folklore and human stories

The film produced by filmmaker and

documentary director Bharatbala

was released on YouTube in 2019.

savs, "Main tumhe khat likh raha

In the opening of the film, Gulzar

The poet was featured in 'Virtual

deepest gratitude to Gulzar.

they would get raw materials.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Dec 25: 'A Poem a Day', a collection of Indian poems selected and translated by legendary poet, lyricist and filmmaker Gulzar, has featured two of Padma Shri awardee Haldhar Nag's poems.

The Kosali poet's poems getting space in the filmmaker's book is not a mean achievement. What is even more impressive is the fact that Gulzar featured two of Nag's poems on the first page of 'A Poem a Day'.

The book has 365 contemporary poems in 34 languages penned by 279 poets of India.

'Pancha Amruta' and 'Chitthi Deuchhen Re Haldhar' are the two poems of Nag that have found place on the first page of 'A Poem a Day'.

Biraja temple to reopen from Dec 29

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Dec 25: After a wait of nine months following the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, the district administration decided Friday in favour of reopening Biraja temple in Jajpur for devotees from December 29.

This was informed by District



will be allowed to have darshan of

Maa Biraia between 6am and 5pm

A detailed standard operating procedure (SOP) for compliance of Covid-19 safety protocols will be issued for the visitors as well as the temple servitors, an official source informed. Keeping in mind the expected rush during the New Year's Day, visitors will not be allowed into the temple January 1,2 and 3. Darshan of the deity will resume from January 4.

hun, Haldhar. Sambalpur ki mitti The first page of the book also carries a message from Gulzar. He se ugaa hua veh Adivasi kavi. writes, "Dear Haldhar, you are like 'Kosali' zabaan mein likhta hai... the sunrise of my book. (I am writing a letter to you, Haldhar.

Padma Shri Nag recently re-Son of the soil of Sambalpur, this ceived a copy of 'A Poem a Day' Adivasi poet writes in Kosali lanalong with a letter from Gulzar. In guage. the letter, the noted filmmaker expressed his desire to meet the poet in person. Reciprocating the feelings,

EAST COAST RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM ary changes have been made in th e-Tender Notice No. eT-M-KUR-CM-BBS-126-20, Closing date: 08.01.2021 which may lease be noted All other terms and conditions will rem unchanged. For detailed corrigendum, please vis ebsite: http://www.ireps.gov.in Sr. Divisional M PR-446/L/20-21 Khurda Roa

get panicked as RT-PCR test positive cases Friday.

Collector Chakravarti Singh Rathore every day, Rathore added.

Pregnant woman carried on Bimlagarh-Talcher rly line hits land hurdle cot to hospital in Koraput POST NEWS NETWORK would be no problem for construc-Inordinate tion of the railway project (82.65

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput. Dec 25: Yet another incident of poor road connectivity playing with the lives of people living in remote areas of the state surfaced Thursday as a pregnant woman was carried on a cot to avail health services in Koraput district.

The incident was reported from Debasandhagura village under Nandapur block in Koraput district. According to locals, a woman of the village experienced labour pain Thursday evening. Her family members booked a 102-ambulance. Although the ambulance arrived, due to streams and hilly terrains it could not reach the woman.



Frequent incidents of pregnant women and patients being carried on cots and slings owing to nonmotorable roads and lack of transportation facilities in several pockets of Odisha have revealed the ground reality of the healthcare delivery system in the state.

Without an alternative, the woman's family members along

Rourkela, Dec 25: The state government has delayed acquisition and handing over of land to the East Coast Railway for the Bimlagarh-Talcher railway line project. As a result, its pace of construction has slowed down. The project was supposed to be completed by 2022, but its completion is expected to be delayed by three years. Its cost has escalated to Rs 3,000 crore from Rs 806 crore, a report said.

The project is passing through Angul, Deogarh and Sundargarh districts. The project is expected to boost the economy of these districts. a report said. Commissioner of commerce and transport Madhusudan Padhi visited these districts to take stock of the land acquisition. His visit came after a PIL



was filed at the High Court by Talcher-Bimlagarh-Sangram Samiti. Padhi discussed the land issues with Rourkela Collector, ADM, sub-collector and land acquisition officers. He said all legality in the matter of land acquisition has been completed but it is getting delayed for shortage of staff. The Collector has been asked to take necessary steps in this regard.

"Due to the efforts of the gov-

delay has escalated the project cost from ₹806 crore to ₹3,000 crore

ernment and the Sangram Samiti, 664 acres of forest land have been made available in 2019. As per information from the East Coast railway December 18, 2020, all private and government land in Talcher and Kaniha tehsils have been handed over to the railways," revealed.

In Pallahada tehsil, 391 acres have been acquired but it has not been handed over to the railway, he said. Padhi assured that there

km stretch) in Angul district.

The government is likely to hand over 192 acres of private land and 81 acres of government land for 32km stretch in Deogarh by December end. As of now, only 17.62 km from Talcher to Sunakhani has been completed while the next stretch of 16.3 km is targeted to be finished by March, 2022.

This has dealt a blow to the key railway infrastructure project as the state government has failed to acquire the required land.

According to ECoR, only 298 acres of the total 921 acres of private land could be acquired till July 14. No land could be acquired in Sundargarh and Deogarh districts. Of the total 422 acres of government land, only 162 acres could be acquired.

SIT chief shields real culprit: Pari's mom Wild bear visits temple on a regular basis

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koksara, Dec 25: A bear has fallen in love with temple prasad! Sounds unbelievable, but it is true. A bear has been regularly visiting a temple at the foot of Sahajkhol hill in Koksara block on the outskirts of Kalahandi district to eat prasad offered by devotees

The tribal people living here worship Budharaja as their deity. There is a temple at the foot of Sahajkhol hill below Aamapani Ghat where Budharaja is worshipped by these tribal people.

For last couple of days, what the villagers have been witnessing is a rare experience for them, they stated. According to them, a bear is coming to the temple every day.



"Bear is a wild animal and has been notorious for getting fierce at times, causing serious injuries to people. But this bear is not like that. After sunset, it comes to the

- The tribal people living here worship Budharaja as their deity. There is a temple at the foot of Sahajkhol hill below Aamapani Ghat where Budharaja is worshipped by these tribal people
- Villagers say: Bear is a wild animal and has been notorious for getting fierce at times, causing serious injuries to people. But this bear is not like that. After sunset, it comes to the temple, eats the fruits offered by the deportees and then returns to the jungle on its own

temple, eats the fruits offered by the are learnt to have stopped coming deportees and then returns to the out of their houses after the sun sets jungle on its own," they observed. in. The local forest department of-Even if it has not attacked anyficers could not be reached for one as yet, people are in fear. They their comments

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Dec 25: The deceased, Pari's mother, Saudamini Sahu, alleged Thursday evening that SIT chief Arun Bothra has been making stories to shield the real culprit in the much-talked about rape and murder case in Nayagarh district.

Notably, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been investigating the alleged rape and murder of the minor girl at Jadupur village.

Nearly, 75 per cent bones of the victim are missing. "The cops have found 12 pieces of bones along with the skull. Our body has 206 bones; so, where are the other bones. The SIT is making stories just to save the actual criminal. Babuli Navak and his gang are involved in the



The SIT is making stories just to save the actual criminal. Babuli Nayak and his gang are involved in the crime, says Saudamini

crime," Pari's mother Saudamini said. Saudamini further claimed that her daughter was killed for

organ trade. Earlier in the day, Bothra had clarified that bones of the deceased girl are not missing. When asked as to why the police sniffer dogs failed to trace the decomposed body by following the stench, Bothra said,

"The SIT hasn't used dog squad. So I cannot comment on dog squad."

"The towel which Saroj used to clean blood stains after killing the 5-year-old girl, has been sent to laboratory for testing. The accused had washed the towel several times but bloodstains were found. Thetowel and leggings are major evidence in the case," he added.





power post

FOCUS PEOPLE

The whole world yearns after freedom, yet each creature is in love with his chains; this is the first paradox and inextricable knot of our nature.



Lateral entry runs into a babu wall

SRI AUROBINDO

arlier this year, Arvind Panagariya, former vice-chief of the govern-✓ ment NITI Åayog, wrote in his book "India Unlimited – Reclaiming the Lost Glory" that Indian babus suffered from the socialist hangover. which has slowed down the pace of reforms the Modi sarkar wishes to introduce (Dilli Ka Babu, April 16. 2020). To buttress his view, he claimed that the government's attempts to privatise several PSUs remained stalled for long despite Prime Minister Modi's push to get Cabinet approval for the list of PSUs drawn up by the NITI Aayog. He also cited Modi's initiative for lateral entry at the top levels of the bureaucracy. According to Panagariya, babus slowed down the process to the extent that at the very end of his term only nine officers could be inducted from outside.

His prophecy now seems to be coming true (though this will be hotly contested by the babus!). One of the nine officers has decided to call it quits. According to sources, domain expert Arun Goel who had joined the Commerce Ministry as joint secretary has put in his papers, barely a year after the much tom-

tomed lateral entry of specialists in government. It is widely believed that the others hired under the scheme may similarly exit the government. If that happens, it will ring down the curtain on one of Modi's pet "reforms", which no previous gov-

BABUDOM BYTES Dilip Cherian

ernment had shown the inclination to implement.

The signs are already there. There have been no new appointments this year through lateral entry since the scheme was introduced last year to bring in domain experts from outside to fill the shortage of specialists in the upper echelons of the bureaucracy.

Is it a brave experiment destined not to succeed? Some observers believe that the scheme was not expected to succeed since the entrenched babus were wary of those who intruded on to their turf and would stymie any such attempt by the government. The babus seem to have fought off this breach of their castle. The walls they have erected around themselves are still holding up.

NDDB gets new chief

Until 2014, the chairmanship of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) was held by dairy professionals. But in its six years term at the Centre, the Modi sarkar has chosen to name only able senior administrators to the top post at NDDB.

Earlier this month, the government named Varsha Joshi, a 1995-batch IAS officer of the AGMUT cadre, as the new chairperson of NDDB. Previously, Joshi was the Joint Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying. Her appointment ended speculation on Dilip Rath who was Managing Director of NDDB and later held additional charge of the post of Chairman since 2016 getting another extension.

Sources say that Rath's claim to being the only Indian after Dr Amrita Patel, another former chief of NDDB, to be elected to the board of the International Dairy Federation, and his showcasing of his achievements on social media did not endear him to the powers that be.

Varsha Joshi has been Commissioner, North Delhi Municipal Corporation, Secretary, Power, Delhi Government, joint Secretary in the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy and Director with the Census of India.

> Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

WISDOM CORNER

- If something is important enough, even if the odds are stacked against you, you should still do it.
- ELON MUSK
- Don't be afraid to give up the good to go for the great. JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER
- People who wonder if the glass is half empty or full miss the point.

WHO IS AMERICA?

hv would a US President in the last weeks of his administration want to start executing federal prisoners at a furious pace, even as he pardons four American mercenaries who murdered 14 Iraqi civilians in cold blood? The federal government has killed ten men already this year – more judicial killings than in all of America's states combined. Three more executions remain to come before Donald Trump leaves office next month one for a murder committed when the condemned man was barely 18 years old, and one the first woman put to death by the federal gov ernment in 70 years.

The Trump administration's killing spree goes against all recent norms and trends, which have reduced executions to almost none And the frenetic activity on death row is going on even as the lame duck administration is doing very little else, aside from angrily contesting the election results. It is President-elect Joe Biden who is trying to talk sensibly about the Covid-19 crisis in America, not Donald Trump.

Is Trump's bloodlust due to a fit of pique because he lost the election? Is it just a matter of personal malice? Or is it symbolic, a brutal gesture toward "law and order," setting up Biden as a softie if he carries out his promise to abolish the death penalty?

Thinking about a possible explanation, I was reminded of an anecdote told by the late great Belgian sinologist and essayist Simon Leys. He was responding to the British journalist Christopher Hitchens, who had written a scathing book about Mother Theresa, entitled, in a typical Hitchens provocation, The Missionary Position. Leys, a devout Catholic, believed that Hitchens was so overawed by the spiritual superiority of Mother Theresa that he wanted to drag her down to his own base level.

Whether or not Leys was right about Hitchens, the anecdote bears repeating. One day, Leys was work-



One of former President Barack Obama's verbal tics was to declare that the baser instincts lurking in the darker corners of American life did not represent "who we are." But four years of Donald Trump's presidency, which is ending with an unprecedented spree of federal executions, suggest that millions of Americans disagree

ing in a noisy café somewhere in refinement. Few Presidents in his-Australia. The radio was playing tory have his gift for English prose. rubbishy pop music. Then, as Obama is not only a stylish writer, though by a miracle, the probut a discerning reader. His begramme changed and Leys heard havior in office was always imthe glorious sound of a Mozart peccable, and he and his wife, quintet. After a moment of silence Michelle, are the model of a highly in the room, a man abruptly rose civilized couple. to his feet and, as though in a fit of anger, switched the radio back of his opponents could never abide. to musical pap. The relief in the Racists hated the very idea of café was palpable. being governed by a black man. But

Levs reflected on this peevish gesture. Did the man hate classical music? Did he have a peculiar loathing of Mozart? Or perhaps his lack of cultivation made it impossible for him to appreciate the beauty of this music. Leys concluded that it was none of those things. It was, on the contrary precisely because the man sensed the quality of the music that he had to cancel it. Mozart had made him feel small, insignificant, uncouth. He had to drag the music down to his own level.

A similar type of aggression has marked the four years of Trump's presidency. Barack Obama had his flaws as a president, but he always exuded an air of dignity and

to declare that the baser instincts lurking in the darkened corners of American life were "not who we are" as Americans. Torturing prisoners in "black sites" all over the world was "not who we are." Racist killings in black churches were "not who we are." And so on.

Obama was nothing if not an aspirational leader. He expressed in his books and his speeches a high ideal of the United States. In this respect, he followed the example of Martin Luther King, Jr. Both men were fully aware of America's coarse, violent, racist side. Both tried hard to appeal to people's better nature. They hoped that their country would one day live up to their vision of it.

That is exactly what provoked the aggression of Trump and his devoted supporters. Being crass, prejudiced, and extolling violence was the key to Trump's success. The coarser his language, the cruder his behavior, the more his supporters cheered him on. It was their revenge on Obama, and every thing he stood for.

Biden's popularity has been based on the exact opposite. He is the anti-Trump who promises to restore dignity to American politics. Like Obama, he expresses faith in reason and pa triotic bipartisanship, and promises that his administration will put an end to an era of social and political vandalism.

We don't know whether he will succeed. It is far easier to destroy than it is to rebuild, as Trump's presidency demonstrated time and again. And no matter how much Biden wishes to pursue Obama's aspiration of a more civilized society, there are millions of Americans who still think that is not at all "who we are."

Ian Buruma is the author, most recently, of 'The Churchill Complex: The Curse of Being Special', 'From Winston and FDR to Trump and Brexit'.

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SPECTRUM EDUCATION

Ian Buruma

THE TRUMP

ADMINISTRATION'S

KILLING SPREE

GOES AGAINST

TRENDS, WHICH

HAVE REDUCED

EXECUTIONS TO

ALMOST NONE

ALL RECENT

NORMS AND

The magic of the syllabus

uring the 2007-08 financial the course that they can't do at the about academic honesty, accomcrises, many experienced Globally, more than \$15 trillion seemed to evaporate, and people wondered, "Wait a second, what is money? How could all of this value just disappear? If this thing that represented that other thing can vanish, was there ever anything there in the first place?" Those of us who teach at universities are currently going through something similar because of Covid-19. Losing most of the physical markers of academic life -no classrooms or offices, and students instead beamed into our homes via Zoom - has forced us to question what a university is and what higher education means. In 2020, the answer is not obvious. Virtual teaching, like online business, socialising, or prayer, is nothing like the real thing. Subtract dorm life, parties, physical classrooms, and office hours in actual offices from the higher-education experience, and what remains is quite sterile. But this pared-down environment may also be revealing something essential that had been hidden by all the climbing walls, cafeterias, and culture wars namely, the mechanism by which learning happens. What should students be able to do at the end of

beginning? What happens when modations for special learning what literary scholars call we ask that question? By building needs, and grievance policies. Yet, at its heart, the syllabus is a piece way professors could then add the of writing that a teacher crafts in order to imagine a classroom community into being.

And that is precisely what some

the fact that he was such a well-ed-

ucated and cultivated black man

made his ascent to the highest of-

Many commentators in the

past four years have pointed out

that Trump was driven by an ob-

sessive desire to tear down every-

thing his predecessor had built.

Various reasons were given:

Trump's deep insecurity; his

playing to his base; or his own

racial prejudices. I think Leys' an-

ecdote about the Australian café

offers the best explanation.

Trump had to erase the image of

high civilization that Obama rep-

resented. He had to drag it down

One of Obama's verbal tics was

to his own level.

fice even more intolerable.

board or chalk was doing the teaching, yet today we risk imagining that our sophisticated technology can make up for the lack of a robust, practical pedagogy. Professors who

The glass is refillable.

UNKNOWN

WORDS**WORTH**

Bridegroom

A Groom is common as a short form of bridegroom. How the word that we Anow use for a man who looks after horses came to be linked to one half of a marrying couple is one of the classic stories of popular misunderstandings - folk etymology - that cause language to evolve in unpredictable ways. In Old English, a bridegroom was a brydguma, a compound of bryd, a bride or marriage, and guma, a man. Guma, which is related to Latin homo, was a poetic term for a man, which turns up in the epic poem Beowulf, as does another version of the same word, gome. By the sixteenth century brydguma had become brydegome (though the spelling was variable). This was starting to look puzzling, because gome had become obsolete, and people didn't connect it with that old word for a man. On the other hand, they did have groom.

Bridewell

n the early sixteenth century, what was modestly called lodging was built for Henry VIII on the banks of the Fleet River in London. It was actually a brick palace arranged around three courtvards. Its claim to fame is partly etymological and partly artistic. The latter came about because in 1533 it was the scene of Holbein's famous painting, The Ambassadors. The former was due to Edward VI, who gave the palace to the City of London as a hospital, orphanage and prison. Later it was used mainly for the short-term confinement and punishment of petty offenders and those who were regarded as anti-social misfits, such as vagrants, itinerants, vagabonds and loose women. The palace was sited near an ancient holy well called St. Bride's Well and became known as Bridewell. The name was passed on to the prison.

LOL

Show him your badge

D^{EA} officer stops at a ranch in Texas, and talks with an old rancher.. He tells the rancher, "I need to inspect your ranch for illegally grown drugs." The rancher says, 'Okay, but do not go in that field over there," as he points out the location. The DEA officer verbally explodes saying, "Mister, I have the authority of the Federal Government with me." Reaching into his rear pants pocket, he removes his badge and proudly displays it to the rancher. "See this badge? This badge means I am allowed to go wherever I wish On

any land... No questions asked or answers given. Have

made myself clear? Do you understand? " The rancher nods politely, apologizes, and goes about his chores. A short time later, the old rancher hears loud screams and sees the DEA officer running for his life chased by the rancher's big Santa Gertrudis Bull... With every step the bull is gaining ground on the officer, and it seems likely that he'll get gored before he reaches safety. The officer is clearly terrified. The rancher throws down his tools. runs to the fence and yells at the top of his lungs... "Your badge... Show him your badge!"

William Germano & Kit Nicholls LOSING MOST OF **THE PHYSICAL MARKERS OF ACADEMIC HAS FORCED US TO QUESTION WHAT A UNIVERSITY IS AND WHAT HIGHER EDUCATION MEANS**

etters

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and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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send in their valuable comments, opinion

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TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST

(200 words), articles and

requested to send their contact numbers and full

columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are

needed skills in stages. This simple idea is not exactly new, but it is not at the center of current higher education debates

Partly because faculty has not organised themselves to answer the essential question of what and how universities teach, that task has fallen increasingly to administrators responsible for "assessment." A set of "measurable objectives" is set in various planning and accreditation documents and "student outcomes" are standardised at the institutional level. Many professors fear that these administrative structures and strictures are gaining greater purchase during the pandemic. Online courses can be monitored and recorded, and may come to resemble algorithms rather than learning communities.

But long before college presidents had MBAs and academic human resources managers had more job security than professors, US higher education had its own planning document: the humble course syllabus.

Many professors worry that the syllabus has itself fallen prey to too many bureaucratic requirements, including quasi-legal disclaimers

That is not the traditional view. of course. Back in the mid-twentieth century, the syllabus was mostly a list of the knowledge a professor would deliver to students. But today, the syllabus is an opportunity to plot a story in which the students – not teachers - are the protagonists. Devising one gives any teacher the chance to do what good writers do, and engage empathetically with others' experiences. That way, teachers can create classes that take students through difficulty and change to somewhere new.

We are not advocating making every class somehow "vocational," much less sentimentalizing the hard work of learning. Rather, teachers should plan their courses backwards by developing assignments - readings, experiments, and projects – in a progression so that students learn how as much as what, week by week, even class by class.

Technology of all kinds can be critical, and especially now, when almost all of us are teaching on screen. But it is, and must be, a tool, not a proxy. No classroom teacher ever thought that the black-

are asking how tech can improve their teaching are asking the wrong question.

Using the pandemic to reimagine the goals of teaching might be the unexpected upside of a miserable situation. Teachers can find within this crisis the opportunity to rethink the precious classroom dynamic. After all, teaching students how to learn, and to learn how to do things themselves beyond the classroom, is education's necessary gift to society.

Giving that gift, and making sure it is received, will require a lot of good writing - not the bureaucratic or disposable kind, but something more imaginative. That may not sound like the syllabus you remember from your own university days, but it is what we need now.

William Germano is Professor of English at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art's Center for Writing. Kit Nicholls is Director of the Center for Writing at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Steady fall

Sir, From being a caged parrot of the powers that be, the inability of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to take investigation and prosecution in crucial and sensational criminals cases to their logical conclusion have bamboozled everyone. That courts are increasingly questioning the CBI'S integrity is a shocking indictment of the latter. The Allahabad High Court judgement in the Aarushi Talwar-Hemraj Banjade double murder was a classic lesson to the CBI on how not to investigate a case. However, two recent verdicts of the Madras High Court questioning the competency, expertise and integrity of CBI officers should come as another wake up call for the agency. The agency 'lost' in its custody 103 kg of the 400 kg gold it seized from a private corporate giant in 2012 kept in the latter's safes and vaults under its responsibility. When the case came up for hearing, there was no plausible explanation forthcoming from the CBI. To add insult to injury, the high court asked the state CB-CID to investigate the matter, a move fiercely opposed by the CBI but to no avail. Generally, the CBI is entrusted a case by governments after their state investigation agencies fail to do their work. But in the instant case, the unthinkable 'reverse' happened

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Roll on Brexit

Sir, The so-called Brexit deal between the UK and the EU has just reached the final stage at last with both the parties clinching the final deal. On the other part, there have been different stories and confusing signals from certain quarters about the deal. As a result of the Brexit deal, business patterns, facets of export/import and farming and job scene are all up for some more breaking points. But it is all about the good rapport and business coexistence between the peers and neighbors at the end of the day. In general, cutting a deal takes a lot of efforts and introspection. There will be initial hiccups. However, they have to bear the brunt of everything out there. One report shows that the farmers involved in Scottish seed potatoes cultivation have been left out of the Brexit business pact. Cherry-picking-choosing only the benefits- won't do. So in the current context, the UK and the EU should adjust to the new patterns through mutual understanding and encouraging all the agriculture and business activities across the board

P Senthil Saravana Durai, MUMBAI



Farmers, BJP activists face off Amarinder asks farmers not

AGENCIES

Chandigarh, Dec 25: Tension prevailed between protesting farmers and BJP activists in Punjab Friday over functions to mark the 96th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The farmers have been protesting against the three farm laws brought by the BJP-led central government

The main events where the disruption, even minor scuffles, took place were held at Punjab's Bathinda and Jalandhar towns.

At Bathinda, the agitated farm ers reached the spot where the BJP workers were going to hold a function to celebrate the birth anniversary and allegedly manhandled them and pelted them with stones. Police had to use mild force to disperse the protesters. Later, the farmers staged on sit-in protest there.

Bathinda BJP chief Vinod Gupta and state BJP legal cell co-convener Ravinder Gupta, among others, sustained minor injuries in the melee.

Farmer union BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) leader Mothu Kotra said: "The farmers are sitting in the open despite severe cold on the Delhi borders and the BJP was celebrating something here. As a mark



Police intervene after a mild altercation between BJP supporters and a section of protestors who were agitating against the new farm laws, in Bathinda, Friday

of protest we didn't allow them to mark the function." "Moreover, our protests against state BJP leaders have been going on for over three months," he told the media.

Likewise, the farmers didn't allow the BJP to hold a similar event in Jalandhar city.

Bharti Kisan Union (Doaba) activists Friday gheraoed local BJP leaders who had gathered at a hotel in Phagwara to observe the birth anniversary of former prime minis-

ter Atal Bihari Vajpayee, forcing

them to slip out from the backdoor under police protection. The protesters claimed that the

hotel was owned by a BJP activist who also ran a company supplying cattle and chicken feed. They said they will boycott the company's products. Led by the union's vice president Kirpal Singh Mussapur, a number of activists held a protest outside the hotel and gheraoed those BJP leaders and workers who

had managed to get inside before farmers started their demonstration.

The protesters also did not allow several BJP activists, including Bharati Sharma, district president of BJP's Mahila Wing, to go inside the hotel, police said.

Those who had gone inside had to slip one by one from the hotel's backdoor under police protection in order to save themselves from the wrath of the protesters, police said.

They included BJP district and block presidents Rakesh Duggal and Paramjit Singh Pamma Chachoki and former Mayor Arun Khosla. Mussapur alleged that BJP's programme and anti-farmers' propaganda were being done under the garb of Vajpayee Jayanti celebration. He said 'kisans', 'mazdoors' (farm labours) and 'mulazams' (employees) will boycott the hotel and the company's products.

The protesters raised slogans against the Narendra Modi government and Union minister Som Parkash. Protesters hoisted the BKU flag on a pole outside the hotel, warning it's owner that if the flag was removed or any BJP function was allowed at the hotel in future, farmers will 'gherao' both the hotel and the company along national highway

to disrupt telecom services

There were reports that farmers at various places in Punjab were disconnecting power supply to mobile towers of a particular telecom operator, disrupting their services

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Dec 25: Amid reports that power supply to mobile towers was being disconnected by protesting farmers in different parts of the state. Puniab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Friday appealed to them to not inconvenience the general public with such actions.

He urged them to exercise the same restraint that they had been showing over the past several months and said that telecom connectivity had become even more critical for people amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The chief minister said the farmers protesting against the Centre's new farm laws should show the same discipline and sense of responsibility which they had been exercising during their protest at the Delhi border, which completed one month, and also earlier during their agitation in the state. Singh's appeal came in the wake



of a request from the Tower and Infrastructure Providers Association (TAIPA), a registered body of telecom infrastructure providers, asking the state government to persuade farmers not to resort to any unlawful activity in their fight for justice, a state government statement said here.

There were reports that farmers at various places in Punjab, including Mansa, Barnala, Ferozepur and Moga, were disconnecting the power supply to mobile towers of a particular telecom operator during the past few days, disrupting their services.

Urging farmers not to take the law into their hands by forcibly shutting down telecom connectivity or manhandling employees and technicians of telecom service providers. the chief minister said such actions were not in the interest of Punjab and its future.

Singh, in a statement here, said the people of Punjab were standing with farmers in their fight against the "black farm laws and will con tinue to do so"

He requested the farmers to reciprocate by ensuring that the battle for justice does not cause any problems for the people of the state.

"Forceful disruption of telecom services due to snapping of power supply to mobile towers by farmers in several parts of the state is not only adversely affecting the studies and future prospects of students. who are dependent entirely on on line education, but also hampering the daily life of people working from home due to the pandemic, Singh said.

Owaisi's AIMIM to contest MP may get a new LoP from Congress urban local body polls in MP Within the party, it is being said that after the demise of senior leader Ahmed Patel, Kamal Nath's role at the centre can increase and he can get a greater responsibility from the party high command

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, Dec 25: The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) led by Lok Sabha MP Asaduddin Owaisi would contest the upcoming urban local body elections in Madhya Pradesh, for which the party has devised a strategy to conduct a survey in the Muslimdominated areas of the state.

The urban local body polls using EVMs are likely to be held in Madhya Pradesh in February next year for which the State Election Commission has completed all the preparations. AIMIM is all set to enter the political fray in the state through these polls. Naeem Ansari, the acting President of the party's Madhya Pradesh unit, has accepted that the prospects of the party's status are being explored in the wake of the local body elections along with a survey to be conducted soon.

Sources said that AIMIM is eveing especially those areas where



cusing on Indore, Bhopal, Ujjain,

Khandwa, Sagar, Burhanpur,

Balaghat and Mandsaur.

large parts of engaged in a the state triangular fight al experts believe that if the AIMIM also contests the urban local body elections, the Congress is expected to suffer a political dent there are a large number of Muslim in the 2017 Uttar Pradesh elections, voters. Owaisi is specifically fo-

has been a

38 candidates were fielded from different constituencies, but it failed to win a single Assembly seat. At the same time, 44 candidates

There are some

(BSP) is

Khargone, Ratlam, Javra, Jabalpur, won the elections in the recent Owaisi has tried to increase Greater Hyderabad Municipal AIMIM's political base outside Corporation elections. Owaisi is now trying to expand his party's base Hyderabad in the last few years. His party fielded 20 candidates in in north India, which he has announced by entering the political the recent Assembly elections in field in Madhva Pradesh. Bihar and won five seats. Similarly,

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, Dec 25: In Madhya Pradesh, the Congress may soon appoint a new leader of opposition in the Assembly since state chief Kamal Nath is expected to relinquish the post. Still, Nath is likely to have a say in the selection

The three-day session of the state Assembly is going to begin from December 28. Before that speculation is rife about the new leader of the opposition. Within the party, it is being said that after the demise of senior leader Ahmed Patel, Kamal Nath's role in the politics of the Congress at the centre can increase and he can get a greater responsibility from the party high command. Nath's recent meeting with Sonia Gandhi is also being linked to this.

If the claimants of the leader of the opposition are to be seen, it is known that the party is likely to bet on a leader from the sched-

PUNJAB EMERGES AS HUB OF

ILLÉGAL CIGARETTE SALE

informed in a tweet Wednesday.

"When compared to the Indian

brands, consumers prefer to buy for-

eign brands due to the interna-

tional quality, catchy labels and

nice packaging," an investigator told IANS. Whereas cigarettes pro-

duced and packed in India have to

adhere to specified health warn-

ings, both in pictorial and text for-

mats, to discourage the smokers.

has an annual legal market of 120

million cigarettes and the grey

Trade insiders say Punjab alone

other major cities.



Kamal Nath appears to have made up his mind to quit as leader of the opposition, because he is keen to take on a big responsibility in the assembly elections in the year 2023

uled castes or tribes. This is because Vikrant Bhuria, a prominent face of the tribal category, has won the election as state president of the Youth Congress. This

is affecting the claims of those like Bala Bachchan and Dr Vijay Lakshmi Sadho. Besides Sajjan Verma, leaders such as Dr Govind Singh, Harsh Yadav and Brijendra Singh Rathore are also said to be in the contention.

Senior Congress leader and former minister PC Sharma believes that the Leader of the Opposition of the Congress should be one who can put up a decent fight on the ground.

Congress sources say Nath has convened a meeting December 27, a day before the assembly session. It is possible a big decision is taken in this meeting.

Political pundits believe that many Congress leaders want Kamal Nath to relinquish one of the posts: state party chief or leader of opposition so that another leader can get a chance on one of them.

Nath appears to have made up his mind to quit as leader of the opposition, because he is keen to take on a big responsibility in the assembly elections in the year 2023. So, it is more likely that Nath will remain the head of the party and anoint a person of his choice as leader of opposition.



India's first hot air balloon wildlife safari launched

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Umaria (MP), Dec 25: India's first hot air balloon wildlife safari in a tiger reserve was launched Friday in the world famous Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve by Madhya Pradesh forest minister Vijay Shah.

Shah said the activity will be restricted to the buffer area and people can watch tigers, leopards, Indian sloth bear and other wild animals from a height

"One more adventure has been added for tourists coming to the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve with



State Forest Minister Vijay Shah launches India's first hot air balloon wildlife safari at Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, in Umaria district, Friday. PTI PHOTO

the launch of the hot air balloon wildlife safari. It is the first in any

tiger reserve in the country. Now like Africa's forests, tourists in India will also enjoy hot air balloon wildlife safari," Shah told reporters after inaugurating the new service by taking a ride.

He said the state was planning to introduce this service in Pench, Kanha and Panna tiger reserves as well.

The service is being operated by Jaipur-based Sky Waltz and company official Jai Thakur said it was hoping for a good response from tourists

besides Amritsar. Chandigarh, Ludhiana and Jalandhar are the main transit points of the imported and cheap Indian brands of cigarettes that are

Trade insiders believe

routed from Delhi

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Dec 25: Punjab has been emerging as a hub of illegal sale of imported cigarettes and a crucial route to neighbouring Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, posing a threat to the health of smokers too who are getting hooked to the cheap quality of international brands sans health warnings, trade insiders said Thursday.

A major tax inspection by the Excise and Taxation Department on two prominent cigarette distributors of the Amritsar city was conducted this week.

Official sources told IANS it seems the tax evasion by both the distributors is of nearly Rs 50 lakh that comprises banned tobacco products, lesser known Indian brands and a large stock of the imported ones

Trade insiders believe besides Amritsar, Chandigarh, Ludhiana and Jalandhar are the main transit points of the imported and cheap Indian brand of cigarettes that are routed from Delhi



Chandigarh and Panchkula cities have an annual legal market of 20 million and 10 million cigarettes respectively, and the illegal market has a share of 15-20 per cent

"Delhi Customs (Preventive) conmarket accounts for 20-30 per cent. ducted multiple searches, including Chandigarh and Panchkula cities the warehouses of logistics service have an annual legal market of 20 providers. Seized 19.3 lakh foreign million and 10 million cigarettes respectively, and the illegal market has cigarettes valued at Rs 2.35 crore. Four arrests so far. Investigation is a share of 15-20 per cent. on," Customs (Preventive) Delhi

Most of the illegal cigarette brands attract the retailers as they According to the officials, the are available at a significantly lower seized cigarettes were smuggled price than the legal cigarettes. They from countries like China, Malaysia, are sold in the market at one fifth the price of the legal product, said South Korea and Indonesia to evade taxes and sell them in Delhi and the investigator.

Take the case of an imported brand. A pack of 20 cigarettes costs Rs 20-30 to a retailer, who is selling at a cost of Rs 100. While an Indian brand cost between Rs 250 and Rs 300 with a profit margin of approximately Rs 5.

A spokesperson for the Punjab government said 21,446 fines under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act or COTPA were imposed in 2019-20 and the maximum fines were against selling cigarettes without pictorial warning.

Online campaign to solicit **NRIs' support for farmers**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Dec 25: A group of Punjab residents has launched an online campaign urging NRIs to come to India to lend "moral and material" support to farmers protesting against the Centre's agriculture laws.

Manik Goyal and Joban Randhawa, who are organising the #NRIsChaloDelhi campaign, said they want to increase awareness among NRIs and channelise their support for the farmers' cause.

A group of NRIs has decided to reach India on December 30 to lend "moral and material" support to protesting farmers camping at the Singhu border on the outskirts of Delhi in a bid to further strengthen their agitation against the three farm laws, the organisers said Friday.

"NRIs led by Surinder Mavi (Toronto-Patiala) and his friends Raman Brar (Toronto-Faridkot), Vikramjit Saran (Vancouver-Mansa), are coming to India to contribute towards farmers' cause so as to provide moral and material support towards the ongoing

Manik Goyal and Joban Randhawa, who are organising the **#NRIsChaloDelhi** campaign, said they want to increase awareness among NRIs and channelise their support for the farmers' cause

farmers' agitation," they said.

The organisers said the ongoing farmers' agitation has led to 'worldwide interest and support.'

As children of farmers and Punjab, it is the moral duty of NRIs to stand with the toiling sons and daughters of India who are braving harsh winter nights at Delhi borders for their rights, they added.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, are camping at Delhi borders for about a month demanding the repeal of "antifarmer" laws.







UNHAPPY FARMERS

The 2020 Indian farmers' protest is an ongoing protest against the three farm acts which were passed by the Parliament of India in September 2020. The acts have been described as 'anti-farmer laws' by many farmer unions, and farmer unions and politicians from the opposition also say it would leave farmers at the 'mercy of corporates'. Farmers, mostly from the Sikh-dominated state of Punjab, have been camped on the borders of New Delhi since last month, demanding Modi roll back the reforms intended to bring investment in the antiquated farm sector but which the farmers say will leave them at the mercy of big corporations. Angry farmers staged demonstrations near New Delhi after rejecting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurances that the laws would double farmers' income. The farmers have been undeterred by the COVID pandemic and bone-chilling Delhi cold.

THEIR DEMANDS

he key demand is the withdrawal of the three laws which deregulate the sale of their crops. The farmer unions could also settle for a legal assurance that the MSP system will continue, ideally through an amendment to the laws. They are also pressing for the withdrawal of the proposed Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020, fearing it will lead to an end to subsidised electricity. Farmers say rules against stubble burning should also not apply to them.

KEY PLAYERS

The 'Delhi Chalo" call was given by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee. Several other organisations including Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh and factions of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) came out in support. The march is being held under the banner of Samyukta Kisan Morcha. PROTESTING FARMER ATTEMPTS SUICIDE

A 65 year old farmer from Punjab protesting at the Delhi-Singhu border tried to commit suicide. He was admitted to Rohtak's PGIMS hospital and is said to be in a stable condition.

WHAT THE CENTRE SAYS

The Narendra Modi government says the new laws will give more options to the farmers to sell their crops and get them better prices. It has assured that there is no move to end the MSP system, and the new Acts do not refer to it. Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday (Dec 25) released over Rs 18,000 crore to more than nine crore farmer families under the 'Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi' (PM-KISAN). With the push of a button, Modi enabled the transfer of money at an event which the ruling BJP has made into a mega exercise to reach out to farmers by having its leaders interact with the farming community at more than 19,000 venues across the country and also listen to the prime minister's address. Modi released the instalment of Rs 2,000 to every farmer on the birth anniversary of former prime minister and BJP stalwart Atal Bihari Vajpayee, which is every year celebrated as "Good Governance Day" by the ruling party.

Before "Delhi Chalo" farmers in Punjab and Haryana held sit-ins and blocked roads in sporadic protests. Punjab farmer unions then announced a "rail roko" agitation, which lasted for abour two months, leading to a suspension of trains to the state and shortages in critical areas, including coal for thermal power stations.

KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD

Racism has been called America's original sin. But it is a sin that extends beyond the United States. On May 25, George Floyd, a forty-six-year-old Black man, was arrested in Minneapolis for allegedly passing a counterfeit \$20 bill. One of the arresting officers kept his knee THE YEAR 2020 WAS THE MOST CHALLENGING AND EXTRAORDINARY. THREE THINGS THAT DEFINED 2020 WERE THE PANDEMIC, ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN AND WIDESPREAD PROTESTS ACROSS THE WORLD. FROM BLACK LIVES MATTER IN THE US TO THE NRC-CAA PROTESTS AND THE FARMER PROTESTS IN INDIA NOW, THE YEAR SAW A WAVE OF PUBLIC ANGER. DESPITE THE GREATEST PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE IN OVER A CENTURY – AND THE VIRUS THREAT, LOCKDOWNS AND INCREASINGLY REPRESSIVE ENVIRONMENT THEY TRIGGERED – PROTESTS REMAINED AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE GLOBAL POLITICAL LANDSCAPE. ORISSA POST TAKES A SHARP LOOK AT SOME OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UPHEAVALS OF THE YEAR.

PROTESTS AMID PANDENIC

WAVES OF GRIEF

≽ HK CLAMPDOWN

n June, a year after a massive wave of demonstrations, China imposes a sweeping new security law on Hong Kong that opponents say undermines the semi-autonomous city's liberties, promised under its handover from Britain in 1997. Pro-democracy lawmakers are ousted, harassed and arrested. In December, three prominent Hong Kong activists are jailed including Joshua Wong.



>> THAI UPRISING

Students spark pro-democracy protests in July that roll on for the rest of the year calling for a new constitution, reform of the untouchable monarchy, and for Prime Minister Pravut Chan-O-Cha to resign.



>> NAVALNY AFFAIR

Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny is flown to Berlin in a medically induced coma after becoming violently ill from tea he drank as he boarded an internal flight to Moscow. Tests reveal he was poisoned with the Soviet-era nerve agent Novichok. Navalny accuses Russian President Vladimir Putin of trying to kill him.



>> CHINA-US TENSIONS

2020 sees US-China relations nosedive, with Trump calling Covid-19 the "China virus" and saying Beijing is responsible for "a mass worldwide killing". They also clash over the repression of Turkic speaking Uighur minority in the Chinese region of Xinjiang, as well as the national security law imposed on Hong Kong.



But the protests and conversations about justice and equality went far beyond America's borders.

From Paris to Nairobi to Rio de Janeiro, people took to the streets to protest Floyd's death and to highlight their own countries' racial inequalities. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that "Racism is real. It's in the United States, but it's also in Canada." But the same could be said of most other countries, including those like China and Iran that seized on Floyd's death as evidence of US hypocrisy on human rights issues. Injustice and inequality remain a global challenge.

Anti-lockdown protests



on Floyd's neck for eight minutes and fifteen seconds, killing him.

Floyd's death at the hands of officers whose mission is to "protect and serve" followed on the heels of literally hundreds of similar police killings of Black Americans, including Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, and Breonna Taylor. Video of Floyd's killing triggered protests across the United States and sparked a long overdue national conversation about systemic racism.



Public health restrictions have become the latest contested symbol in broader conversations about how to align citizens' needs with government action

he wave of anti-government protests that roiled global politics over the past decade initially seemed to be an early casualty of COVID-19. Lockdown measures, especially stay-athome orders and restrictions on mass gatherings, halted protests almost everywhere. Yet as the pandemic has dragged on, the increasingly strained relationship between governments and citizens in many countries has brought demonstrators back into the streets. While many renewed protests reflect anger over familiar issues like corruption. political repression and economic hardship, a striking new trend is afoot: citizens openly challenging the public health measures governments have taken to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Since March. more than 30 major protests in 26 countries have targeted

coronavirus restrictions. Such demonstrations have emerged in every region of the globe. not only in wealthy countries like Australia, Germany and the United States, but also in poorer ones like Brazil, Mexico and Nigeria. Moreover, antilockdown uprisings are occurring in states with very different governance systems-consolidated autocracies and liberal democracies alike. These popular eruptions have generally occurred in two waves: An early one in April and May emerged soon after the virus spread around the world, and an ongoing second one started in early August in reaction to the extension of public health measures. As large demonstrations in the past month across multiple regions have made clear, their tempo is accelerating.

>> NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Heavy fighting for the Armenianpopulated region of Nagorno-Karabakh, which broke away from Azerbaijan after a war in the 1990s, goes on for 45 days. Several thousand die before a Kremlin-brokered peace deal on November 9, with Armenians losing swathes of territory to Azerbaijan forces.

>> ETHIOPIA: TIGRAY CONFLICT

Ethiopian Prime Minister and Nobel Peace Prize winner Abiy Ahmed orders a military response to attacks on federal army camps in the dissident northern Tigray region. The



Tigray People's Liberation Front -which has dominated Ethiopian politics for nearly three decades -denies responsibility and says the reported attacks are a pretext for an "invasion". Federal forces take the Tigrayan capital November 28.



On 17 October 2019, the Lebanese cabinet announced new tax measures to address an economic crisis. In response, tens of thousands of peaceful protesters took to the streets across the country calling for their social and economic rights, for accountability, an end to corruption, and the resignation of all political representatives. Although the cabinet resigned, many of the ruling figures who have dominated the Lebanese political scene for decades remained in power. In January 2020, a new cabinet was appointed, with little change to address the population's demands, and the protests continued. On 4 August, an explosion at the port of Beirut killed at least 190 people, injured more than 6,500, and left an around 300,000 people homeless. The blast was caused by 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate that had been stored unsafely in a warehouse. This tragic event, against the backdrop of a global pandemic, financial crisis, and political crisis, reignited the October protests on 8 August with calls for accountability and justice.

>>> TEACHER BEHEADING IN FRANCE



Thousands rallied following the murder of a teacher who showed cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in class AP FILE PHOTO



Protestors hurl brick-bats during clashes between a group of anti-CAA protestors and supporters of the new citizenship act, at Jafrabad in north-east Delhi PTI FILE PHOTO



Supporters of President Donald Trump pause for prayer during a rally outside the Maricopa County Recorders Office in Phoenix AP FILE PHOTO



Belarus strongman President Alexander Lukashenko's disputed victory in August 9 elections – (sparks four months of anti-government protests, centred on his main rival, political novice Svetlana Tikhanovskaya. Opposition leaders were jailed or driven into exile.







GOVT READY TO DISCUSS ALL

ISSUES WITH FARMERS: PM

India and the US will need to be attentive to the dangerous currents in the Indo-Pacific to ensure that the region continues to be a zone of peace, prosperity and pluralism NISHA DESAI BISWAL US INDIA BUSINESS

COUNCIL PRESIDENT

RAJINI ADMITTED TO HOSP

Superstar Rajinikanth was Friday admitted to Apollo Hospitals in Hyderabad for severe blood pressure fluctuations and he was "stable", the hospital said



uote , ,

The Congress is shedding crocodile tears for farmers now. Why did the Congress not give permission to install

gates on the dam for seven years? You let the water of Narmada went into the sea when farmers were in need of that water to save their crops. It all happened when you were in power (before 2014)

VIJAY RUPANI GUJARAT CHIEF MINISTER

Farmers, who sell their produce at the market yards, have to pay transport, labour, weighing and other charges This is injustice



The noble ideals enshrined in the Srimad **Bhagavad Geeta** have radiated across the world. They motivate people to lead life to

the fullest potential and be compassionate. On Geeta Jayanti we celebrate the values mentioned in the Geeta & recall the teachings of Bhagwan Shri Krishna

NARENDRA MODI PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Man gets new lease of life

New Delhi: A youth suffering from a rare cardiac anomaly got a new lease of life at the AIIMS, New Delhi, Thursday after the heart of a 17-yearold brain-dead girl in Vadodara was flown to the national capital and transplanted in him. This was the third heart transplant at the AIIMS here this year. The other two were conducted in midfebruary and early march. before the COVID-19 lockdown was imposed.

Encounter breaks out in Shopian

Srinagar: An encounter broke out between terrorists and



New Delhi, Dec 25: As the farmers' agitation along the borders of Delhi entered its 30th day on Friday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the government is open to hold discussions with the farmers and opposition political parties to iron out the confusion over the newly passed farm laws. Modi said this after transfer-

ring more than Rs 18,000 crore to over nine crore beneficiary farmer families as part of the seventh instalment of the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme -- a direct transfer scheme for the farmers -- even as the farmers continued to hold fort against his government over the

contentious farm laws. Defending the farm laws, the Prime Minister said some people are misleading the farmers. "We are ready to discuss all the issues with the farmers and also the political parties which are against the farm laws, but the discussion will be

Modi said. While defending the farm laws, the PM said they are for the ben-

can snatch farmers' lands. "I am satisfied that now there are no middlemen and the farmers are getting money directly and till now, Rs 1,10,000 crore has been deposited without any cut and commission. This is good governance," the Prime

Minister said. He also targeted some political parties for latching on to the farmers' protests, and said: "They are trying to disturb the economy of the country and also giving nightmares to the people of Delhi. "If APMC is good then why it's not in Kerala? The online Mandis have done a business of Rs 1 lakh crore." he said.

Modi said the government has tried to decrease the input cost of the farmers through various means.

"The government is promoting micro irrigation, per drop more crop," he said, adding that the government is building infrastructure and storage near the villages. The Prime Minister also had a

interaction with the farmers from six different states during the event. The farmers shared their experiences with the PM-KISAN scheme and also on various

Modi, Mamata in war of words

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday lashed out at West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, accusing her government of "destroying" the state and depriving its over 70 lakh farmers of benefits from the Centre's flagship PM-KISAN scheme under which Rs 6,000 per year is given to each farmer. Modi also made a veiled attack on the once-potent political force in the state, the Left parties, saying that those who ruled the state for three decades, brought it down and did not do anything for farmers. Assembly elections are due in West Bengal in April-May next year and the BJP has already launched a massive campaign to unseat Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government in the state. Banerjee has been West Bengal's Chief Minister since 2011 after ending 34-year-old Left rule in the state. "Mamata Baneriee's ideology has destroyed the state and her actions are against the farmers," he said. Mamata reacted strongly to PM's charge and accused him of trying to mislead the farmers of West Bengal with half-truths. "Today, PM showed apparent concern for farmers through televised address, instead of proactively working to resolve their issues. While he publicly claimed his intention to help farmers of West Bengal through his PM Kisan Yojana ... fact is he's

other initiatives taken by the government for the welfare of the farmers



CHILLING OUT

Children play with balloons at Girgaon beach in Mumbai

TRP SCAM Ex-BARC CEO sent to police custody



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 25: A magistrate's court here Friday remanded Partho Dasgupta, a former CEO of the rating agency Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), inpolice custody till December 28 in the alleged fake TRP scam.

Dasgupta was arrested by the Mumbai crime branch from Pune district on Thursday and produced before the court Friday. The police sought his remand for further probe, saying his custodial interrogation was required to understand his role in the scam.

Dasgupta's lawyer Kamlesh Ghumre argued that the offences of cheating and criminal breach of

tody of crime branch till December 28. Dasgupta is the fifteenth person to be arrested in the case related to alleged rigging of Television Rating Points (TRP) by some TV channels

The court Thursday had granted bail to another accused in the case, Ramil Ramgarhia, a former chief operating officer of the BARC. The probe was over and therefore his detention was not needed, the court observed.

Most of the accused in the case are now out on bail. Mumbai police began the probe after the BARC, a rating agency, filed a complaint about rigging of TRP by some channels.

TRP, measured by recording viewership data at sample households, is crucial as it helps TV channels attract advertisers. It was alleged that some of these households were being bribed to tune into certain channels to ramp up their ratings.

PTI PHOTO

Japan invites German warship for naval drill

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 25: Japan wants Germany to send a warship to East Asia in the newyear as it drums up support from likeminded nations against Chinas hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region.

German state-owned broad caster Deutsche Welle reported that in talks between Japanese Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi and his German counterpart, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Kishi hoped that a German warship would hold joint exercises with Japan's Self-Defense Forces in 2021.

Kishi suggested that such an act would also ensure the right of passage through the South China Sea (SCS), most of which is now claimed by China. Over years, Japan has voiced for a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), as a large volume of trade goes through the region, particularly energy supplies.

Japan Times reported that Kishi stressed upon the Germans that China is "strengthening its attempts to unilaterally change the status quo with force in the background." He also welcomed Germany's efforts to strengthen its maritime presence and contribute to maintaining order in the region.

The defence ministers of the



minister from the saffron party. Vajpayee's visionary leadership saw the country's development reach unprecedented heights, Modi said in a tweet. "His efforts for making a strong and prosperous India will be remembered forever," he said. Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu shared several poems penned by Vajpayee to remember him fondly and lauded him as a "great vision-

arv" and the "man of masses"

Nation remembers Vajpayee on his b'day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: President Ram Nath Kovind led the nation on Friday in paying homage to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 96th birth anniversary with leaders hailing the BJP stalwart's vision of a strong and prosperous India.

on issues related to the laws,"

An event was held in the Central Hall of Parliament where Prime

trying to mislead people with halftruth," Mamata said.

security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district Friday, officials said. The firefight broke out after security forces cordoned off Kanigam area and launched a search operation on the basis of a specific information about presence of terrorists there.

Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Union ministers and many parliamentarians paid floral tributes. Modi also released a book, "Atal Bihari Vajpayee: A Commemorative Volume", to mark the occasion.

President Kovind paid homage to Vajpayee at 'Sadaiv Atal', a memorial to the former prime minister, here. Besides Kovind and Modi, top Union ministers also attended a prayer meeting at the memorial and paid homage to the first prime

Born in 1924, Vajpayee was a founder member of the Jana Sangh and then the BJP, a party which rose from the margins to rule India for the first time in 1990s with him being its main face. His tenure is credited

trust for which he has been booked were not made out against him. The probe was harassment and a use of pressuring tactics by police, the lawyer alleged.

After hearing both the sides, the court sent the accused in the cus-

Leopard found dead

Bareilly: A leopard was found dead with head injuries in Uttar Pradesh's **Bareilly district Friday** morning, forest officials said. They said the leopard, which was around a year old, died after being hit by a vehicle. The carcass of the leopard was found this morning in the fields in Lakhanpur village. The villagers informed the officials and the carcass was sent to Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) for a postmortem examination, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Bharatlal said.

Jilted lover kills girl

Gopalganj (Bihar): A man in Bihar's Gopalganj district stabbed a girl to death for refusing his marriage proposal. The incident took place in the Sidhwalia area and the accused has been identified as Anil Yadav.

Urdu poet Farugi is no more

New Delhi: Legendary Urdu poet and critic Shamsur Rahman Faruqi passed away on Friday at his Allahabad home, a month after recovering from COVID-19. He was 85

On Christmas, Dharavi records zero Covid cases

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 25: In what could be termed a "Christmas present" for the BMC, Asia's largest slum Dharavi notched zero cases Friday - first time since the Covid-19 pandemic appeared in the congested settlement April 1, health officials said.

At one point, it ranked as the worst hotspot and the most worrisome for the health authorities, but Dharavi now has a mere 12 active cases currently under treatment in local hospitals

"We salute the people of Dharavi for their full cooperation, following the BMC's SOPs and other health guidelines that has helped immensely," an elated BMC Municipal Commissioner I.S. Chahal told IANS

"This is a major progress and achievement since the first case and death was reported from Dharavi April 1.'

"All our efforts to control the pandemic here have yielded fruitful results. Nevertheless, our vigil continues," said a local BMC Ward official, requesting

anonymity.

Till date, Dharavi has notched a total 3,788 cases, - compared with Mumbai's 289,800 - and just 12 active cases vis-a-vis the city's current total of 20,128.

After a quiet entry into Dharavi on April 1, the locality attracted national and even global attention as cases continued to soar in April-May-June, posing a huge challenge for the BMC and the Maharashtra government.

As the state and civic administrations girdled their loins to tackle the Covid-19

onslaught by implementing the 'Dharavi Model', it yielded rich dividends and by the third week of June, the 2.25 square km neighbourhood was already off the 'Corona critical' list.

As Dharavi's success spread cheer, the World Health Organisation, the World Bank, and the Centre praised the successful efforts while the Philippines announced that it would implement a similar model to control the contagion in the less affluent districts of Manila.

two nations met at a time when Germany had expressed interest over sending its navy to patrol the Indian Ocean trade routes. Addressing Australian and German think tanks, Kramp-Karrenbauer had recently said that her country would also like to have closer defence cooperation with Australia.

China has ruffled the feathers of nations in its neighbourhood by laying claim to large parts of the SCS in opposition to the rights of smaller nations like Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei, as well as Taiwan. The communist giant has also taken over islands and reefs, often violating the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) by sending fishing trawlers, research and exploration vessels and even Coast Guard ships.

tering a record loading of 102 Million

Tonnes (MT), which is the highest

ever loading for the month of

September in any year. The mo-

mentum in freight loading contin-

ued and growth of 15 per cent and

9 per cent has been obtained in the

subsequent months of October and

tracks, the Railways doubled the

speed of freight trains from 24 kmph

a year ago to 46 kmph which means

half the time taken for sending

products. It also completed over 350

critical and long pending major

While the year saw no major ac-

With passenger trains off the

November respectively.

2020: A GLIMPSE OF LIFE WITHOUT TRAINS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

its services.

New Delhi, Dec 25: The year 2020 showed India a glimpse of how life would be without trains

As the coronavirus lockdown was announced on March 24, the Railways for the first time in its 167-year-old history shut down all

People stranded across the country and who usually looked to the Railways to ferry them home, were left without their lifeline. Some, like the thousands of migrant workers, took to the streets choosing to walk to their destinations As the Railways directed its re-

sources towards carrying essentials across the country, lakhs of tickets were cancelled during the summer holidays -- something unheard of in rail history.

It was May 1 that the wheels of trains started chugging again. This time, to ferry migrant workers home. Between May 1 and August 30, the Railways ferried 63.15 such workers home across 23 states in over 4,000 Shramik Special trains, not only bringing huge relief to the stranded migrants, but also hope for the others that their lifeline was down, but not out.

It was, however, the Shramik Special trains which saw the Railways being criticised by the Opposition parties over the fares being charged from the migrant workers. While the Railways said that it did not charge a penny from the workers and spent more than Rs 2,000 crore on their transportation, the politics over the issue continued. Currently, the Railways is operating 1,089 special train services,

while Kolkata Metro was running 60 per cent of its services, Mumbai suburban was running on 88 per cent and 50 per cent of Chennai suburban services were in operation. Railway Board Chairman and CEO VK Yaday agreed that it was a tough year for the national transporter, but

and used the crisis as an opportunity.

NDIAN RAILWAYS

While passenger movement dipped resulting in an estimated loss of 87 per cent as compared to last year, the Railways' made drastic changes in their freight movement, introducing parcel services, carrying essentials like milk, medicines and even ventilators.

The innovation was to realise that if the Railways could not move passengers freely, it could move freight instead.

Business Development Units (BDUs) were set up at Railway Board, Zonal Railway and Divisional levels. Multi-disciplinary teams from BDUs have been reaching out to customers to attract new business. It also introduced time-tabled parcel services to provide reliable services to courier services, e-commerce companies.

The Railways also launched eight Kisan Rail Services to enable farmers to send their produce across

the nation with enhanced speed and reduced cost. With all its focus on freight movement, the Railways' freight staged

cidents, the Railways family bore the pain of 30,000 employees infected with coronavirus and saw more than 700 frontline workers breathe a recovery in September by registheir last.

bridge and track works.

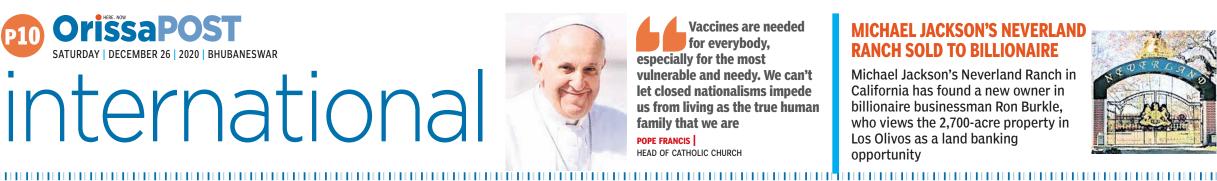


also highlighted how it innovated





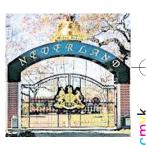
OrissaPOST SATURDAY | DECEMBER 26 | 2020 | BHUBANESWAR international



Vaccines are needed for everybody, especially for the most vulnerable and needy. We can't let closed nationalisms impede us from living as the true human family that we are POPE FRANCIS HEAD OF CATHOLIC CHURCH

MICHAEL JACKSON'S NEVERLAND RANCH SOLD TO BILLIONAIRE

Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch in California has found a new owner in billionaire businessman Ron Burkle, who views the 2,700-acre property in Los Olivos as a land banking opportunity



(Having achieved the post-Brexit deal) we have taken back control of every jot and tittle of our regulation in a way that is complete and unfettered

BORIS JOHNSON BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

I am pleased that the negotiators of the European Union and Britain have reached an agreement and that the future relations between the European Union and Britain are clearly regulated

ANGELA MERKEL GERMAN CHANCELLOR

The deal with the UK is essential to protect our citizens, our fishermen, our producers. We will make sure this is the

EMMANUEL MACRON FRENCH PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

6.3-magnitude quake jolts Philippines

Manila: An earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale Friday jolted the Philippines' Batangas province located on the main island of Luzon, authorities said. According to the Philippine Institute of Seismology and Volcanology (Phivolcs), the quake, which struck at 7.43 a.m. hit at a depth of 102 km, about 11 km southwest of Calatagan town, some 100 km south of Manila, reports Xinhua news agency. Metro Manila and nearby provinces of Batangas, Laguna, Cavite, Rizal also felt the tremor, the institute said.

Italy in 'red zone' amid nCoV spike

Rome: Italy has entered a nationwide 'red zone' of very high risks in the wake of a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, which is set to remain in place through Christmas and New Year's Day to rules include a ban on travel between regions, a 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew, closure of shops, bars and restaurants, as well as an urge for keeping holiday gatherings at home to a minimum of two adult visitors. To contain the second wave, the government has categorized Italy as three colour-coded areas, namely yellow, orange and red.

UDE TT NG We the Brexit Ve taken US lawmakers urge Pompeo to take up issue with India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 25: A group of seven influential US lawmakers, including Indian-American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, have written to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, urging him to raise the issue of farmers' protest in India with his Indian counterpart. India has called the remarks by foreign leaders and politicians on protests by farmers as "ill-informed" and "unwarranted", asserting that the matter pertains to the internal affairs of a democratic country.

We have seen some ill-informed comments...relating to farmers in India. Such comments are unwarranted, especially when pertaining to the internal affairs of a democratic country," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said earlier this month.

This is an issue of particular concern to Sikh Americans linked to Punjab, although it also heavily impacts the Indian Americans belonging to other Indian states, the lawmakers said in their letter to Pompeo dated December 23.

Many Indian Americans are directly affected as they have family members and ancestral land in Punjab and are concerned for the well-being of their families in India. In view of this serious situation, we urge you to contact your Indian counterpart to reinforce the United States' commitment to the freedom of political

speech abroad," they said. In their letter, the lawmakers said that the US as a nation that is familiar with political protests can





Remarks by foreign leaders and politicians on protests by farmers as "ill-informed" and "unwarranted". as the matter pertains to the internal affairs of a democratic country

This is an issue of particular concern to Sikh Americans linked to Puniab. although it also heavily impacts the Indian Americans belonging to other Indian states: US lawmakers

offer counsel to India during their current period of social disturbance. "As national legislators, we respect the right of the government of India to determine national policy, in compliance with existing law. We also acknowledge the rights of those in India and

HOLIDAY IN HOSPITAL

abroad who are currently protesting peacefully against agricultural laws that many Indian farmers see as an attack on their economic security," the lawmakers said.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and several other states have been protesting on various borders of Delhi since November 26, seeking repeal of three farm laws enacted in September.

Dubbing these laws as "antifarmer", these farmers claim that the newly enacted legislations would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations

However, the government has maintained that the new laws will bring farmers better opportunities and usher in new technologies in agriculture. There have been multiple rounds of talks between representatives of the protestors and the Indian government but the logjam continues.

In addition to Jayapal, the letter has been signed by Congressmen Donald Norcross. Brendan F Boyle. Brian Fitzpatrick, Mary Gay Scanlon, Debbie Dingell and David Trone. Over the past few weeks, more than a dozen US Congressmen have expressed their concerns on the ongoing protest by the farmers in India.

CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR China backing away from promises made to Pakistan

AGENCIES

Islamabad, Dec 25: China appears to be backing away from its initial financial promises to Pakistan under Beijing-financed China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a \$60 billion infrastructure building plan, amid rising corruption and terrorist attacks

PARLIAMENT DISSOLUTION

Nepal's apex court issues show-cause notice to Oli govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Dec 25: Nepal's Supreme Court Friday issued a show-cause notice to Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli-led government, asking it to submit a written clarification over its decision to abruptly dissolve Parliament.

The notice was issued after a preliminary hearing at the fivemember Constitutional bench headed by Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana on the writ petitions filed against the government's decision to dissolve the 275-member House of Representatives, according to court officials.

The bench sought the written clarification from the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Minister and Office of the President as they are made defendants in all the writ petitions, they said.

The court has also asked the government to submit an original copy of the recommendations made by the government to dissolve the House and the decision made by President Bidya Devi Bhandari to authenticate the government's recommendations within 10 days.

Earlier, the apex court demanded an amicus curiae from Nepal Bar Association and Supreme Court Bar Association in connection with the hearing. Meanwhile, the Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'-led faction of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) staged a protest rally in Kathmandu against the decision



'Prachanda' and Madhav Kumar

Nepal, senior leaders Jhala Nath

Khanal, spokesperson Narayan Kaji

Shrestha along with the party's

Central Committee members and

members of the dissolved House

gathered near the Prime Minister's

Office for the protest. "We are here,"

"Reinstate the House of Representatives," and "dissolution of

the House is unconstitutional," were

the slogans raised by the protesters.

members of the NCP and nearly 100

members of the House were present

in the protest rally. After staging a sit-

in, the crowd marched towards the

Election Commission (EC) office.

The EC will decide which faction of

the NCP is legitimate to carry the

jority of the Central committee mem-

bers. Therefore, we are going to the

commission to prove and show that

we are the legitimate faction," protest-

ing leader Sunil Manahdhar, who is

also a Central Committee member of

the NCP, told this news agency

"We have the support of the ma-

party name and election symbol.

Around 300 Central Committee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, Dec 25: British-born al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and his three aides. whose release in the abduction and murder case of US journalist Daniel Pearl was ordered by a court here, would walk out of the prison on Saturday, police and lawver said Friday.



Explosion rocks Nashville

Nashville (US): An explosion shook the largely deserted streets of downtown Nashville early Christmas morning shattering windows. damaging buildings and wounding three people. Authorities said they believed the blast was intentional. The FBI is leading the investigation. Police spokesman Don Aaron said the 6:30 a.m. Explosion was believed to be "an intentional act." Police earlier said they believe a vehicle was involved in the explosion.

2 Afghan army officers killed

Kabul: At least two Afghan army officers including a battalion commander were killed Friday when their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb in the northern Balkh province, the military said. Hanif Rezaie, a spokesman for the army in the country's north, said Capt. Mohammad Qasim Paikar and another officer were killed and two other soldiers were wounded in the explosion, which took place between Balkh and Char Bolak districts AGENCIES

A medical worker in a protective suit works inside an intensive care unit for coronavirus patients at the San Filippo Neri hospital in Rome, Italy, on Christmas day REUTERS PHOTO

on Chinese engineers.

According to Asia Times, Pakistan Army is set to take neartotal control of the CPEC in a bid to reassure Beijing that their investments will be more secure amid terrorist attacks on Chinese engineers and others facilitating the infrastruc-

ture projects The new Bill comes at a time when reports suggest that China is slowly

retreating from its promises. Overall lending by the state-

backed China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China declined from a peak of \$75 billion in 2016 to just \$4 billion last year. Provisional 2020 figures show that amount shrunk to around \$3

billion in 2020, according to data of Boston University researchers in the United States.

Gwadar Sea Port

The belt-tightening is **Pakistan Army is** believed to be in line with set to take near-Beijing's so-called "retotal control of think strategy" for its \$1 the CPEC in a bid trillion BRI, which is to reassure under broad fire for Beijing that their "structural weaknesses" investments will including opacity, corbe more secure ruption, over-lending to amid militant poor countries resulting attacks: Report in "debt traps" and adverse social and environmental

impacts, the Boston University researchers said. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan is also facing flak in his country for not prioritising and expediting big-ticket Chinese infrastructure investments.

In a surprise move, a two-judge bench of the Sindh High Court Thursday directed security agencies not to keep Sheikh and other accused under "any sort of detention" and declared all notifications of the Sindh government related to their detention "null and void". The court observed that the four men's detention was "illegal".

According to the Jail Superintendent, the four men could not be released from Karachi's Central Jail Thursday as the prison authorities received orders from the Sindh High Court for their release very late.

The legal counsel for the four men said that they would now be



released Saturday as Friday is a public holiday in the country.

Meanwhile, the United States on Friday expressed "deep concern" over Sindh High Court's order to release Sheikh and his aides and said it will continue to monitor any developments in the case.

"We are deeply concerned by the reports of the December 24 ruling of Sindh High Court to release multiple terrorists responsible for the murder of Daniel Pearl. We have been assured that the accused have not been released at this time," the US State Department said in a tweet.

It said that the US will continue to monitor any developments in the case and will continue to support the Pearl family "through this extremely difficult process" whilehonouring the legacy of Pearl as a "courageous journalist".

A pandemic Xmas: Churches shut, borders complicated

Curfews, quarantines and even border closings complicated *Christmas celebrations Friday for countless*

people around the globe

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, Dec 25: Curfews, quarantines and even border closings complicated Christmas celebrations Friday for countless people around the globe, but ingenuity, determination and imagination helped keep the day special for many.

In Beijing, official churches abruptly cancelled Mass on Christmas Day in a last-minute move, after China's capital was put on high alert following the confirmation of two confirmed COVID-19 cases last week, and two new asymptomatic cases were reported Friday. One of several notices was posted at Beijing's St. Josephs' Church, which was built originally by Jesuit missionaries in the 17th century.

Border crossing closures kept thousands of migrants from economically devastated Venezuela who live in Colombia from going home for Christmas. Colombia's government shut down the crossings in a bid to slow down the spread of Covid-19 infections. Those trying to return home for the holidays this

year had to turn to smugglers. Yakelin Tamaure, a nurse who left Venezuela two years ago, won't be going home and said there will be no gifts or new clothes for her two children, aged 10 and 15, Tamaure

said that she hasn't been able to find work as a nurse because she still doesn't have a Colombia residence permit. Her parents are still in Venezuela.

Others successfully crossed borders elsewhere only to find themselves in quarantine. For their first



Christmas since getting married in March, Nattasuda Anusonadisai and Patrick Kaplin are cooped up in quarantine in a Bangkok hotel room. It wasn't great fun but they did make sure to get a Christmas tree.

They returned earlier this month from a 41/2-month trip to Canada and the United States, making a 32hour journey from Montreal via Doha. One condition of entering Thailand is 14-day quarantine upon arrival. Thai citizens can stay at state facilities for free but foreigners like Kaplin, from Canada, must pay to stay at an approved hotel, the option the couple took so they could stay together.

Churches in South Korea have ignited clusters of coronavirus infections in densely populated Seoul, along with hospitals, nursing homes,

restaurants and prisons. The 1,241 new daily cases reported by the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency Friday was a record for the country.

Song Ju-hyeon, a resident in Paju, near Seoul, who is expecting a child in February, said home is the only place she feels safe now. "It doesn't feel like Christmas anyway, there are no carols being played on the streets," she said.

In Paris, members of Notre Dame Cathedral's choir, wearing hard hats and protective suits - not against COVID-19 but for construction conditions in the medieval landmark ravaged by fire in 2019 — sang inside the church for the first time since the blaze. In Rome, partial lockdown measures were keeping the faithful from gathering in St. Peter's Square, where in past years tens of thousands would receive a papal blessing and hear the pope's traditional Christmas Day message. But they wouldn't have been able to see Pope Francis anyway this year.













"There is not much gain for Indian

There is a steady uptick in the credit growth. **Retail, home and agriculture** loans are doing well, and MSMEs again, with the intervention of the government through the ECLGS and other similar schemes, have also picked up DEBASISH PANDA SECRETARY, FINANCIAL SERVICES

OVER 4 CRORE ITRS FILED

The Income Tax Department Friday said that over four crore income tax returns (ITRs) have been filed for the assessment year (AY) 2020-2021. An IT Department tweet said that as of December 24, nearly 3.98 crore ITRs were filed, compared to over 3.92 crore ITRs. Another tweet said that nearly 5.83 lakh ITRs were filed Friday



uote 77 'India should aggressively pursue FTAs with EU, UK'

Russia expects to support an increase in oil production by the group, known as OPEC+, of another 500,000 bpd from February at next month's summit of the leading global oil producers

ALEXANDER NOVAK DEPUTY PM, RUSSIA

The EPFO would have to expand the ambit of its schemes as well as network for providing socia security to unorganised sector

workers. These workers would get social security benefit under the Code on Social Security VIRJESH UPADHYAY FORMER GENERAL

SECRETARY, BHARATIYA MAZDOOR SANGH

Specifically engineered for the Indian mini-truck customer who values superior mileage, Super Carry has fulfilled its

promises. Being the 1st LCV launched with a BS6 petrol variant offering a powerful 1196cc 4 cylinder dumdaar engine

SHASHANK SRIVASTAVA EXEC DIR (MARKETING & SALES), MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA

SHORT TAKES

IOC to purchase hydrogen buses

New Delhi: To give a fillip to India's push to usher in a hydrogen-based mobility solutions ecosystem, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) plans to buy 15 buses that can run on hydrogen fuel. The country's largest oil refiner and fuel retailer is also setting up a facility at its Faridabad R&D centre to produce hydrogen to run the buses, the company said in a statement. Like all electric vehicles (EVs), fuel cell EVs use electricity to power an electric motor.

Foundries demand import duty cut

Kolkata: Hit by surging input costs, the Foundry industry in

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

pact, they said.

not cover services, they added

goods, but we can gain in services New Delhi, Dec 25: With European sector in both the UK and EU mar-Union (EU) and the UK clinching kets. We will gain more in the UK market as we are English speaka post-Brexit trade pact, India should now aggressively pursue ing country," Federation of Indian free trade agreements (FTAs) sep-Export Organisations (FIEO) arately with both the regions, according to experts. Although it is premature to assess

Director General Ajav Sahai said. He said there are no specific customs duty benefits for domestic the gains for India from the agreegoods from this agreement. "Now we should push the FTA nement between European Union (EU) and the UK, Indian goods gotiations with both the EU and would not get much benefit from this

the UK. Indian competitors like Vietnam have greater duty advan-However, India can explore optage in sectors like apparel and maportunities in service sectors like rine goods," Sahai said. IT, architecture, research and de-Sharing similar views, Biswajit

velopment and engineering in both Dhar, a professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, said the markets as the EU-UK pact does India had a lot of contentious issues



while negotiating FTA with the EU. However, after Brexit, the UK could have different stand on those issues and now "India should pursue FTA talks again with both the regions'

He added that there is a possibility of doing a favourable free trade pact with the UK.

FIEO President Sharad Kumar Saraf said that India should now

There is not much gain for Indian goods, but we can gain in services sector in both the UK and EU markets. We will gain more in the UK market as we are English speaking country AJAY SAHAI I DIRECTOR GENERAL, FIEO

move "aggressively" on starting negotiations for FTA with both the

EU and UK. 'We have requested the government to sign an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) regarding a deadline to conclude FTA talks with Britain during the visit of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson next month in India," Saraf said.

Rakesh Mohan Joshi, professor at Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), said that after the trade deal with the EU and the UK. India will get a better opportunity to cater to the demands of both the markets.

"But India needs to plan accordingly," he added.

Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) Chairman A Sakthivel said India-UK FTA would help in removing the customs duty disadvantages faced by domestic players in Britain. Britain clinched a historic deal

with the European Union on Thursday as both sides managed to thrash out a post-Brexit free trade agreement just days before the December 31 deadline.

RIL to buy out IMG Worldwide's stake for ₹52.08 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) has agreed to buy out IMG Worldwide LLC from their sports management joint venture for ₹52.08 crore.

The nation's biggest company by market value, in a stock exchange filing, said it will buy IMG Worldwide's 50 per cent stake in IMG-Reliance Ltd (IMG-R) for no more than ₹52.08 crore in cash.



RIL will rebrand the company after the closure of the deal.

RIL had formed an equal joint venture with IMG Worldwide, an international sports marketing and management company, in 2010 to develop, market and manage sports and entertainment in India. IMG is a global leader in sports,

fashion, events and media, operating in more than 30 countries, and is a part of the Endeavor network.

IMG-R is engaged in the business of creation, management, implementation and commercialisation of sporting, fashion and entertainment events in India.

"The company has entered into definitive agreements to acquire the shares held by IMG Singapore Pte Ltd in IMG-R, for a cash consideration not exceeding ₹52.08 crore," the filing said.

'FASTag' toll collection crosses ₹80 crore per day for first time

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 25: The toll collection per day via 'FASTag' crossed ₹80 crore Thursday as 50 lakh transactions took place via the electronic highway user fee collection system. According to state run NHAI, ₹80 crore per day toll collection mark was crossed December 24.



Centre, states must continue with counter-cyclical fiscal measures: RBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 25: The Centre and state governments need to continue with the counter-cyclical fiscal measures to sustain the momentum of economic growth which went through a rough patch following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, according to an RBI article.

"Capital expenditure, which collapsed in H1:2020-21, will need to be scaled up as a priority. Public investment in healthcare, social housing, education and environmental protection is the need of the hour to build a more resilient and inclusive economy." said the RBI article on 'Government Finances 2020-

21: A Half-Yearly Review' The governments, it added, will have to effectively balance between continued fiscal support for the fragile recovery process and addressing the medium-term debtdeficit imbalances, while ensuring good housekeeping and adequate transparency in the fiscal reporting.

The economic growth dipped by 23.9 per cent in the first quarter of the current financial year on account of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The contraction, however, narrowed to 7.5 per cent

The governments will have to effectively balance between continued fiscal support for the fragile recovery process and addressing the medium-term debt-deficit imbalances

in the second quarter and growth is expected to turn positive in the third quarter.

"Notwithstanding the severe impact of COVID-19 on government finances already realised in H1, it is imperative for Centre and states to continue with the counter-cyclical fiscal measures to sustain the

momentum of the recovery," the article said

The paper noted that Gross Fiscal Deficit (GFD) for the Union Government in 2020-21 crossed 100 per cent of the budgeted amount by the fourth month of the financial year (July 2020), and stood at 119.7 per cent of the budgeted amount by October 2020.

For states, H1:2020-21 GFD stood at 58.4 per cent of budgeted amount. significantly higher than the 35-40 per cent observed in a normal year.

With deterioration in fiscal balances at both levels of government, the combined GFD (centre plus states) in H1:2020-21 stood at 85.9 per cent of BE, significantly higher than 70 per cent in H1:2019-20, said the article authored by Rahul Agarwal, Ipsita Padhi, Sudhanshu Goyal, Samir Ranjan Behera and Sangita Misra in the Fiscal Division of Department of Economic and Policy Research (DEPR), RBL

The RBI said the views expressed in the article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the central bank.

As per the article, the build-up of combined fiscal deficit in H1:2020-21 is sharper, but attributable mostly to the developments in the first quarter.

BUDGET 2021-22 Govt may reduce oil subsidy budget by half

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 25: A rather stable phase of oil prices is expected to help the government make big cuts in the oil subsidy allocation in next year's budget. Sources said that the mathematics being worked out by the Finance Ministry ahead of the presentation of Budget 2021-22 in February next year could see netroleum subsidv burden falling by more than half from the FY21 levels of ₹40,915 crore.

A major saving on the subsidy is expected to come from reduced government support for domestic LPG cylinders. A favourable global oil market, in the first half of current fiscal, helped the government to completely eliminate the subsidy paid under direct benefit transfer (DBT) to eligible domestic con-

prices (non-subsidised) by ₹100 per ₹694, even if a ₹100 per cylinder government during FY22, the albe 14,000 crore higher.

The government had allocated ₹40,915 crore as petroleum subsidy

Manufacturing firms log 'softer

contraction' in sales in Q2 FY21

sumers from September this year. While a slight firming of global oil prices has raised domestic LPG 14.2 kg cylinder in December to subsidy is to be provided by the location towards this end would



for FY21, a 6 per cent increase from ₹38,569 crore allocated for the last fiscal. Out of this, the allocation for LPG subsidy has been increased to ₹37,256.21 crore for the current

vear.

If the current price trend holds and the projections that oil prices remains range bound at around \$ 45-55 per barrel next year, the government's LPG subsidv burden could fall by almost ₹20.000 crore in FY22. The subsidy could be higher if government extends provision of three free cylinders for the poor

as part of Covid-19 relief meas-

India has about 28.65 crore LPG

consumers. Of these, around 1.5

crore are not eligible to get LPG sub-

sidy since December 2016 because

they have an annual taxable in-

ures in FY22.

come above ₹10 lakh

the country has demanded reduction of import duty for pig iron and other raw materials, an official said Friday, Prices of pig iron and other raw materials for the industry have gone up by 30-50 per cent. Institute of Indian Foundrymen (IIF) President Vijay S Beriwal said. The industry body has also sought subsidies on power from the government to stay competitive in the global markets.

IKEA India FY20 loss widens

New Delhi: Furniture retailer IKEA India saw its net loss widen to ₹720.1 crore in the financial year ended March 2020, according to regulatory documents. The company had registered a loss of ₹685.4 crore in the financial year ended March 2019, according to Registrar of Companies filing shared by market intelligence firm Tofler. However, IKEA India saw its net sales grow 64.68 per cent to ₹566 crore in FY 2019-20 from ₹343.7 crore in the previous fiscal.

Myntra sells 1.1 crore items

Bangalore: Fashion

ecommerce platform Myntra Friday said it sold 1.1 crore items to more than 32 lakh customers during its 13th, five-day End of Reason Sale that ended December 24. Also catering to more than 50 lakh orders, the fashion carnival witnessed 51 per cent increase in traffic over the previous winter edition. The company said it processed record-breaking more than 19,000 items per minute at peak.

NO REVISION IN FUEI **PRICES ON CHRISTMAS**

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 25: Petrol and diesel prices remained unchanged on Friday as oil marketing companies continued to maintain a wait and watch stance amid range bound global oil prices. Accordingly, the pump price of

petrol remained at ₹83.71 a litre and diesel ₹73.87 a litre in Delhi Friday. Across the country as well the price of the two petroleum products remained unchanged.

The price of petrol in Mumbai remained at ₹90.34 and diesel ₹80.51, the two fuels remained at ₹86.51 and ₹79.31 a litre respectively in Chennai. The retail price of petrol remained at ₹85.19 and ₹77.44 a litre in Kolkata.



The OMCs have gone on a pause mode at a time when the news of a successful coronavirus and expectations of big pick up in demand had kept crude on the boil with prices breaching \$50 a barrel mark.

Petrol price was very close to breaching the all-time high level of ₹84 a litre (reached on October 4, 2018) when it touched ₹83.71 a litre on December 7. But the march has been halted ever since then with no price revision by the OMCs.

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 25: Demand conditions in the manufacturing sector returned to the recovery mode with a softer contraction of 4.3 per cent (Y-o-Y) in the second quarter of this fiscal in terms of nominal sales after shrinking 41.1 per cent in the previous quarter that was hit by countrywide lockdowns due to COVID-19, according to RBI data.

The recovery was led by iron and steel, food products, cement, automobile and pharmaceuticals companies, showed the data on the performance of the private corporate sector during the second quarter of 2020-21.

Manufacturing companies re-



ported sales of ₹5,99,479 crore in the second quarter, compared to ₹3,97,233 crore in April-June of FY 2020-21. The data has been drawn from abridged quarterly financial results of 2.637 listed non-government non-financial (NGNF) companies, the RBI said.

Nominal sales of non-IT services sector also registered lower contraction of 14.5 per cent (Y-o-Y) led by

expansion in sales of telecommunication and real estate companies. Sales growth of IT sector com-

panies remained steady at 3.6 per cent (Y-o-Y) in Q2 FY 2020-21. As per the data, sales of non-IT

firms and IT firms during the second quarter stood at ₹80.842 crore and ₹1,01,353 crore, respectively.

"Operating profits of manufacturing companies increased on the back of savings in expenditure; operating profits of services (both IT and non-IT) companies also increased in Q2:2020-21," the RBI said in a statement.

On expenditure, it said input cost pressure from raw materials remained subdued for manufacturing sector in the July-September quarter.

"With more than 2.20 crore

'FASTag' issued till date, adoption of 'FASTag' by the highway users has seen unprecedented growth. With FASTag being mandatory for vehicles from 1st January 2021, the NHAI has made all necessary arrangements to provide seamless movement of vehicles at fee plazas," the statement said.

"Adoption of 'FASTag' has helped highway users to save time and fuel at the toll plazas. The digital transaction has got necessary push through the recent amendment in 'Central Motor Vehicle Rules'." The user fee collection system

'Radio-Frequency uses Identification' (RFID) technology.

"The payment is made digitally through the FASTag linked to the bank wallet," the statement said.

Realty sector plunges deeper into crisis this year

BUILDERS LOOK TO 2021 WITH HOPES OF REVIVAL IN DEMAND

AGENCIES

in sales

New Delhi, Dec 25: India's real estate industry has been trying to get back on its feet ever since the 2016 note ban laid the sector low but 2020 was hardly the year to stand tall. With the pandemic devastating demand in the economy, the industry is now looking to the New Year with the hope of a sharp recovery

Stable property prices, low home

loan interest rates, discounts and

freebies offered by developers and

lower stamp duty rates offered by

some states are what the industry

hopes will aid in the recovery after

housing sales and office space leas-

ing sunk by 40-50 per cent this year.

one of the world's strictest lock-

downs that lasted over two months,

saw muted demand for housing and office space through September even as the developers quickly adopted digital tools to reach out to prospective buyers. Only in October did the property market start seeing some trac-

tion, driven by pent up as well as fresh festive demand that got further consolidated towards trusted developers.

Still, data compiled by property consultant Anarock showed that housing sales fell 47 per cent yearon-year to 1.38 lakh units in 2020 across top seven cities -- Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai and Kolkata.

Stamp duty cut by the Maharashtra government provided The economy, which witnessed a big relief to builders and buyers alike, and was instrumental in re-



viving demand in Mumbai and Pune. Many developers absorbed the balance stamp duty to boost their sales. The pandemic reinforced the importance of home ownership in a world enamoured with the concept of shared economy. On the performance in 2020, realtors' apex body CREDAI's Chairman Jaxay Shah said the realty sector in the last few years has "borne the repercussions of fiscal and non-fiscal reforms", be it demonetisation, introduction of GST or RERA

'While the sector was under pres-

The economy, which witnessed one of the world's strictest lockdowns that lasted over two months, saw muted demand for housing and office space through September

sure owing to all the reforms, the COVID-19 pandemic made things worse as the sector is reeling under the worst ever crisis," Shah said.

"The real estate sector has been facing headwinds for the past few years. The situation became tougher owing to the COVID-19...Uncertainty over jobs and livelihoods robbed the market of its potential buyer-base

leading to near-zero demand," **CREDAI** President Satish Magar said. Post-lockdown, he said sales have improved but are yet to touch pre-COVID levels in most cities.

'There are indicators that point towards recovery in the sector, but at a less than desired pace," Magar said.

The CREDAI President said the government and the RBI took steps to help the sector but those do not address the prolonged problems as he sought both demand and supply side interventions in the upcoming Budget.

To help developers tide over the crisis, the Centre invoked force majeure clause under the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA) to extend the deadline forcompletion of projects by six to nine months.













OrissaPOST SATURDAY | DECEMBER 26 | 2020 | BHUBANESWAR

sports

REDEMPTION TIME INDIA LOOK FOR SALVATION UNDER STAND-IN CAPTAIN AJINKYA RAHANE

AGENCIES

Melbourne, Dec 25: It is a do or die situation for India when the face Australia in the Boxing Day Test at the MCG here Saturday. It is time for redemption for them after getting bowled out for 36 at the Adelaide Oval a few days back. And their job gets doubly difficult as they have to

AUSTRALIA

Tim Paine (captain and wicketkeeper), Joe Burns, Matthew Wade, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Cameron Green, Pat **Cummins, Josh Hazlewood,** Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon

do without their best batsman -Virat Kohli. But then as they say 'cometh the hour, cometh the man', so who knows how India will shape up when the game begins.

No doubt, stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane will be looking for salvation. India have the talent to fight back and if they have achieve redemption, it is Rahane and Cheteshwar Pujara who will have to take the onus. The question is whether the

Australian bowlers will loosen the shackles. What makes this Test doubly

intriguing is the nature of the pitch. Usually the Melbourne pitch has something for both the batters and bowlers. This time it looks very firm with a lot of bounce. Hence, the Indian batters

'Have to be wary about India'

MELBOURNE: Australian captain Tim Paine said Friday a 'proud' cricketing nation like India is not going to roll over like Adelaide. India lost the first Test by eight wickets, bowled out for 36, their lowest Test score. But Paine is in no mood to take it easy against their battered opponents. "Well, we can't pay any attention to mental scars or whatever thing they're talking about," the skipper said. "We know India are a proud cricket country, an extremely talented Test match side with lots of dangerous players. So we have to be wary. If we give them an inch, they will take a mile,"

he asserted. Paine said winning is a habit and the Australians would go for the jugular. "We saw last year how England came back against us after being 1-2 down. Since then our focus has been winning after winning," he said. Talking about the quality of the opponents, Paine heaped praise on Rishabh Pant and KL Rahul (not aware of his non-inclusion). "KL Rahul or Rishabh (Pant), are all dangerous players. So we got to be bang on the mark tomorrow (Saturday) as we were in Adelaide," he added.

STATS TRIVIA he game at the MCG will be the 100th

Test between India and Australia ustralia have won 30 of the 49 Tests A ustralia nave won so or site they have played against India at home. India have emerged victorious in seven away games

ndia have been stronger at home too. They have won 21 of the 50 Tests played. Australia, on the other hand have won emerged victorious in 13.

India's first win against Aussies came in 1959 at Kanpur. It was the 10th encounter between the two countries.

Cince 2001, India have held a slight Output Content of the second secon 17 Tests while the Australians have triumphed in 15.

CH STARTS: 5.00AM IS **ON SONY CHANNEL**

can expect a barrage of short balls from the Australians. It is a condition that Aussies definitely cherish and the likes of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood, not to forget Cameroon Green, will be raring to go once more.

India have made four changes in the team - two forced and two expected. What was unexpected however, was the omission of KL Rahul. India are going into the game with five bowlers, hoping that Hanuma Vihari, Ravindra Jadeja and Rishabh Pant can contribute substantially if the situation demands so. The changes that have been made are Shubhman Gill (Prithvi Shaw), Jadeja (Virat Kohli), Pant (Wriddhiman Saha) and Mohammed Siraj (Mohammed Shami). Among the four, Gill and Siraj will be making their Test debut. It's not about the defeat but the

manner of capitulation which can come back to haunt India, a side that's not short on quality. The next few days will be a test of real character and it's only fair that

a strategic shift was on the cards. The Australians aren't known to take any prisoners and an unchanged XI that is expected to play at the MCG will not take its foot off the pedal, skipper Tim Paine insisted.

However, more importantly for India, their premier fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah will have to bring his 'A' game to the fore. He needs to strike at regular intervals if India are to fightback and that will certainly take the pressure off debutant Siraj and Umesh Yadav. There can be no doubt that India's hour of reckoning has arrived... no denying that.

INDIA

Ajinkya Rahane (captain), Mayank Agarwal, Shubhman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wicket-keeper), Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Umesh Yadav, Jasprit

Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj DBYJU'S

'We will focus on our strengths' MELBOURNE: India's stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane said Friday he would rather focus on his team than worrying about Australia's 'mind games' ahead of the 'Boxing

Day' Test. The Indian skipper stated that his players would focus on their own strengths rather than think about what the Aussies are doing. "Australians are very good at playing mind games and I will let them do that. We are focussing on ourselves, what we want to do as a unit and we are going to back every individual," Rahane said on the eve of the match. "I think what I want to do is back my team. So focus is not on me, it is all about team and how we want to do well. We are focussing on that," the skipper added. Rahane asserted that one hour of poor cricket on the third morning in Adelaide doesn't define this team. "We had two good days, just one bad hour, where we actually lost it completely," Rahane pointed out.

l am just tellina the boys to stick to their brand of cricket. We know our abilities and we know our strengths. If everyone raises ar nothing to worry

lia. If we give them an inch. will take a

308

Australia romped to an eight-wicket win courtesy a 12-wicket match-haul by pacer Bruce Reid. India were bowled out for 263 and 213 as Australia got 349 and 128/2.

DECEMBER 26-30, 1999 : Australia won by 180 runs Sachin Tendulkar's 116 in the first innings and 52 in the second were in vain as Australia beat India by 180 runs. Australia made 405 and 208/5 declared and bowled India out for 238 and 195.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2007 : Australia won by 337 runs Havden was the star once again with 124 in the first innings that helped Australia to 343. It was followed up with 351/7 declared in the second innings. India were dismissed for 196 and 161.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2011: Australia won by 122 runs It was the first game of series in 2011-12 which India lost 0-4 of. Australia made 333 and 240 and bowled India out for 282 and 169.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2014 : Match drawn It was Mahendra Singh Dhoni's last Test match

THE TWO DEBUTANTS

he door opened for Mohammed Siraj, after Mohammed Shami got injured in the first Test and was ruled out of the series. Siraj also could have missed out on the Test series. His father died during the T20 series, but Siraj refused BCCI's offer to fly him back to attend the last rites. He knew that for the trip he would have to be under quarantine for 14 days and that would rule out his chances. So he decided to listen to skipper Virat Kohli who told Siraj, "Stay strong for your dad's dream." The decision to remain back in Australia seems to have been a boon for the son of an auto-rickshaw driver. Now the sky is the limit for him.

MOHAMMED SIRAJ (BOWLER)

First Class	M- 38	W- 152	BB- 8/59	5W /I-4				
List A	M- 46	W- 81	BB- 5/37	5W /I-2				
T20s	M- 67	W- 90	BB- 4/20	4W /I-3				
*Siraj so far has played one ODI and three T20s for India picking up three wickets.								





Shubhman Gill's languid grace and the Bability to play the ball late have fetched him rave reviews. Cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar spoke very highly about Gill during the IPL. He is a classy act with plenty of time at his disposal to play the bowlers. After the debacle in Adelaide, the visitors will certainly be hoping Gill comes good at the top of the order. Skipper Ajinkya Rahane said that the role of an opener in any game is very important.

India have played 13 Tests at the MCG. Their best records are at this hallowed ground. India have won three of the 13 Tests they have played at the MCG. The last one came in 2018 and helped India clinch the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in 72 years. Here's how the matches have panned out.



then shot India out for 331 and 67 to win by an innings and 177 runs. Vinoo Mankad hit 111 for India in the first innings.

DECEMBER 30, 1967- JANUARY 3, 1968: Australia won by an innings and four runs Australia posted 529 and bundled out India for 173

and 252. Only Mansur Ali Khan (75 and 85) shone with the bat. DECEMBER 30, 1977- JANUARY 4, 1978: India won by

222 runs

It was India's first win at the MCG courtesy spinners Bishan Singh Bedi and BS Chandrasekhar who picked 18 of the 20 Aussie wickets to fall. India made 256 and 343 against Australia's 213 and 164.

India made 445 and 59/2 against Australia's 262 and

DECEMBER 26-29, 1991: Australia won by eight wickets

DECEMBER 26-30, 2003 : Australia won by nine wickets Virender Sehwag's 195 was overshadowed by Ricky Ponting's 257 and Matthew Hayden's 136 as Australia aced a run-fest, winning by nine wickets. The hosts replied to India's 366 with 558 in the first innings before bowling the Indians out for 286 in the second essav.

JANUARY 1-5, 1948 : Australia won by 222 runs In this game Sir Donald Bradman scored centuries in both innings. Australia posted 394 and 255/4 declared. India declared on 291/9 in the first innings and were bowled out for 125 in the second.

FEBRUARY 6-10, 1948: Australia won by an innings and 177 runs Australia piled up a mammoth 575/8 declared and

FEBRUARY 7-11, 1981: India won by 59 runs The game will be remembered more for Sunil Gavaskar threatening to walk off. However, that did not happen. An injured Kapil Dev took five wickets in the second innings as Australia were bowled out for 83 chasing a victory target of 143. India made 237 and 324. Australia got 419 in the first innings. DECEMBER 26-30, 1985 : Match drawn

Australia got 530 and 465 while India replied with 465 and 174 for six.

DECEMBER 26-30, 2018: India won by 137 runs An iconic Test as it enabled India to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time. Jasprit Bumrah ran through the Australians picking up nine wickets in the game. India scored 443/7 declared riding on Chetshwar Pujara's 106. They then bowled out the Aussies for 151 and 261.

SHUBHMAN GILL (BATSMAN)

rst class	M-23	R-2,270	H-268	100s-7	50s-11	
st-A	M-58	R-2,313	H-143	100s-6	50s-11	
20	M-51	R-1,217	H-78	100s-0	50s-9	

NEWS IN BRIEF

2 Man City players test Covid positive

MANCHESTER: Manchester City players Gabriel Jesus and Kyle Walker have tested positive for coronavirus. The club said two staff members also tested positive and that all four are self-isolating in accordance with Premier League and government protocols. This has been an injury-plagued year for Jesus. He has just scored four goals in all competitions. The club wished all four 'a speedy recovery over the Christmas period ahead of their return to work, training and competition'.

'Negative impact'

KARACHI: Former Pakistan captain and chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq has said the recent Mohammad Amir retirement controversy will have a negative impact on the country's cricket. Amir retired from international cricket due to his differences with team management comprising chief coach Misbah ul Haq and bowling coach Waqar Younis. "It is not about the impact Amir's decision will have on our bowling resources or strength because life moves on. But what bothers me more is the negative impact such incidents have on our cricket and its image," Inzamam said. AGENCIES

INDUCTION INTO BCCI'S NEW SENIOR SELECTION PANEL Debashis ready for new role

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Just elevated to the BCCI senior selection committee, former India fast bowler Debashis Mohanty feels that life has turned a full circle for him. Debashis has been a player, then a coach before finally being inducted into the junior selection committee. Now he has moved a step forward to the senior level and he feels that it is a role which has a lot of responsibilities.

Talking to reporters here at the Sahid Sporting Club, the former India fast bowler said that his main aim will be to identify the real talents. He also asserted that Odisha cricketers will have to perform consistently at all levels across all formats to attract attention. "I am now a national selector,

so I have to identify talented players from all over India, not just Odisha," Debashis said. "Odisha cricketers will have to perform consistently at all levels, be it the Mushtaq Ali Trophy, Ranji or Duleep Trophy. If they do so, I will certainly highlight their perform-

ances," Debashis added. Debashis was quick to point out that the Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) is on the right track to unearth talented players. "I am sure in the next few vears we will see a lot of talented faces in Odisha cricket," he asserted.



BCCI's senior selector Debashis Mohanty poses with kids at the Sahid Sporting Club ground at Bhubaneswar, Friday

Odisha cricketers will have to perform consistently at all levels across all formats. Then only will they come into national reckoning

DEBASHIS MOHANTY

Debashis was asked as to which role he enjoyed the most – player, coach and now selector. "Each has its own responsibilities, but the one role I have enjoyed most is representing India on the cricket field," said the man who was a member of the 1999 World Cup team.

"Coaching is a different job altogether and as a selector the main focus is to identify talents that will be useful for India. Each role has its pros and cons. Frankly speaking, I have enjoyed each and every role,"

Debashis informed.

Debashis, Abey Kuruvilla and Harvinder Singh have all played together and incidentally all the three were fast bowlers in their prime. Will playing together help in their role as selectors? "Well, certainly there will be better understanding as we all know each other." Debashis said. "It will enable fruitful discussions," he added.

Debashis identified Priyam Garg and Kartik Tyagi as players to look out for the future. He also said that a cricketer should identify the format he is comfortable in and hone his skills accordingly. He also spoke highly about current Odisha skipper Subhranshu Senapati stating that the player is a very 'talented'. "If he works hard, he has a very bright future," stated Debashis.

Subhranshu to lead Odisha T20 squad

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Odisha cricketers will have the chance to show their prowess when the domestic 2020-21 season starts January 10 with the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. The Odisha Cricket Association announced Friday a 20-member team to take part in the tournament. Odisha will be led by Subhranshu Senapti and seniors like Biplab Samantray and Govind Poddar have found a place in the team.

Odisha have been placed in Group 'C' with Jharkhand, Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Hyderabad and Assam. All the matches will be played in Kolkata

ODISHA TEAM

Subhranshu Senapati (captain), Biplab Samantray, Govind Poddar

Pratik Das, Shantanu Mishra, Ankit

Choudhury, Sukesh Heera, Walter

eper), Pravin Loha (wicket-keeper)

Toppo, Rajesh Dhupar (wicket-

Suryakant Pradhan, Sarbeswar

Mohanty, Tarini Sa, Pappu Ray,

Sunil Kumar Roul and Asish Rai

Ankitkar Jaiswal, Rajesh Mohanty,

where a bio-bubble will be created.

All the teams will have to reach

the venue by January 3 so that the

players and support staff can un-

Yadav, Aditya Rout, Gourav

dergo seven-day quarantine.

This year the tournament was deferred due to the COVID-19 outbreak in India. Originally the event was scheduled to be played in November. However, now it will be played from January 10 with the finals coming off January 31.

Forty four teams are taking part in the event. The teams have been divided into seven groups. While Groups A to F will have six teams each, the Plate Group will comprise of eight sides. Odisha, no doubt are in a tough group with teams like Tamil Nadu, Bengal and Hyderabad. However, they have the talent to surprise superior sides.

planned by Akos. It gives Vinesh

the opportunity to spar with many

European wrestlers in her weight

category. Akos is sure it will im-

prove her her technical and tactical

aspects. Vinesh is looking forward

to the overseas training camp. "As

a wrestler, I need to know my level

and getting to spar with good

wrestlers will be very helpful in as-

sessing where I stand," Vinesh said.

Olympics scheduled for July-August

2021 in the women's 53 kg event

after winning the bronze medal at

the 2019 World Championships.

Vinesh has qualified for the Tokyo

40-day foreign camp for wrestler Vinesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: The Central Government has sanctioned a 40-day training camp in Hungary and Poland for champion wrestler Vinesh Phogat along with her personal coach Woller Akos, sparring partner Priyanka Phogat and physiotherapist Poornima Raman Ngomdir for a total cost of Rs 15.51 lakh. The tour was sanctioned under the government's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS). The camp will take place from December 28 to January 24 at the Vasas Sports Club in Budapest and from January 25 to February 5 at the Olympic Training Centre in Szczryk.



local transportation, boarding and lodging charges and out of pocket allowance. Vinesh is a part of the TOPS and is a medal prospect at the Tokvo Games.

The training camp has been

Her last competition before the COVID-19 lockdown was the Asian Senior Championships in February.

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