



Rumoured boyfriend

Actress Tripti Dimri was spotted again with rumoured boyfriend Sam Merchant

LEISURE | P2

Israel eyes Golan Heights

Israel agrees Sunday to double its population on the occupied Golan Heights while saying threats from Syria remains

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Russian oil dips

Import of Russian crude oil dips in November to its lowest level since June 2022

BUSINESS | P11

Oz dominate India

Travis Head and Steve Smith centuries help Australia put 405 for 7 on the score board at the end of second day of the third Test

SPORTS | P12

2 women run over while boarding train

Chikiti: In a tragic incident, two women were killed after being run over by a train they were boarding at Surla Road railway station under Golanthara police limits in Ganjam district, Sunday morning. The deceased were identified as Jhunu Gouda, 59, and Parbati Gouda, 59, residents of Jagannathpur village in Pitatali panchayat. They used to work as cooking assistants at Jagannathpur Primary School. Sources said both the deceased were members of the Pachika Sahayika Mahasangha. The incident occurred while they were boarding the Palasa-Cuttack DMU train to attend an association rally in Bhubaneswar. When they attempted to board the train, they lost balance and fell under the wheels of the moving train leading to their death on the spot.

Justice Yadav likely to explain stand

New Delhi: Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, who purportedly made controversial statements at a VHP function, is likely to appear before the Supreme Court Collegium soon to explain his stand on the controversy. The top court December 10 took note of news reports over the statements and sought a report from the Allahabad High Court on the entire issue. "The Supreme Court has taken note of newspaper reports of a speech given by Mr Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, a sitting judge of the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad. The details and particulars have been called from the high court and the matter is under consideration," an official statement had said.



FIRE FIGHTING: Firemen douse a fire at a seven-storey commercial building in the Worli area of south Mumbai Sunday morning

PTI PHOTO

Atul Subhash's wife, her mother and brother held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bengaluru, Dec 15: The Bengaluru police have arrested three people, including the estranged wife of senior tech executive Atul Subhash, who died by suicide recently.

Nikita Singhania was arrested in Gurugram, Haryana, while her mother Nisha Singhania and brother Anuragh Singhania were picked up from Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj, police said Sunday. They were arrested Saturday morning, brought to Bengaluru and sent to 14-days judicial custody after being produced before a local court.

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said Subhash's wife, mother-in-law and brother-in-law have been apprehended and are in judicial custody. The investigation will follow.

Subhash, 34, was found hanging from his house in Munnekolalu, Southeast Bengaluru, December 9. He left behind lengthy videos and notes, blaming his wife and in-laws for driving him to suicide through "false" cases and "persistent torture".

Marathahalli police has registered a case of abetment to suicide and arrested Nikita and two others. Addressing reporters here, Parameshwara said, "He (Subhash) had left about a forty page death note and he has raised several issues, most importantly about the misuse of provisions in the law that were meant for protection of women."

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No matter what the question is, just criticise the Nehru-Gandhi family and you'll pass in flying colours

Zakir Hussain admitted to ICU



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: Tabla maestro Zakir Hussain has been admitted to the ICU of a San Francisco hospital with heart-related problems, his friend and flautist Rakesh Chaurasia said Sunday.

The 73-year-old US-based musician, who has taken the tabla to the global stage, had been having blood pressure issues, added Hussain's manager Nirmala Bachani. "He has been admitted to a hospital in San Francisco for a heart-related problem for the last two weeks," Bachani said.

"He is unwell and admitted in the ICU right now. We all are worried about the situation," Chaurasia told PTI.

Amid reports claiming that Hussain had died, his publicist confirmed to PTI that the percussionist is being treated at the San Francisco hospital and "has not passed". Hussain's sister Khurshed told PTI that her brother is "very very critical" but is "very much breathing at the moment".

Jumbo tramples sisters in sleep

People in a tribal hamlet in the mining-affected Bonai block of Sundargarh district were jolted from their sleep Sunday morning when a wild tusker strayed into their village. While most of the villagers ran to safety, the tusker trampled two little girls, aged 12 and three respectively, in their sleep. Though the incident will pass off as yet another case of growing man-animal conflict, an analysis of the event reveals that the mishap could have been averted if the authorities were better prepared. According to the statistics presented before the Parliament December 13, Odisha accounts for the maximum number of deaths (624) in India (2,829) in elephant attacks between 2019 and 2024. The state holds the dubious distinction despite being home to a lower number of elephants compared to Karnataka, Assam, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

PNN & AGENCIES

Rourkela, Dec 15:

Two sisters were trampled to death by a wild elephant after it attacked



their house in Sundargarh district Sunday, officials said.

The incident occurred in Kantapalli village in Tamada range of Bonai forest division, they said.

The deceased were identified as Samiya Munda, 12, and her sister Chandni Munda, three, they added.

The two girls were sleeping when the elephant attacked their kuchcha house and brought down a portion of it. When the adults saw the elephant, they fled, but the girls, who were asleep, were left behind amid the commotion.

Reports said that after hearing the noise, the 12-year-old

girl woke up and tried to run away, but the intruder elephant grabbed her before she could escape. Subsequently, it trampled and killed her before handing out the same cruel fate to the three-year-old.

Divisional Forest Officer Lalit Patra said, "We are keeping a close eye on the elephant as it is roaming in the area. It is a lone tusker, which probably separated from its herd."

The elephant has a radio collar but could not be tracked as the service provider of the GSM SIM card in it does not have network in the area, he said.

The government would provide compensation to the fam-

ily members of the deceased, he added. Meanwhile, conservationists have slammed the authorities for their blind reliance on technology that led to the tragic incident.

Sangitya Iyer, Founder of Voice For Asian Elephants, an elephant conservation organisation which works towards safety of elephants in Odisha, said "Radio collar would work if the device is able to convey the detection to the stakeholders. In this case, it seems to have been dysfunctional, which is unfortunate. One of the greatest challenges facing technology is its ability to function properly. It should have been tested and tried in such areas before implantation. In this situation it appears that the device was installed in a haphazard manner, albeit with good intentions," she said.

"Elephants only want some fodder, their space has been invaded by humans and they have nowhere else to go to find food," she added while expressing her grief over the death of the two little girls.

City to host World Athletics Continental Tour in Aug '25

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 15: India will host its maiden World Athletics Continental Tour event -- a bronze level global meet -- in Bhubaneswar August 10 next year, the national federation said Sunday.

The announcement was made by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) while releasing the competition calendar for 2025.

The Continental Tour is an annual series of track and field competitions held under the aegis of World Athletics and it forms the second tier of international one-day meetings after the prestigious Diamond League.

"The Continental Tour will be a good opportunity for the Indian team to showcase their potential on home ground before the World Championships in September," AFI President Adille Sumariwalla said.

The meet will be a chance for Indian athletes to earn world ranking points (category C) in home conditions for the 2025 World Championships to be held in Tokyo from September 13-21.

The bronze level Tour meet is



below the gold and silver levels. This will be the first global athletics meet to be hosted by India after the international permit meets, held in the country in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi in a post on X said, "Odisha is honoured to host India's maiden World Athletics Continental Tour in Bhubaneswar. We thank World Athletics, Athletics Federation of India, and the Government of India for placing their trust in us. This reflects our commitment to promoting sports and providing world-class infrastructure for athletes. We eagerly look forward to welcoming the global athletic community and inspiring a new generation of talent from India."

Murder accused Luigi Mangione captivates netizens

Folk ballads. Fan fiction. Legal defense funds. "Free Luigi" T-shirts. Support for the 26-year-old charged with murder in the shooting of UnitedHealthcare chief executive Brian Thompson has evolved into a frenzied online fandom, reflecting the simmering discontent among American citizens against the current state of healthcare.

The story of Luigi Mangione, who stands accused of shooting a 50-year-old father of two while he was on his way into an investor conference, has hit a cultural nerve, bridging long-simmering anger against insurance companies with the rapid currents of internet culture. Online creators have made memes depicting Mangione as a patron saint, designed

merchandise featuring his mug shots and written sexually explicit fan fiction about the accused killer. Their posts encapsulate a mix of admiration, anticorporate sentiment and frustration with American healthcare. Some websites are racing to remove content that glorifies violence or the suspect.

Sites such as Etsy, Redbubble and TeePublic have tried to remove listings for items depicting Mangione but have struggled to keep up with the speed of new designs. Videos in which TikTok users profess crushes on Mangione have disappeared from the social-media site. Representatives for TikTok did not respond to requests for comment.

Using a tactic often employed



by stan armies—the rabid fans of celebrities—supporters flooded the Yelp page of the Altoona, Pa., McDonald's where Mangione was arrested with one-star reviews. Conversely, reviewers bestowed five-star praise on a Levi's jacket the suspect allegedly wore the day of the

shooting: "Looks great when you wanna chat up ladies, but functional when you need to shoot a CEO."

Mangione, an athletic, Ivy League-educated scion of a wealthy Baltimore family, has been cast as a folk hero by those who sympathize with him. Crit-

ics have said sympathy is akin to condoning violence.

The alleged shooter was arrested Monday (Dec 9) on firearm, forgery and other charges. New York prosecutors later charged him with five criminal counts, including second-degree murder and criminal possession of a weapon. On Tuesday, Mangione's lawyer said his client intends to plead not guilty.

Fan cam edits—where admirers compile swoon-worthy photos and clips of celebrities set to popular songs—with Mangione's face have proliferated, set to songs such as Britney Spears' "Criminal" and Taylor Swift's "Fresh Out the Slammer."

Matthew Keith, a 29-year-old Indianapolis resident working in marketing, went viral this week for reading aloud his

three-part, handwritten fan fiction on TikTok detailing an NSFw encounter with a hooded, masked man after the shooting. He finds Mangione handsome, but his interest in the alleged shooter goes beyond that. Last year, Keith lost his job after he'd been diagnosed with cancer. His parents helped him pay for treatments, but he saw firsthand how the system could have left him without critical care.

"It really hit home for me," Keith said.

He thinks Mangione makes people feel that he's fighting for them against a broken healthcare system. "The commonality is that people shouldn't have to question whether they can afford to go to the doctor," he said.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

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

TAURUS

Logic may be your forte today, but in the game of life, sometimes the heart wins and sometimes the head. Your analytical skills will help you understand things better, in turn, making you wiser. You may feel an urge to spend on music cassettes, CDs and electronic gadgets.

GEMINI

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

CANCER

Ganesha believes that today you may have to take certain financial decisions at home as well as at work. If you are in-charge of a certain project, you will trust the judgement of those working on it, mostly because they have been hand-picked by you.

LEO

It may be that the best daffodils bloom early in the morning, but good ideas can come any time of the day, says Ganesha. So spruce up your management skills, as you shall need them to help organise and cash in on the multitude of ideas that will bombard you today. Remember, says Ganesha, a good idea can change your life, just the way a good poem can help you win a wife! So, if it is some love that you are fishing for, then express yourself without inhibitions today.

VIRGO

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

LIBRA

Some days you get the carrot, while on others, it is the stick! Today is going to be one of those 'stick' days when it comes to dealing with your seniors, foresees Ganesha. It would be wise to delay auction bids or sealed tenders. Sometimes, waiting patiently is the best policy, especially if you are a job aspirant.

SCORPIO

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

SAGITTARIUS

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

CAPRICORN

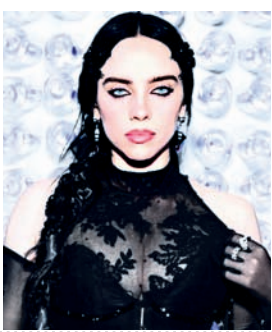
Work will suck you dry of your energy today, says Ganesha. Business rivals will go out of their way to mar your reputation and project you as incompetent. But to their dismay, you will prove to be way too smart to let them succeed in their sinister motives. In fact, you will hit where it hurts most and show your foes that you have all it takes to be a winner. Your superiority will reign over theirs.

AQUARIUS

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

PISCES

Anticipation is all the fun. Sadly, this only alludes to your months-in-preparation travel plans that are most likely to be delayed today on one count or the other. Though, if this is any consolation, your trip, when it finally occurs, will bring you as much pleasure and satisfaction that you expected out of it, if not more, says Ganesha.



BILLIE ELISH GETS HIT DURING CONCERT

Grammy Award-winning singer Billie Eilish was recently hit on the face during a live show. While she was performing, someone threw a necklace at her during a concert in Arizona. Despite this, the singer showed patience and continued to perform.

ATWELL TO RETURN AS AGENT CARTER

Actor Hayley Atwell is reportedly set to reprise her iconic role as Peggy Carter in the highly anticipated *Avengers: Doomsday*. The film, which is slated for release May 1, 2026, will once again be directed by the Russo brothers.



Triptii sparks dating rumours

Mumbai: Actress Triptii Dimri, who is currently basking in the success of *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*, was spotted again with rumoured boyfriend Sam Merchant. The duo seemed to prefer keeping a low profile, as Triptii was seen politely asking the photographers to refrain from recording her.

In a video, Triptii was seen exiting a restaurant wearing a black t-shirt and denim. At first she posed for the camera and later asked the paparazzi to leave. She was heard saying "Jao jao please", and soon after Sam Merchant was spotted leaving the same restaurant but the duo refused to pose together.

This is not the first time that the *Laila Majnu* actress has been spotted with her rumoured boyfriend. Recently, she was photographed with Sam attending the Bryan Adams concert in Mumbai.

While the two have been papped together several times, they have not commented on the bond yet.

On the work front, Triptii will be seen next in *Dhadak 2* alongside Siddhant Chaturvedi in the lead. It is a sequel to the 2018 film, which starred Janhvi Kapoor and Ishaan Khatter in the lead.



Mumbai: Actress Nushratt Bharuccha was hilariously a nervous wreck after her best friend and actress Ishita Raj took over the steering wheel of her new luxurious car.

Nushratt took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a video of the two going out for a night out. In the funny video, Nushratt is heard telling her *Pyaar Ka Punchnama* co-star: "Aaram se Ishita! Pehele udhar dekho, traffic dekho, fir right jao. (Be careful Ishita, First see here and then see the traffic)."

To which, Ishita said that she has seen and she then questions Nushratt if she is teaching her on how to drive a car.

Nushratt replies: "I am teaching you how to drive my car."

Pat comes the reply from Ishita, who says that Nushratt needs to learn how to drive her own car.

Nushratt turns teacher

Mallika's beauty secrets

Mumbai: Actress Mallika Sherawat's secret to looking youthful is leading a "satvik disciplined life" devoid of late night parties, alcohol and cigarettes.

Mallika replied to a fan on X, formerly known as Twitter, who asked: "I don't care of any plastic surgeons/botox/diet except for that is treating #mallikasherawat!! I want that fitness/ cosmetic/ diet/ yoga trainer."

To which, the actress shared: "My secret is leading a satvik disciplined life devoid of late night parties, alcohol and cigarettes."

She revealed that she tries to sleep early, which helps her look like a "million bucks."

"Try to sleep by 9pm and you will look like a million bucks," she wrote.

The actress has often shared videos and pictures of herself working out in the gym and the rigorous routine she follows to stay fit. On the work front, Mallika was last seen on screen in *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video*.

The mega auditions will take place January 11, leading up to the grand finale February 2. The winner of the pageant will proudly represent Odisha state at the renowned Femina Miss India 2025.

Miss Odisha India 2025 auditions held in City



Bhubaneswar: The much-anticipated Miss Odisha India 2025 auditions was hosted by Enigma and Addiction Fashion Management at a City hotel here Sunday, showcasing an extraordinary display of talent, confidence and charm.

Out of total 60 participants, only 14 contestants secured spot for the mega auditions. The show was judged by an esteemed panel comprising show director John Ajay, Enigma director Nirajpriya, fashion stylist Sibiyon Saron and entrepreneur Gaurav Chawla.

The mega auditions will take place January 11, leading up to the grand finale February 2. The winner of the pageant will proudly represent Odisha state at the renowned Femina Miss India 2025.

9pm and you will look like a million bucks," she wrote. The actress has often shared videos and pictures of herself working out in the gym and the rigorous routine she follows to stay fit.

On the work front, Mallika was last seen on screen in *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video*.

starring Rajkumar Rao, Vijay Raaz and Triptii Dimri. The film follows the story of a couple who decide to film their first night as a souvenir. It all seems fine until the CD in which they stored their video gets stolen along with the CD player.



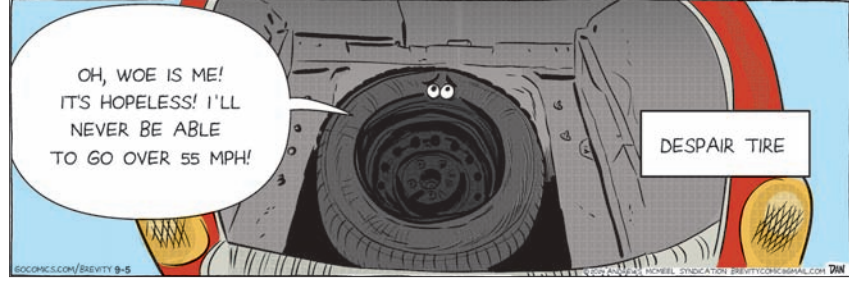
PEANUTS



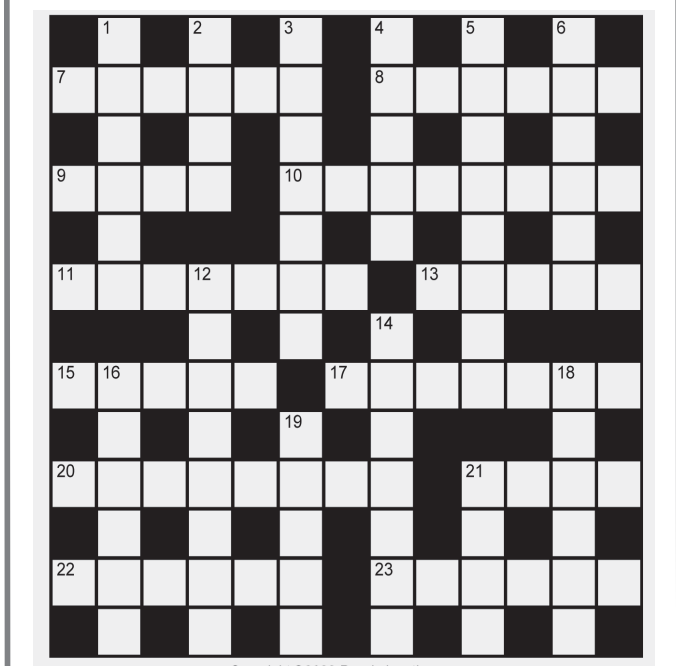
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



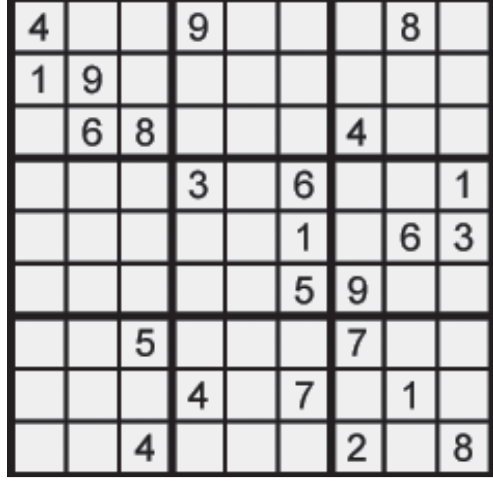
CROSSWORD



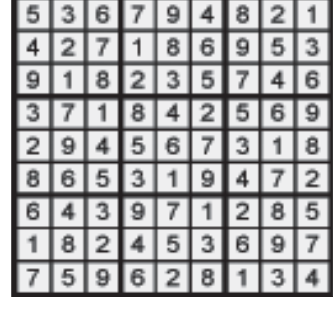
- Across**
- 7 Dense
 - 8 Ancient Egyptian city
 - 9 Ivory source
 - 10 Pitiful
 - 11 Ship's officer
 - 13 Taste or touch, e.g.
 - 15 Sherlock's word
 - 17 Conservationist's request
 - 20 Sticky insect trap
 - 21 Cast a ballot
 - 22 Alpine abode
 - 23 Summer drink (3,3)
 - 4 Articulate
 - 5 Final resting place
 - 6 Einstein, for one
 - 12 Paper starter (4,4)
 - 14 Enlistee
 - 16 Unclean
 - 18 Stretcher, of sorts
 - 19 Ill will
 - 21 Aspect
- Down**
- 1 Sudden
 - 2 Pochard or eider, e.g.
 - 3 Evening worship service

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

RAISING DAY FETE

Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy being felicitated by CRPF IG, Odisha Sector Amitendra Nath Sinha during the 52nd Raising Day of Group Centre, CRPF in Bhubaneswar Sunday



downtown

Adulterated 'khaja' being sold as 'Prasad' in Puri

Puri Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain clarifies that the 'khaja' available on Srimandir precincts is authentic 'Bhoga Khaja', made specifically for Lord Jagannath



sellers use adulterated oil and prepare the unique delicacy by kneading flour in unhygienic manner. "The act of selling such adulterated 'khaja' in the name of 'Bhoga' is regrettable," said Mahasuara.

He also emphasised that the 'khaja' being sold at Ananda Bazaar in the Srimandir is genuine 'Bhoga Khaja', prepared by temple cooks in the temple's kitchen and sold in the bazaar.

Puri Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain clarified that the 'khaja' available inside the temple premises is authentic 'Bhoga Khaja', made specifically for Lord Jagannath and prepared in the temple kitchen.

Meanwhile, Puri Superintendent of Police (SP) Vinit Agrawal mentioned that allegations regarding weighing discrepancies would be addressed. The administration plans to inspect the weighing machines and take strict action if the complaints are found to be true.

Local resident Prasanna Mohapatra expressed his concerns, noting that over the past five years, 'khaja' shops have mushroomed across the Pilgrim City like never before.

He recalled incidents of violence and even murders linked to 'khaja' business that has become highly lucrative, with traders buying Khaja cheaply and selling it to pilgrims at two to three times the cost. Moreover, fraudulent practices in weighing further exploit customers.

Narayan Mahasuara stated that many 'khaja' sellers have been mislabelling their products as 'Mahaprasad' to mislead devotees and tourists. These

Suara-Mahasuara Nijog has informed the administration about allegations of exploitation of customers through digital weighing machines by 'khaja' sellers

seen two murders. As the business continues to expand in Puri, public resentment is growing over the sale of adulterated 'khaja' labelled as 'Mahaprasad'. Suara-Mahasuara Nijog has informed the administration about allegations of exploitation of customers through digital weighing machines by 'khaja' sellers.

Narayan Mahasuara stated that many 'khaja' sellers have been mislabelling their products as 'Mahaprasad' to mislead devotees and tourists. These



REGALING POSE: Artists of Shree Dance Academy perform Odissi during Shree Nrutyotsav at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar Sunday

CM: Given support, specially abled can do wonders

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday said that persons with disabilities (PwDs) can make wonders given support and opportunities from all sectors.

Majhi said this while distributing 500 e-rickshaws among people with disabilities at a function in Sambalpur.

"With the support, encouragement and opportunities from the government, they can prove themselves to be capable," Majhi said.

Stating that the state is proud of persons with disabilities as they have exhibited their talent in different fields of sports, art, trade and business, Majhi said: "Many persons with disabilities have brought laurels for the coun-

try in the Paris Olympics. This is a matter of pride for all of us."

Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) provided these e-rickshaws for persons with disabilities under its CSR programme, a company statement said.

Earlier, the MCL had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the state government's Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) department to roll out the transformative project aimed at providing livelihood support to PwDs in the state.

MCL has invested Rs 7.5 crore in this CSR initiative, which aims to create an enduring impact by offering PwDs an opportunity for financial independence, mobility, and dignity, the statement said.

During his visit to Sambal-

pur, the chief minister also attended the Golden Jubilee Celebration of Janardan Pujari Government High School, Sindurpank, and the Platinum Jubilee celebrations of Government High School at Burla in Sambalpur district.

Addressing the gathering at Government High School in Burla, Majhi said every school is a great institution for society. This school is not just a general educational institution; it is a historically proud institution.

The educational institution has been continuously building good human beings for more than seven decades, he said.

The people's government is giving importance to strengthening the education system and providing quality education in Odisha, the Chief Minister said.

Education budget has been increased by 19 per cent during this year compared to the previous year's budget. A provision of more than Rs 35,500 crore was made for the education sector this year, he said.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the state is implementing the National Education Mission 2020 and taking massive steps for the bright future of lakhs of students of the state, he added.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the state government is about to implement the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in letter and spirit.

He requested the state government to set up a dedicated building in Burla to create and support new startups to make local youth self-employed.

Committee formed to investigate Mo Bus fire

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 15: A committee was formed by the Transport department Sunday to probe the Mo Bus fire incident Saturday night.

The bus, bearing registration number OD-33Y-7111, caught fire and was completely destroyed at Link Road Square under Madhupatna police station Saturday night. However, no casualty or injury was reported in the incident, said sources.

Sunday, the Transport department ordered an investigation, while a committee led by the Deputy Commissioner of the Transport department has been formed to conduct a detailed inquiry.

According to local residents, the Mo Bus had been stranded at the location since 4pm due to some mechanical faults. People were travelling along the route as usual when the bus suddenly caught fire. By the time firefighters reached the spot, the bus was entirely engulfed in flames. However, the fire personnel managed to bring the blaze under control.

The Director of Operations, N Thirumala Naik, and General Manager (Operations and Maintenance), Sanjay Biswal, visited the site and took stock of the situation.

Meanwhile, a dedicated committee headed by the Deputy Commissioner of Transport department has been formed to conduct a detailed investigation.



POLITICKLE by MANJUL



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Parents of a 28-year-old man, whose body was found near a hotel in Kalinga Nagar under Bharatpur police station Sunday, brought allegations of abetment of suicide against his female friend. The man reportedly ended his life by jumping off the hotel roof in the wee hours of Thursday following which the police have registered an unnatural death case and started a probe.

Though no one has been booked yet in this connection, sources at the police station said that the cops are looking into every angle of the case. Bharatpur police station in-

POLICE ARE LOOKING INTO EVERY ANGLE OF THE CASE, THOUGH THEY ARE YET TO BOOK ANYONE

spector in-charge (IIC) Deepak Kumar Khandayataray said, "Deceased Deepak Naik, a native of Ranpur in Nayagarh district, was into a relationship with a divorcee for the past several months. The duo, along with two of the woman's friends, had recently visited Bihar for some personal work but returned to the City December 11. They had booked two rooms in hotel 'Bijaya Residency'. The woman's friends stayed in one room and the duo in another." The IIC said during the stay,

Deepak had a tiff with his female friend over returning back to Bihar again. While the woman insisted on returning to Bihar again for some work, Deepak rejected the idea which eventually led to a scuffle between them. Deepak left the room and climbed to the hotel roof before "jumped off from there", said sources.

A video of an angry Deepak rushing out of his room and proceeding towards the hotel roof went viral on social media Sunday.

A senior police officer at Bharatpur police station said Deepak's body was handed over to his family members after the post-mortem was conducted, Sunday evening.

CBI's summons to IAS officer Sethi triggers political slugfest

While opposition Congress raised doubts over the final outcome of the case, BJD demanded that the investigation into corruption cases should not be delayed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) summons to senior IAS officer Bishnupada Sethi in connection with Rs 10 lakh bribery case triggered a political slugfest in the state Sunday.

The CBI December 10 issued a summons to Sethi, the principal secretary of ST&SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare department. He also holds additional charge as principal secretary of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities department.

The CBI Saturday interrogated Sethi's three drivers

in connection with the case. Sethi was summoned to join the investigation at CBI's Bhubaneswar office December 11, sources said, adding that the bureaucrat sought more time through his lawyers.

ST&SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare Minister Nityananda Gond said that everything will be clear after the probe.

While opposition Congress raised doubts over the final outcome of the case, BJD demanded that the investigation into corruption cases should not be delayed.

Former OPCC president Jayadev Jena feared that there may not be any concrete action in the case.

"The hype being created now, may gradually die down," Jena said.

He alleged that the corruption cases which came to the fore during the previous BJD regime were later "neutralized" by the BJP.

"Keeping in view the past record, the present case may



also end up in the cold storage," Jena alleged, while demanding stringent action against the corrupt officers irrespective of his or her position.

Senior BJD leader Sudhir Samal said that during the previous Naveen Patnaik government, the Vigilance department cracked down on corrupt officials.

"A senior IAS officer was sus-

The CBI Saturday interrogated Sethi's three drivers in connection with the case. Sethi was summoned to join the investigation at CBI's Bhubaneswar office December 11

ended in the housing scam," Samal said.

He said that the BJP has no reason to boast of its 'double-engine' government, if it failed in taking action against corrupt persons.

The ruling BJP, on the other hand, claimed that the Mohan Majhi government in the state is determined to take stringent action against anyone, including bureaucrats and political leaders, if found involved in corrupt practices.

"The state BJP government will not tolerate any form of corruption," BJP MLA from

Bhubaneswar-Ekamra, Babu Singh, said.

Stating that corruption had become widespread during the BJD's 24-year rule in Odisha, Singh said stringent action will be taken against anyone found involved in corruption.

"The chief minister has said that corrupted persons will find their place in jail in the BJP regime," Singh said.

The CBI wanted to ascertain from Sethi some important facts regarding the bribery case in which the investigating agency has arrested three persons, including Chanchal Mukherjee, group general manager, Bridge and Roof Construction Company Ltd, Bhubaneswar.

In a letter to the IAS officer, CBI inspector Gurjinder Singh December 10 said, "It is learnt that you are acquainted with some important and relevant facts and circumstances of the instant CBI case, which are required to be ascertained from you."

Meanwhile, Mukherjee's

lawyer Rajesh Mishra said he would move the court seeking bail for his client.

The CBI is scheduled to produce the three arrested accused in the court after completion of their five-day remand Monday.

"My client is unwell and I will move a bail petition in the court," Mishra told reporters on the CBI office premises here. "I have not been able to talk to him since he has been taken to hospital. I will move a bail petition tomorrow," Mishra said.

On October 19, 2024, Sethi wrote to Mukherjee regarding assignment of projects for upgrading an ashram school to high school and a high school to higher secondary school in Boudh and Nayagarh districts. The two projects are worth Rs 37 crore, state government sources said.

However, the CBI has not made it clear whether these school upgradation projects have anything to do with the bribery case.

VISION 2036 & 2047

Odisha receives over 3 lakh inputs

The initiative achieves a major milestone with extensive citizen participation, paving the way for sustainable growth and development



ed into the state's strategic roadmap. The use of AI underscores Odisha's commitment to leveraging cutting-edge technology to enhance citizen-driven policymaking and ensure a transparent and data-backed approach to governance, they said.

Deputy Chief Ministers Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and Pravati Parida also expressed their appreciation for the widespread public involvement, emphasising the power of collective effort in realising Odisha's long-term vision of growth and prosperity.

They stated, "This is a historic collaboration for a brighter tomorrow. The Odisha Vision Citizen Engagement Platform reflects the diverse perspectives of our people, and together, we will build a better future."

The citizen inputs have spanned 17 transformative thematic areas, which will serve as the foundation for Odisha's sustainable and inclusive growth. These areas include agriculture and rural development, sustainable mining practices, women-led growth, tourism and heritage and urban development among other.

fect the inclusivity and global reach of the initiative.

In a statement, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi expressed his gratitude to the people of Odisha for their active participation, saying, "Thank you, Odisha, for coming forward with your valued inputs in shaping the future of our state. Your contributions are pivotal in building a prosperous and sustainable Odisha."

In a pioneering move, Odisha has become the first state in India to incorporate Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to review and analyse citizen suggestions, the officials said.

This innovative approach ensures that every voice is heard, and the best ideas are integrat-



WORKERS UNITE: Thousands of workers from organised and unorganised sectors along with representatives from 24 states, under the banner of All India United Trade Union Centre (AIUTUC), assemble at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Sunday during the 22nd All India Conference

Coastal highway could harm Chilika ecosystem: Experts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: The Central government's decision to construct the coastal highway NH-516A, connecting Gopalpur with Satapada via Krushnaprasad in the Chilika region, has sparked concerns over its potential impact on the lake's fragile ecosystem.

Experts at a discussion organised Sunday by the Orissa Environmental Society (OES) on the theme 'Preservation of Chilika Lake Ecosystem' highlighted the threats posed by the project, including increased air, water, and noise pollution, which could have detrimental effects on the lake's biodiversity.

OES working president Jaya Krushna Panigrahi attributed much of the stress on the lake to human interventions. Former engineer-in-chief of the Works department Manoranjan Mishra emphasised the importance of using eco-friendly technologies during construction to minimise damage. Former advisor to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEF) VP Upadhyay advocated for comprehensive environmental impact assessments before initiating such a large-scale project.

OSA pushes for modern libraries in rural Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: The Odisha Society of the Americas (OSA), under its Odisha Public Library Initiative (OPLI), organised a one-day conference here Sunday, emphasising the need for modern public libraries in rural Odisha.

Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida and Law, Works, and Excise Minister Prithviraj Harichandan lauded the OSA's efforts in this initiative.

"Libraries play a crucial role in broadening the knowledge of students, youth, and the community. Rebuilding reading habits can ensure better use of library infrastructure. This vision requires collective effort," said Parida. Harichandan proposed using Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Local Area Development (LAD) funds to establish libraries at the block level as a preliminary step, with potential expansion to Gram Panchayats. He also urged OSA officials to draft a model library blueprint for further discussions.

OSA President Leena Mishra



highlighted the transformative role modern libraries could play in rural areas and called for government support to establish advanced libraries at district headquarters, blocks, and panchayats.

The conference featured two technical sessions: 'Modern Public Libraries in Odisha as Economic Engines' and 'Roles to Play in Building a Knowledge Society in Odisha.' Notable speakers included, CEO of Swabhiman Sruti Mohapatra, Editor and CEO of OdishaLIVE Nilambar Rath, department of Journalism and Mass Commu-

nication faculty at Ravenshaw University Debilal Mishra; Bakul Foundation's Sujit Kumar Mahapatra and OSA board member Nalini Patnaik.

Pranab K Pani, member of the OSA Odisha Public Library Network, anchored the event. Former IIT Kharagpur director Damodar Acharya and Utkal University Library Science expert Baman Parida were among the participants.

OSA officials cited Karnataka's success in establishing over 6,000 libraries as an inspiring model for Odisha to build a future-ready knowledge society.

Amit Sial wishes to act in Odia cinema

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: Curtains came down Sunday at the 5th Kalinga Global Film Festival (KGFF), organised by KIIT-DU, with actor Amit Sial stealing the spotlight at the closing ceremony. Known for his critically acclaimed performances in TV series like Maharani and Jamtara and in films like Titali, Sial shared his reflections on cinema, culture, and admiration for KIIT.

During an engaging interaction with the audience, Sial was asked about future scopes of acting in Odia cinema, to which he responded enthusiastically and said, "If the story is good, I will definitely act in an Odia movie."

"We have amazing talent in our country. Tribal dances and music, which used to be a staple in old movies, should find a place in today's cinema too," Sial commented. He also praised the rich culture and traditions of Odisha and lauded KIIT Founder Achyuta Samanta.

"What Dr Samanta is doing is quite admirable. I traveled across the campuses, and all of them are mesmerising. This visit has been truly memorable," Sial remarked.



The actor delighted the audience by answering questions from students. When asked about his singing habits, Sial said, "I can sing a few Kishore Kumar songs," and sung the classic 'Hume Tumse Pyaar Kitna'.

Asking about his favourite roles, Sial mentioned, "The character I played in Titali, Savarkar, and the character in Maharani are among my favourites."

Acclaimed theatre writer and film director Anant Mohapatra joined the closing ceremony and shared his insights on cinema and storytelling.

KIIT and KISS founder Samanta, vice-chancellor Saranjit Singh, pro vice-chancellor Debashis Bandyopadhyay and registrar JR Mohanty were present on the occasion. Bandyopadhyay proposed the vote of thanks, marking the end of the three-day festival.

Sainik School hosts Mini Marathon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 15: With a purpose to spread the message of 'Clean, Green and Healthy Bhubaneswar' with the spirit of 'Run for Fun', Old Boys Association (OBEANS) of Sainik School and Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) jointly organised the 8th Mini Marathon on the school premises here Sunday.

More than 600 cadets from Sainik School, 200 OBEANS and 400 students from Sahodaya Schools Bhubaneswar Chapter and government schools partic-



ipated in the event with a great vigour and enthusiasm.

The event was flagged off by NCC Directorate Odisha Dy Director General Commodore Mahesh Rahangdale and Sainik School principal Colonel Balu Bharath.

OBEANS president and re-

tired IAS Madhusan Padhi, Cdr Dinesh Swain, ADM officer Lt Col Amit Tewari, Cdr Manorama Pokheriya and senior officials from OMC were present on the occasion.

The senior category covered a distance of 10km and the junior category covered 6.5km

distance. In senior category, B Prasad Dora emerged as the winner followed by Abhishek Kumar. In junior category, Vikash secured the first position, followed by Shivam Yadav.

Among girls, Akanksha Priya won the marathon and Ranjith Sahani won in OBA category. They were awarded with cash prizes by the chief guest.

In his address, Rahangdale appealed the students and youth to work for a clean, green and healthy Bhubaneswar and cooperate in the endeavours of the government.

Heritage enthusiasts explore Hindol Palace in Dhenkanal

The initiative aims to preserve the knowledge gained during the walk and share it with a wider audience, promoting awareness

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Dec 15: The 20th edition of Dhenkanal Heritage Walks took around 40 participants on a visit to the magnificent Hindol Palace in the district, Sunday. The participants included students, researchers, historians and others.

The event was a journey into

the palace's rich history, offering insights into its architectural splendour, the struggles it has endured, and the fascinating timeline of the Hindol kings, who once ruled this land.

While the King of Hindol could not join the walk due to prior commitments, he expressed his regret for missing the event and extended his best wishes to the participants. In his absence, the heritage enthusiasts had the privilege of interacting with his personal secretary, who provided a wealth of information about the palace's culture, its historical significance, and its present status.

The walk uncovered numerous anecdotes that brought history to life, highlighting the courage, vision, and chal-



lenges faced by the rulers of Hindol. Participants delved into stories of resilience and legacy that continue to inspire admiration for the palace and its custodians.

"During our trip, we learned that the king had donated dou-

ble-bladed swords to 1,600 Paika soldiers, making him the first ruler to recognise and honour their bravery. To this day, these swords remain with the respective families and are revered as sacred objects of worship" said one of the participants.

The entire journey was meticulously documented through photographs and videos, capturing not only the architectural grandeur of the palace but also the enthusiasm and curiosity of the participants. To further the impact of this heritage walk, participating students have been encouraged to write articles reflecting on their experiences and learnings.

These articles, along with the photographs taken during the event, will culminate in the publication of a special magazine. The initiative aims to preserve the knowledge gained during the walk and share it with a wider audience, promoting awareness and appreciation of our heritage.

The heritage walk to Hindol

palace was more than just a visit; it was a deep dive into the layers of history and culture that define our collective identity. It stands as a testament to the importance of preserving and celebrating our heritage for future generations.

The 20th DHW palace trail was led by Suresh Prasad Mishra. On their arrival at Hindol palace, social activist Ratikanta Gadanayak welcomed them at Hindol Palace.

Among others, the event was graced by Cuttack Heritage Walks convenor Dipak Samantarai, Puri Heritage Walks convenor Biswaranjan Dehury well-known photographers Kishore Bit, Hrudananda and other students from Dhenkanal College.

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Lower Suktel oustees left high and dry

Hopes of landless displaced families have now been dashed as the promised support has not materialised, compounded by the misinterpretation of government policies



Bolangir, Dec 15: The government drafts policies aimed at ensuring the welfare of citizens, with the expectation that officials will implement these policies effectively to deliver the promised benefits. However, when policies are misinterpreted or when guidance is not provided in a timely manner, the outcomes can be counterproductive. In such cases, schemes intended to help people may end up having the opposite effect. This is the reality faced by many landless families displaced by the Lower Suktel Project, where confusion over the rules has led to further hardship. The administration had initially promised that displaced families would receive enhanced assistance compared to the provisions outlined in the Land Acquisition Act of 2013. It was announced that each

affected family would receive a special assistance package of ₹3.54 lakh, along with homestead plot and house under various housing schemes. This announcement provided some hope for the displaced families, who were uprooted from their villages. However, these hopes have now been dashed as the promised support has not materialised, compounded by the misinterpretation of government policies. As per departmental sources, 268 landless families were identified as affected by the Lower Suktel Project. While most of these families reportedly received the promised financial assistance, only 10 to 15 families have been given homestead plots or houses so far. The rest of the landless families remain

without proper rehabilitation. Resettlement colonies were set up in the Bolangir and Loisingha tehsils to accommodate the displaced families. While some oustees were provided homestead plots in these colonies, many landless families received neither plots nor houses. As a result, many families have been forced to live in temporary shelters in precarious conditions. The government had previously assured the affected families that they would be granted homestead plots under the Vasundhara Scheme and houses through various housing initiatives. Some families used the financial assistance they received to buy small plots of land. However, this decision has now backfired, as officials

have ruled that families who purchased land with the assistance money are ineligible for benefits under the Vasundhara Scheme. Consequently, they will no longer receive homestead plots under the scheme. Recently, Bolangir MLA Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo held a review meeting to discuss the rehabilitation of families displaced by the Lower Suktel Project. During the meeting, displaced families raised concerns about the issue of homestead plots. The Loisingha tehsildar explained that the purchase of land by these families disqualifies them from receiving plots under the Vasundhara Scheme. As a result, of the 120 identified landless families, only six were deemed eligible for homestead plots. Officials, including the Sub-Collector and the ADM present at the meeting, reiterated that applications for the Vasundhara Scheme cannot be processed for those who already own land. However, it was pointed out that these displaced families were not simply scheme beneficiaries, but direct victims of the Lower Suktel Project. They are entitled to homestead plots and housing under any rehabilitation scheme, but this crucial issue has not been adequately addressed by the authorities.

Tension after speeding bus kills BJP leader; 10 injured

POST NEWS NETWORK



Bhadrak/Bant, Dec 15: Tension ran high after a speeding passenger bus ran over a BJP leader and overturned into a roadside water body after crashing against a transformer at Tilo Jaguliapada Square under Bant police limits in Bhadrak district, Sunday. Ten injured passengers, four of them critical, were rescued after the bus overturned. The critically injured passengers, identified as Ashis Rout, 27, and Mahendra Behera, 61, of Tihidi, Hemalata Parida, 37, of Gadi and Anita Mahonta, 15, of Thakurmunda, have been admitted to the Bhadrak Headquarters Hospital for treatment. The deceased was identified as Sudhakar Dhal, 59, of Tilo village. He was the former BJP president of Bant block and the incumbent vice-president of the party's district unit. The mishap sparked protests in the area as locals burnt tyres and staged a road blockade at the mishap site for several hours demanding compensation for the bereaved family. The road blockade caused significant traffic disruptions on the route. The mishap occurred when the bus named 'Baba Arupananda' with around 12 passengers on board was on its

way to Anandapur in Keonjhar district from Bhadrak within 7am to 7.30am. The deceased was standing on the roadside, talking with two others in front of his house when the speeding bus veered towards the roadside and ran over him. The bus overturned after hitting a transformer. The injured passengers were rescued after the window panes of the vehicle were broken. The bus driver fled the scene after the mishap. Bhadrak MLA Sanjib Mallik visited the hospital and enquired about the treatment of the injured persons. Local authorities, including Sub-Collector Sourabh Chakraborty, SDPO Trilochan Sethi, Bant additional tehsildar Prasant Puhan, Bant IIC Sriballav Sahu and his Agarpada counterpart Srikant Pati held talks with protesters. Though no immediate resolution was reached, the authorities

assured compensation of ₹20,000 from the Red Cross fund to the affected families. The office bearers of the Bhadrak bus syndicate also joined the discussion. The talks were disrupted after a member of the syndicate made some erratic remark during the discussion. As a result, the authorities rescheduled the talks till 4pm, Monday and assured no bus will ply on the Bhadrak-Anandapur route till the issue is resolved. Bant police registered a case and sent the body for post-mortem to the Bhadrak Headquarters Hospital over a complaint filed by the deceased's elder brother Manoranjan Dhal. Several political figures, including former block chairman Akshaya Sahu and former minister Prafulla Samal visited the residence of the deceased BJP leader and paid their respects to the departed soul.

NH-520 congestion: A daily struggle for locals



POST NEWS NETWORK

Local sources have suggested that regular patrolling is needed to keep the NH clear, ensure adherence to traffic regulations, and penalise violators. "Due to a lack of regular patrolling, drivers continue to drive carelessly and park trucks on the road," one source remarked. Rasananda Behera, a social activist from Barbil, emphasised, "The mining companies haven't established parking plazas, so truckers park their vehicles wherever they can, causing congestion and accidents. It's time to improve traffic management by creating truck parking yards at critical points." The 41.7-km, four-lane Rimuli-Koira stretch of NH-520, which traverses Keonjhar district, has facilitated the growth of local industries by supporting goods transport. However, traffic bottlenecks frequently occur in areas such as Basudevpur, Bileipada, Bhadrasahi, Rugudi, and Tanto—under the jurisdictions of the Joda, Barbil, and Rugudi police stations in Keonjhar district, as well as Koira in Sundargarh district. These recurring traffic jams disrupt travel for passenger buses, school buses, vans, auto-rickshaws carrying students, and ambulances, with delays often lasting hours. Despite repeated complaints from residents, authorities have largely ignored the problem, resulting in escalating public frustration. Umakanta Parida, Sub-Collector of Champua, commented, "I will work with local revenue and police officers to address the situation."



BITING COLD: People warm themselves around a bonfire to beat the chilling cold as temperatures plummeted and hovered in between 11 to 13 degree Celsius at Buguda area in Ganjam district, Sunday

2 leopard hides seized; wildlife criminal held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Dec 15: The Forest department's vigilance wing arrested a wildlife criminal after seizure of two leopard hides from his possession while he was trying to sell those at Pulerana Gate Chowk here, Sunday afternoon. The accused was identified as Reddy Koushalya, a resident of Prem Nagar at



of Forests (ACF) Rajanikanta Mohanty and the Forest de-

partment staff of Rayagada range office conducted a raid. They seized the two leopard hides from the possession of Reddy and immediately arrested him. He was taken to the Forest department office for questioning. After interrogation a case was registered against the accused and an investigation launched.

Mahua flowers worth over ₹6 lakh seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Dec 15: Acting on a tip-off, Excise personnel Sunday seized Mahua flowers worth over ₹6 lakh after intercepting a pick-up van at Dhabanishola under Chandua police limits in Mayurbhanj district and arrested two persons in this connection. The accused were identified as Prasanjeet Das, 35, of Bhuskunda village under Suliapada police limits in Mayurbhanj district, and Samay Soren, 52, of Putulia area under Gopiballavpur police limits in neighbouring West Bengal. Another person involved in the smuggling fled the scene during the raid. Excise sources said that illegal country liquor trade is on the rise in Mayurbhanj district and miscreants are smuggling Mahua flowers, which are used as raw material for liquor production, from Jharkhand to the district. District Excise Superintendent Prasant Kumar Kanhar directed inspector Sridhar Mohanty of Excise Mobile Unit-1 to conduct a raid after intelligence inputs. Accordingly, the team waited at Dhabanishola and intercepted a pick-up van for verification as it passed by the route. During verification, the team members seized 20.80 quintal of Mahua flowers packed in 52 sacks. The consignment was being smuggled from Jharkhand to Deuli area in Mayurbhanj. Further investigations are on to nab the rest of the accused persons involved in the smuggling, Mohanty said.

Wrong injection: Medicine store owner arrested for boy's death

POST NEWS NETWORK



Patana, Dec 15: Days after the death of a 15-year-old boy due to administration of a wrong injection by a chemist, police arrested the proprietor of the medicine store, Sunday. The accused identified as Manoj Mohanta, 49, of Raipur village in Udayapur panchayat under Saharpada block of Keonjhar district was produced in the court after his arrest, Ghatagaon police SDPO Prabhakar Kumar Tripathy stated in a press release issued here, Sunday. Mohanta was trying to flee the area Sunday when a police team raided Keonjhar market and arrested him. CDMO Dr Kishore Prusty said that the Patana medical officer has been asked to conduct a probe and submit a report in this regard. Drug inspector Rudra Narayan Sa-

da police limits in Keonjhar district. Sukadev, who was staying in the school hostel, was suffering from severe itching problem. His family members took him to Sarbeswar Medicine Store at Saharpada for a check-up and medicines. The medicine store proprietor said it was an infectious disease and advised them that administering an injection will cure him fast. However, the boy was rendered critical two minutes after the injection was administered. Family members rushed him to the Karanjia Sub-Divisional Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. Shocked over his son's death, the boy's father Bijay Munda lodged a complaint at Saharpada police outpost holding the medicine store owner responsible.

30 injured as iron gate of folk theatre caves in

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Salepur, Dec 15: Over 30 people, including women and children, were injured after an iron gate at the venue of a folk theatre show collapsed in Cuttack district, police said. The incident took place at Raisunguda in Salepur area Saturday night as the people were passing through the iron structure, they said. The injured have been admitted to Salepur hospital, a police officer said. Six of them, who suffered critical injuries, were shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack, he said. According to officials from the construction company and the Public Works department, this road is being developed on an experimental basis for the first time in Kamakhyanagar. They highlighted that the road,

Country's first synthetic road being built with German tech

POST NEWS NETWORK



Kamakhyanagar, Dec 15: In a first for the country, a synthetic road is being constructed using German technology in the Kamakhyanagar NAC area of Dhenkanal district. The 800-metre stretch of road, from the Electric Office Square to Kamakhyanagar College, is being built on an experimental basis at an estimated cost of ₹6.9 crore. Officials claimed this technology has earlier been used in construction of airports but this is for the first time that a road is being built using the German technology. According to officials from the construction company and the Public Works department, this road is being developed on an experimental basis for the first time in Kamakhyanagar. They highlighted that the road,

built with synthetic sheets overlaid with bitumen, is expected to be more durable and require less maintenance. As a result, no pothole will appear on the road surface from gradual damage due to traffic or weather, they said. The construction is being closely supervised by Sigma Entech Construction Com-

pany, with their consultant engineer, Uma Shankar Pattnaik, present on the site. Key officials present during the construction included Jayant Kumar Nayak, Superintendent Engineer of the Public Works department; Bijay Kumar Sethi, Executive Engineer; and Achyutananda Malik, Assistant Executive Engineer.



It is not God who made man wicked. It is man who makes himself wicked by separating himself from God.
THE MOTHER

Real Democracy

The people of South Korea and their representatives showed the world last weekend how real democracy works. The country's parliament voted to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol following his surprising declaration of martial law that only lasted six hours. Yoon's presidential powers and responsibilities have been suspended and the Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, the nation's second-in-command, has assumed presidential authority. The impeachment brought an end to days of political stalemate, even as hundreds of thousands of jubilant people gathered near the parliament celebrating yet another bold chapter in the country's enduring democracy with the slogan: "We have preserved the constitutional order!" The vote marked the National Assembly's second attempt to remove Yoon; he previously survived an impeachment effort by opposition parties on 7 December, thanks to a boycott of the vote by lawmakers from his conservative People Power Party. Since then, many of his party colleagues have decided to participate in his impeachment as his approval ratings have plummeted to as low as 11 per cent.

The swiftness with which the developments unfolded bears testimony to the country's young, yet robust democratic institutions. Yoon's attempt to suspend civilian governance on 3 December evoked memories of the oppressive dictatorship that plagued the country four decades ago, a time marked by widespread human rights violations by the military. The repercussions of his failed initiative were rapid, as South Korea's institutions sprang into action—Yoon's close associates were quickly subjected to police investigations and summoned before parliament which demanded accountability. Lawmakers promptly initiated impeachment proceedings against Yoon, accusing him of "insurrection" and attempting to undermine the democratic constitution. On 14 December, he was suspended from office following a tense secret ballot in the grand parliamentary chamber. All these things happened in a matter of days.

Nestled between totalitarian North Korea and autocratic China, South Korea has long stood as a symbol of a vibrant democracy in East Asia. Born from the turmoil and violence of the anti-dictatorship movement of the 1980s, which saw many of today's political leaders of that country rise to prominence, South Koreans have a rich history of challenging their leaders through spirited street protests and lively expressions of dissent.

However, the country now faces an extended period of uncertainty as the Constitutional Court can take up to 180 days to deliberate on whether to uphold the impeachment charges against the president. Should the court rule that the parliament's decision is constitutional, Yoon will be ousted from office, prompting a new presidential election within 60 days. This will earn Yoon the dubious distinction of being only the second South Korean president to be impeached. He previously played a significant role in the impeachment of fellow conservative Park Geun-hye, who was removed under strikingly similar circumstances. In 2016, the parliament impeached Park Geun-hye, the first female president of the country, due to a corruption scandal. The Constitutional Court upheld her impeachment and removed her from office. In 2004, President Roh Moo-hyun faced impeachment by parliament due to an alleged violation of election laws. However, the Constitutional Court later reversed the impeachment and reinstated his presidential authority.

In spite of the massive demonstrations for his ouster and his abysmal approval ratings, Yoon remains defiant. Describing the impeachment as a "temporary" pause to his presidency, Yoon asserted that he would "never give up." Opposition parties and experts have accused Yoon of rebellion, referencing a law that defines rebellion as inciting a riot against established state authorities with the intent to undermine the constitution. They argue that, in South Korea, a president can declare martial law only during wartime or similar emergencies and does not have the authority to suspend parliamentary operations, even under martial law. Following his declaration of martial law, Yoon deployed hundreds of troops and police officers to the parliament in an attempt to obstruct a vote on the decree, but they withdrew after the parliament rejected his proposal within hours.

At a time when democracy is backsliding in many parts of the world, including in developed countries, the recent events of South Korea offer many lessons. Any leader of State making efforts to undermine its constitution and institutions deserves severe treatment from the people and their representatives. South Koreans have demonstrated that people must be ever vigilant to trace any iota of threat to democracy as their duty doesn't just end with electing their leaders. Checks and balances in the form of independent institutions, civil society and a free Press are essential for the functioning of democracy. Georgia, on the other hand, is another example where institutions are collaborating in damaging democracy through that very same democratic process.

WISDOM CORNER

They who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night
EDGAR ALLAN POE

The moment you have in your heart this extraordinary thing called love and feel the depth, the delight, the ecstasy of it, you will discover that for you the world is transformed
JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

Keep your eyes open to your mercies. The man who forgets to be thankful has fallen asleep in life
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1707: Last eruption of Mount Fuji. The highest volcano in Japan erupted for the last time in what is known as the Hei Eruption. The eruption lasted for 17 days. It is well known for the immense ash-fall it produced over eastern Japan and subsequent landslides and starvation across the country. The area where the eruption occurred is called Mount Hei because it occurred in the fourth year of the Hei era.

1773: Boston Tea Party. Considered as one of the key events in the American Revolution, the Tea Party occurred when protesters in Boston, a territory controlled by the British, dumped heavily taxed British tea into Boston Harbor. The Americans were protesting both a tax on tea and the perceived monopoly of the East India Company.

1944: In World War II, German forces attempted to push through Allied lines in the Ardennes, beginning the Battle of the Bulge.

1991: Kazakhstan independence. The Central Asian country was the last Soviet republic to declare its independence. The first country to recognize Kazakhstan was Nigeria on December 16, 1991, followed by the United States on December 26, 1991, China on January 3, 1992, and the United Kingdom on January 19, 1992.

GEOPOLITICAL SCRAMBLE

FOCUS WEST ASIA

After more than a decade of catastrophic civil war, the Assad dynasty's abrupt collapse represents a moment of rebalancing, not only within Syria but across Middle East. With Iranian influence diminished, Russia preoccupied and overstretched, and Turkey quietly expanding its reach, the US has come to a strategic juncture. It can continue to pursue a policy of sanctions and military brinkmanship, or it can pivot to a more constructive form of engagement.

In this first phase, Syria will seek a new equilibrium. Russian forces, once entrenched in the heart of Syria's security apparatus, drained by their own war in Ukraine, are effectively gone. President Bashar al-Assad has fled to Russia, and the Kremlin is hoping to secure a deal with Syria's new rulers, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), to retain its Khmeimim air base in Latakia governorate and its naval facility at Tartus. Iran, meanwhile, has also withdrawn its military assets, which were pummeled by Israeli strikes following Hamas' 7 October invasion. Its "axis of resistance," which previously stretched from Tehran to the Mediterranean, has all but collapsed.

These developments have triggered a geopolitical scramble, with Turkey, Israel, and the US moving to secure their interests. Turkey is seizing the moment to strike US-backed Kurdish forces along its border, viewing them as terrorists linked to the Turkey-based Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). It desperately wants to prevent the consolidation of an autonomous Kurdish region within northeastern Syria, as that could embolden Kurdish separatists at home.

Meanwhile, the US, determined to prevent a resurgence of the Islamic State, is targeting the remnants of terrorist groups in Syria. Israel is expanding its occupation of the Golan Heights (which it seized from Syria in



Assad's fall is not the end of Syria's troubles, nor is HTS' ascent a panacea. Deep structural problems remain

1967) and conducting airstrikes on missile and chemical weapons sites. The barrage continues to eliminate critical military capabilities, including fighter jets, radar and air defense installations, and naval vessels. According to Israeli journalist Yoav Limor, "the damage surpasses the airstrike that launched the Six-Day War... effectively reducing [Syria] to a point of zero capability."

While each power's objectives differ, their swift moves highlight the challenges facing Syria's new rulers. The US, with its long fixation on counterterrorism, had previously designated HTS a terrorist organisation, placing a \$10 million bounty on its leader, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani. US suspicions are not entirely unfounded, given that HTS' lineage can be traced back to Syria's al-Qaeda affiliate. Yet the group claims to have reinvented itself politically, pledging a more inclusive, representative system. Its rhetoric has focused on institution-building, and its takeover has been remarkably bloodless; when it reached Damascus, it peacefully escorted the prime minister, Mohammad Ghazi al-Jalali, out of office.

In his victory speech, Jolani addressed old grievances, decrying Iranian-fueled sectarianism and domestic corruption. But he also expressed a willingness to break from his own radical roots. The logic of

realpolitik was clear. The rebel group now governs a war-ravaged country. It urgently needs legitimacy, foreign investment, and international recognition to stabilise Syria's shattered economy, restore infrastructure, and provide basic public services.

In this context, it would be risky for the US to cling to outdated paradigms. While US policymakers have long sought to curb Iranian influence and limit Russia's strategic foothold, it is HTS that has partly satisfied both objectives. Rather than squandering this moment with knee-jerk bombing campaigns against a group that appears genuinely to have severed its ties to al-Qaeda, and could be further encouraged to move to civilian rule, the US should shift to a policy of engagement.

That means lifting the sanctions targeting Jolani and HTS' top leadership, and signaling a willingness to negotiate and support Syrian reconstruction. Such a move would not be a concession to extremism, but rather a carefully calibrated step to encourage moderation.

With the United Kingdom already preparing to reassess HTS' terrorist designation, the US could coordinate with the UK and other European partners to create a conditions-based blueprint for diplomatic recognition and economic assistance. Crucially, this should be tied to

tangible benchmarks: inclusive governance, respect for minority rights, transparent elections, the dismantling of extremist networks, and full compliance with prohibitions on chemical weapons. That is more than the US could have hoped for during the five-decade-long Assad regime.

Engagement will give the US more leverage than confrontation. Continuing to bomb or isolate Syria risks reinforcing the very extremism the West fears. Military strikes might push HTS back into the arms of jihadist groups, undermine its domestic credibility, and fracture the nascent coalition holding the country together.

A heavy-handed approach also could create a power vacuum for Islamic State remnants to exploit. By contrast, a diplomatic opening that relaxes punitive measures and opens channels of communication could encourage HTS leaders to usher in a more stable future in which reconstruction can take place. Such a shift in US policy would reverberate strategically. By not allowing Russia or Iran to reassert their influence, the US could shape a scenario in which Syria finally moves away from foreign-sponsored proxy wars and toward a more balanced regional alignment.

Assad's fall is not the end of Syria's troubles, nor is HTS' ascent a panacea. Deep structural problems remain, and the legacy of war, sectarian strife, and economic and environmental collapse cannot be easily overcome.

Great-power politics in a post-Assad Syria will be defined by who recognises the moment's opportunities first. After 50 years of a brutal dictatorship that suppressed Syrians' political and economic freedoms, the US must help them reclaim their own destiny.

The writer is Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto.



Carla Norrlöf
GREAT-POWER POLITICS IN A POST-ASSAD SYRIA WILL BE DEFINED BY WHO RECOGNISES THE MOMENT'S OPPORTUNITIES FIRST

SPECTRUM DIPLOMACY

Delhi in hurry, Dhaka lukewarm

India and Bangladesh have entered a critical phase in their diplomatic relationship. On 9 December, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met with Bangladesh's Foreign Advisor Tauhid Hosain and interim Prime Minister Muhammad Yunus, amidst shifting political dynamics in the region. The meetings come after the dramatic events of 5 August, when Sheikh Hasina, then Prime Minister of Bangladesh, fled to New Delhi during a period of escalating unrest.

While Misri struck an optimistic tone, emphasizing India's desire for a "positive, constructive, and mutually beneficial relationship" with Bangladesh, Dhaka's response was more measured. The discussions were overshadowed by tensions regarding Hasina's refuge in India and her critical statements about the interim government. Speaking at Dhaka airport, Misri described the talks as an opportunity for candid and productive dialogue, underscoring India's commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation for the mutual benefit of both nations.

The premier Dhaka daily Pratham Alo is not exuberant. In an opinion piece, a columnist

writes in the paper: "Before this development (mass uprising), in more than one and a half decades, New Delhi had offered a foreign policy puzzle by relying only on one party, practically a single Zaminder (landlord)-like chief executive officer in Dhaka, for serving Indian interests."

It points out Misri raising the issue of safety of minorities in Bangladesh and a strong rebuttal by Dhaka, which went to the extent of stating that attacks on minorities or the issue of ISKCON activists being held in detention, killing or lynching of lawyers pleading for ISKCON monk Chinnoy Das' release on bail are "internal" affairs.

Even the posturing by Yunus and the subduedness of Misri before him were eloquent, possibly exceeding diplomatic nicety. Misri apparently did not raise the issue of India's role in helping the Mukti Bahini in liberating the country from the tyrants of Pakistan. Such mentions are part of diplomatic niceties.

Dhaka has particularly taken offence to Hasina issuing statements targeting the Yunus government. Yunus was categorical in stating that her statements "fan tension." It's pointing a finger at India indicating that Hasina "may have

been acting at the behest of her hosts." Still the host sometimes has to take care of the ties with the smaller neighbours.

Safety of minorities is a serious issue. India alone has not raised it. Separately but simultaneously European Union also virtually condemned Bangladesh for the highhandedness. The EU has called on the interim government to be mindful of the need to uphold the rule of law, and respect due process and fundamental rights. Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the EU to Bangladesh, Michael Miller, made the call at an interactive session with Yunus at the Chief Adviser's Office on 9 December itself. Even the UK Parliament expressed concern over minority bashing in the disturbed country about seven days back. In reality, minorities are being mistreated there since the partition in 1947, their properties looted, women kidnapped and raped and forced to flee to India. After 75 years of continuous torture it has become the concern of the world.

A special tribunal in Bangladesh has banned the publication of any speeches by Hasina, a day after she made her first public speech in a virtual address to supporters of her Awami

League party in New York. In the speech, she accused Yunus of perpetrating genocide and failing to protect minorities, especially Hindus, since her ouster.

On the other hand, it appeared India was keener on restoring normalcy as Bangladesh and India have a whole set of issues ranging from trade, commerce, connectivity, power, water, and energy, and development cooperation, consular cooperation, and cultural cooperation.

Diplomatically, Misri took up the issues a bit too early. India and Bangladesh have a strong trade relationship, with India as Bangladesh's second largest trade partner in Asia and Bangladesh as India's largest trade partner in South Asia.

Misri may be concerned about suspension of train services from Bangladesh to India as also bus and shipping services indefinitely since the uprising in August. India's freight operations with Bangladesh have also been affected. Bangladesh has not shown any interest in resumption of the services that benefit India more.

India has to be calm so that its anxiety is not exposed, even as Dhaka remains somewhat reticent.



Shivaji Sarkar

INDIA HAS TO BE CALM SO THAT ITS ANXIETY IS NOT EXPOSED, EVEN AS DHAKA REMAINS SOMEWHAT RETICENT

Letters TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com



Balanced approach

Sir, The suicide of a techie in Bangalore has sparked off a debate over whether Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code is misused or underused by women against men. True, in some cases the law is exploited and men face unpleasant consequences. On the other hand, many experts are of the opinion that the law is underused since pursuing maintenance and reporting cruelty is difficult for most women. In some cases, women are victimised by men for doing so. Although the law acts as a deterrent to men, many women are unable to use it for their benefit. The latest National Family Health Survey shows that nearly one third of all married women face spousal violence. Thorough investigation needs to be carried out before taking legal action against men. Similarly, the abused women must get opportunity to seek legal help. The two sides of this issue need to be dealt with properly. The law must not be weaponised against men. At the same time, women must be given their due.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

Chess superpower

Sir, At the age of eighteen, Dommaraju Gukesh has ascended to the zenith of the chessboard realm. His conquest in the 2024 World Chess Championship not only did crown him as the youngest monarch of this cerebral kingdom but also as the second son of India to seize this honour, following in the illustrious footsteps of the legendary Viswanathan Anand, who has claimed this title on numerous occasions since the dawn of the new millennium. Gukesh's victory heralds a new epoch for Indian chess, which is burgeoning into a global colossus, boasting now 85 Grandmasters, with more to follow. The tournament, held in the exotic climes of Singapore, was historic on many a front. It was the first instance where two scions of Asia contended for the crown, and it saw the youngest-ever challenger. Gukesh faced a formidable adversary in Ding Liren, who, against all expectations, presented a contest of fierce competition. Gukesh's triumph underscores India's rise as a chess superpower, built upon the foundation laid by Viswanathan Anand's pioneering victory in 2000.

Amareet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

MVA slams Maha govt over farmers' woes, inflation, jobs

Congress state chief Nana Patole demanded ₹3 lakh loan waivers for farmers and increase in the monthly financial assistance to eligible women under the 'Ladki Bahin' programme from the current ₹1,500 to ₹2,100



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Dec 15: The Opposition MVA Sunday targeted the Maharashtra government over farmers' plight, price rise, jobs and a sarpanch's murder and declared it would boycott the customary tea party on the eve of the state legislature's winter session here.

Hours before the Cabinet expansion of the government in the evening, leaders of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), comprising the Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP (SP) and Congress, held a press conference at Ravi Bhavan in the city to slam the BJP-led dispensation.

Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Ambadas Danve said the government was doing a "drama" by keeping the session only for six days. Earlier,

We have received the invitation for the tea party, but it would be impossible for us to attend an event of a 'khooni sarkar', anti-farmer government and a government persecuting Dalits. Hence, MVA has decided to boycott it

AMBADAS DANVE | LEADER OF OPPOSITION

er, the Nagpur session used to be held for anywhere between three weeks and one month, said the Sena (UBT) leader.

Danve claimed that there would be no questions and answers and calling attention motions during the winter session, which will be held from December 16 to December 21.

Though the Opposition's strength in the Assembly may be less, it will, with its full

force, take on the government on various issues, including those concerning farmers, said Danve.

The Mahayuti has formed the government with the "help" of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), he claimed. The government booked the people of Markadwadi village in Malshiras Assembly constituency for planning to hold a "mock repoll using ballot papers", he said.

The Sena (UBT) leader claimed that the government is not giving proper remuneration to soybean and cotton growers for their produce.

"We have received the invitation for the tea party, but it would be impossible for us to attend an event of a 'khooni sarkar', anti-farmer government and a government persecuting Dalits. Hence, MVA has decided to boycott it," said Danve.

The Opposition leader said they expect discussions from crop insurance to farm loan waiver. The law and order situation in the state has worsened, he alleged and claimed that those behind the murder of the sarpanch in Beed have the government's backing.

Congress state chief Nana Patole demanded Rs 3 lakh loan waivers for farmers and increase in the monthly financial assistance to eligible women under the 'Ladki Bahin' programme from the current Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,100.

He demanded a CBI probe into the sarpanch's death.

Bima Sakhi Yojana empowering hordes of women in Palghar

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Dec 15: The 'Bima Sakhi Yojana', launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is empowering the women in Palghar district of Maharashtra by providing them specialized training in key areas of interest and enabling them to become self-sufficient.

Many women beneficiaries expressed their gratitude to the government while highlighting on how the scheme is helping them achieve their dreams and become financially independent.

Talking to IANS, Purnima Pandey, a woman from Palghar, said, "I want to thank PM Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for this scheme. It is truly empowering women. Through this scheme, we are gaining knowledge and receiving stipends, which are helping us fulfill our dreams as well as those of our children. It is a step towards our empowerment."

Sachin Singh, another local resident, referred to the initiative as a 'gift' for women ahead of the New Year.



Farmers load freshly harvested sugarcane into a tractor trolley during the harvesting season, in Karad, Maharashtra, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

FADNAVIS GETS GRAND WELCOME IN NAGPUR

The chief minister, who represents the Nagpur South West Assembly constituency, underlined the Mahayuti government's commitment to serve the people 24 hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Dec 15: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Sunday led a rally organised in his hometown Nagpur by BJP workers to celebrate the Mahayuti's victory in recent Assembly polls.

The chief minister, who represents the Nagpur South West Assembly constituency, underlined the Mahayuti government's commitment to serve the people 24 hours.

Fadnavis landed in Nagpur to a grand welcome from party workers and people. The rally started from Nagpur airport and culminated at Fadnavis' residence in Dharampeth.

Talking to reporters at the airport, Fadnavis said, "It is a joyous moment that after becoming the chief minister, I have come to my janmabhoomi and karmabhoomi (birthplace and workplace). Nagpur is my family, and it is welcome by my family."

He slammed the Opposition parties, accusing them of not believing in the Constitution.

Fadnavis, accompanied by his wife Amruta Fadnavis, state BJP chief Chandrashekar Bawankule and others boarded a decorated open-top vehicle at Nagpur airport. The route of the rally was dotted with banners welcoming the son-of-the-soil.

Fadnavis raised 'Ek hain toh safe hain' and 'Modi hain toh mumkin hain' slogans while addressing his supporters.

"The Mahayuti (coalition) under the leadership of PM Modi received huge blessings from the poor, tribals, farmers, Dalits, and OBC and others (in assembly elections). This elec-



It is a joyous moment that after becoming the chief minister, I have come to my janmabhoomi and karmabhoomi (birthplace and workplace). Nagpur is my family and it is welcome by my family

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | CM, MAHARASHTRA

toral victory became possible due to the trust put in Mahayuti by Ladki Bahins (the name of a popular scheme for women), ladka (beloved) shetkari (farmers), ladke yuva (youths), Dhangars, Marathas and other sections," he said.

I thank 14 crore people of Maharashtra for blessing the Mahayuti and making me chief minister, Fadnavis added.

Fadnavis said the people chose Mahayuti to serve them and change their lives and Ma-

AIADMK picks arrogance pitch to target CM Stalin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Dec 15: In its executive committee and general council meeting here, the AIADMK Sunday accused Chief Minister MK Stalin of being arrogant and said the ruling party-led government's days are numbered.

AIADMK leader and former minister B Valarmathi accused Chief Minister Stalin of being at the 'peak of arrogance' and mocking at opposition parties. She claimed that the DMK government's 'days are numbered,' and added that the chief minister's chair has become ready for Edappadi K Palaniswami, her party chief.

Recently, Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam chief and actor Vijay had accused the DMK of being arrogant by claiming to win 200 seats and had also said that people will 'minus' the 'selfish alliance calculations' of the ruling party. Valarmathi used the same Tamil word (Rumappu) used by Vijay to level her allegation of arrogance against Stalin.

AIADMK's Villupuram strongman C Ve Shanmugam said the frequently asked question of forging alliance with parties will happen at the right time and recalled that the AIADMK won Assembly polls hands down in the years, 2001 and 2011, and alliances then were formed just ahead of the state elections.

"Alliance will be formed, the general secretary will take care of that."

Vijay's party, the TVK said last month that its goal was to form the government by winning the 2026 Assembly polls and had ruled out alliance with the AIADMK.

India's first diabetes biobank set up in Chennai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: The country's first diabetes biobank, a repository of population-based biological samples aimed at supporting scientific research, has been established in Chennai by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in collaboration with the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF).

The biobank set up at the MDRF, Chennai aims to gather, process, store and distribute biospecimens to assist scientific studies with the permission of the ICMR.

The biobank will facilitate advanced research on the causes of diabetes, the variations of the Indian type of diabetes and related disorders, said Dr V Mohan, chairman of the MDRF and Dr Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre.

The biobank has blood samples from two ICMR-funded studies -- the ICMR-India Diabetes (ICMR-INDIAB) study conducted in all states and Union territories in phases from 2008 to 2020 and the "Registry of people with diabetes in India at a young age at the onset", which was launched in 2006 and is still ongoing.

A plethora of blood samples of different types of diabetes in the young, such as Type 1, Type 2 and gestational diabetes, have been stored for future studies and research, Mohan said.

The process of setting up the biobank started around two years ago.

The details of the biobank and the purpose behind setting it up have been explained in detail in an article published in the "Indian Journal of Medical Research" last week.

Biobanks are critical in biomedical research, collecting, processing, storing and distributing biospecimens to support scientific research, the article said.

"This diabetes biobank could help in the identification of novel biomarkers for early diagnosis and the development of personalised treatment strategies," it added.



Additionally, it would support longitudinal studies to track the progression of diabetes and its complications over time, leading to better management and prevention strategies.

"By fostering collaborative research efforts, a diabetes biobank in India could significantly advance our understanding of the disease and contribute to the global fight against the diabetes epidemic," the article said.

Involving private agencies in developing biobanks and research is essential for translating research into practice. Adopting new technologies for specimen storage, preservation, data management and sharing is crucial for creating a cost-effective, long-lasting disease-specific biobank in India.

Of the various biobanks available globally, the most well-known is the UK Biobank, supported by the National Health Service (NHS), which is a vast biomedical database with genetic, lifestyle and health information from five lakh participants in the United Kingdom.

The collected information comprises phenotypic, genomic and imaging data derived from direct assessments, verbal interviews, online questionnaires and electronic health records.

This dataset continues to expand as new biomedical data are added through ongoing assessments and longitudinal follow up.

The ICMR-INDIAB study is one of the large epidemiological studies on diabetes with a sample size of 1.2 lakh nationally-representative individuals, covering every state of India.

Mega Varmam therapy session aims for world record

VARMA PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN SIDDHA MEDICINE AS A DRUGLESS METHOD OF TREATMENT FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Dec 15: The National Institute of Siddha (NIS) will organise a mega Varmam therapy session to treat 555 patients here December 18, aiming to create a Guinness world record and popularise this drugless Varmam therapy in Siddha medicine.

Through this unique effort, the NIS will spread the popularity of Siddha medicine to the world with the guidance and support of the Union Ministry of Ayush, NIS Director Prof R Meenakumari said Saturday.

"The institute is trying to spread the benefits of Siddha medicine and the virtues of Varmam therapy throughout the country. For this purpose, preparations are on to set a record by simultaneously provid-



ing Varmam therapy to 555 people by 555 Varmanis (Varmam healers) December 18," Meenakumari said in a release here.

Siddha medicine, one of the Indian traditional medical systems, is the best medical system not only for treating people's health but also for disease prevention, she said. Kayakalpam, Varmam, and Thokkanam,

which are unique methods of Siddha medicine, exemplify its greatness and antiquity.

"Varma medicine is a wonderful method of modality used as an instant remedy in Siddha medicine. Though Varmakalai is widely known as a martial art, it is being used in Siddha medicine with a scientific background as a treatment method

Siddha medicine, one of the Indian traditional medical systems, is the best medical system not only for treating people's health but also for disease prevention

for acute, and serious diseases," Meenakumari said.

Varma played a major role in Siddha medicine as a drugless method of treatment for pain management and it is widely used for diseases not only related to bone, joints and muscles but also in diseases that can occur in the body, especially brain and nervous

system related diseases such as stroke, and rheumatoid arthritis etc., she said.

"Also, Varmam system can be very beneficial for injuries caused by trauma and accidents," the NIS director said and added that the Varmam system was very economical and it ensured results in a time-bound manner.

During Covid, the NIS, Tambaram, established five Siddha Covid care centers and successfully carried out 4 clinical researches. Last year, a group of Siddha doctors came together to spread Siddha medicine across the country by undertaking a motorbike rally from Delhi to Kanyakumari, covering a distance of 3,333 km in 20 days, and conducted Siddha medical camps and delivered awareness lectures in every state every day.



Everyone feels like getting an opportunity to be become minister. However, the ministerial berths remain limited while everyone deserves a chance

COLD WAVE PERSISTS IN PUNJAB, HARYANA

Cold weather conditions continued to grip Punjab and Haryana Sunday, with Faridkot being the coldest place in the region at a minimum temperature of one degree Celsius, the meteorological department said.



of the day quote

Anyone who witnessed the Kumbh of 2019 would have seen the out-of-the-box efforts that made it clean, safe, and well-organised.



I urge all our former legislators and party leaders who have gathered in Davangere that already our conducts have created a lot of confusion among party workers and supporters in the state.



Surrendered Naxals reveal futility of violent movement

Jagdalur (Chhattisgarh), Dec 15: Joymati Vanjan and Shankar Markade, two tribals from poor families in Chhattisgarh, once carried a bounty of ₹5 lakh each.

after Class 8 to becoming dreaded Naxals with a huge bounty on their heads. Vanjan was allegedly involved in several offensives against security forces as a CPI (Maoist) cadre.



teenager in the early 2000s, his entire village was overrun by the proscribed outfit. States affected by Leftwing Extremism have rehabilitation schemes for surrendered Maoists.

Olympics' -- Shah appealed to Naxals to give up arms and join the mainstream, saying their rehabilitation was the government's responsibility.

tremists of serious consequences if at least one member did not join them. Bima Sodi, also from Malkangiri, is now a home guard in Odisha with a monthly salary of ₹18,000.

DELHI POLLS Kejriwal slams BJP for 'no CM face'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: After AAP on Sunday released its final list of candidates for the upcoming Assembly polls in Delhi, party supremo Arvind Kejriwal took a swipe at the BJP, claiming that the saffron party has no chief ministerial face.



The AAP Sunday released its final list of 38 candidates for the Assembly polls due in February, fielding Kejriwal from New Delhi besides repeating Chief Minister Atishi from Kalkaji

AAP's list include Sanjeev Jha from Burari, Ajesh Yadav from Badli, and Durgesh Pathak from Rajinder Nagar. The party has fielded Amanatullah Khan from Okhla and Somnath Bharti from Malviya Nagar.

Maha: Fadnavis expands Cabinet

Fadnavis along with two Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar were sworn in at a grand function held December 5 at Mumbai in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a galaxy of NDA leaders, representatives of industry and businesses and Bollywood stars



for sharing ministerial berths. Of the 39 ministers, 33 are cabinet ministers and 6 are ministers of state. Fadnavis along with two Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar were sworn in at a grand function held December 5 at Mumbai in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a galaxy of NDA leaders, representatives of industry and businesses and Bollywood stars.

SHORT TAKES

Alert loco pilots save eight lions

Bhavnagar: Alert loco pilots of a goods train and a passenger train applied brakes in time to save the lives of eight lions that had wandered onto railway tracks in Gujarat's Bhavnagar district in the last two days, an official said Sunday.

Pak drone with narcotics seized

Jammu: A Pakistani drone carrying nearly half a kg of high-grade narcotic substance was seized by the Border Security Force near the International Border here, officials said Sunday.

4 killed as tractor trolley overturns

Gwalior (MP): Four tribal persons were killed and 15 others injured when a tractor-trolley overturned in an attempt to save a buffalo in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior district, police said Sunday.

SNIPETS

Lok Sabha to take up financial business first, 'ONOE' bills later

New Delhi: The government has deferred the introduction of Bills related to 'one nation one election' in the Lok Sabha till after the completion of financial business, sources said.

Waqf report: Vijayendra rejects claims

Bangalore: Karnataka BJP president B Y Vijayendra Sunday strongly dismissed Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and ruling Congress leaders' charges that he attempted to 'bribe' former state Minority Commission chairperson Anwar Maniappad to hush up his report on the Waqf encroachments.

NGT issues notice to environment ministry

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal has issued notice to the Centre regarding the alleged felling of scores of trees in the national capital. The green body was hearing about the alleged illegal felling of thousands of trees at Chajju Ram Bagh in Jindpur by a private builder to construct a warehouse and commercial godown.



Farmers prepare food at their protest site at Shambhu border, in Patiala district, Punjab. A 'jatha' of 101 farmers on Saturday resumed its foot march to Delhi from the protest site at Shambhu border, but was stopped a few metres away by a multilayered barricading

Drone operators take wedding season by storm in rural pockets of UP

Drones have become a must-have at weddings in the region, with pilots like him charging anywhere between ₹8,000 and ₹40,000 per event, depending on the complexity and duration of the service

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ballia (UP), Dec 15: In the heart of rural Ballia in Uttar Pradesh, young men are turning heads with their innovative use of drones to capture weddings from new heights. Among them is Sumit Kumar, a 20-year-old, who has become a sought-after drone pilot during the wedding season.

wedding unique. Flying drones over wedding guests, capturing mesmerising aerial shots and even delivering garlands to the couple have made his work a favourite among locals. "No matter how grand the wedding is, I make every guest look up when I fly my drone," he said with a smile.

scene. With a deft flick of the remote, he lowered the drone, allowing the groom to take the garland and place around the bride's neck, earning cheers and applause from the crowd. The spectacle did not end there -- he sent the drone soaring again to retrieve another garland before placing it on the couple, creating a moment that left guests reaching for their phones.



have at weddings in the region, with pilots like him charging anywhere between ₹8,000 and ₹40,000 per event, depending on

the complexity and duration of the service. Awdhesh Singh, a mobile phone shop owner, who supplies drones and their parts to photographers said that the trend is rapidly gaining attention in rural areas.

sions and regulations to deal with in villages, and the locals are thrilled to see technology in action. He aspires to turn his passion for drones into a full-time career, hoping that government schemes like the 'Namo Drone Didi' initiative, which empowers rural women with agricultural drones, will expand to include support for photographers and drone operators like him.

national



Our rights and justice should not be denied. The positive aspect is that all our MPs, except those from the BJP, are united in demanding what is rightfully ours

MORE THAN 22 LAKH DEVOTEES AT SABARIMALA

Over 22 lakh Ayyappa devotees visited Sabarimala in 29 days till December 14, an increase of 4.51 lakh pilgrims from the corresponding period last year...



of the day uote

Our government has been unwavering in its advocacy for their inclusion. A landmark resolution passed by the Sikkim Legislative Assembly in January 2021...

I appeal to industry, trade, business and corporates and their associations to take a policy decision to pool their CSR (corporate social responsibility) funds to bring about institutions and nurture them because investment in education is not only for the present but also for the future...

Now Omar Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, throws the Congress and Rahul Gandhi under the bus, on the EVM issue

Punjab DGP, MHA director meet farmer leader Dallewal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Dec 15: The Punjab Police chief along with a senior officer in the Union Home Ministry Sunday met farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal...



PUNJAB DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE GAURAV YADAV AND DIRECTOR IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS MAYANK MISHRA MET DALLEWAL AT THE KHANAURI BORDER POINT AND HEARD HIS DEMANDS

wal is a senior citizen, he has some health issues and he is a prominent farmer leader. The SC has directed that emergent requisite medical aid be provided to Dallewal...

Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav and Director in the Ministry of Home Affairs Mayank Mishra met Dallewal at the Khanauri border point and heard his demands...

The 70-year-old Dallewal, a cancer patient, has been on a fast-unto-death at the Khanauri border point between Punjab and Haryana since November 26 to press the Centre to accept the agitating farmers' demands...

Mishra said, "We have heard whatever his (Dallewal) demands are." To a question, he said, "There was no proposal of any kind. I came here to hear him and also for implementation of the SC order."

dal said, "We have told Dallewal that his way of leading a peaceful agitation has been appreciated everywhere and the government has also taken cognisance of it."

"The chief minister has specially sent a message and our efforts are that talks should be held on their demands and this issue is resolved," the DGP said.

VHP EVENT REMARKS

Justice Shekhar to face SC Collegium

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, who purportedly made controversial statements at a VHP function, is likely to appear before the Supreme Court Collegium soon to explain his stand on the controversy.

The top court December 10 took note of news reports over the statements and sought a report from the Allahabad High Court on the entire issue. "The Supreme Court has taken note of newspaper reports of a speech given by Mr Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, a sitting judge of the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad..."

Apex court sources said the Allahabad High Court judge is likely to be asked to appear and put forth his version as per established practices. At a Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) function December 8, Justice Yadav said the main aim of the uniform civil code was to promote social harmony, gender equality and secularism...



Tourists visit a frozen waterfall at Drung area on a cold winter morning, in Baramulla district, Jammu and Kashmir

SHORT TAKES

Lankan President begins India visit

New Delhi: Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayaka arrived in India Sunday on a three-day visit in his first foreign trip after assuming the top office in September...

MP Assembly's Winter Session from today

Bhopal: The Winter Session of the Madhya Pradesh assembly will begin on Monday, with the opposition Congress announcing that it would hold protests to highlight farmers' plight and crimes against women in the state...

Protest in Arunachal

Itanagar: Hundreds of people Sunday demonstrated at the entry gate of Parong village in Arunachal Pradesh's Siang district against the proposed deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) for conducting a study to prepare the pre-feasibility report (PFR) for the 11,000-mw Siang Upper Multipurpose Project.

Government unveils 'Jalvahak' to boost inland waterways

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 15: Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal Sunday unveiled a major policy for cargo promotion - 'Jalvahak'.

Jalvahak is aimed at incentivising the movement of long-haul cargo via National Waterways 1 (river Ganga) as well as for National Waterways 2 (river Brahmaputra) and National Waterways 16 (river Barak).

"The government has made a concerted effort to realise the tremendous potential of our rich network of inland waterways. With its advantage of being an economical, ecologically sound, and efficient mode of transportation, we want to boost cargo movement via waterways, to decongest the railways and roadways," Sonowal said.

"Jalvahak scheme incentivises long haul cargo on NW1, NW2 & NW16, and provides an opportunity for the trade interests to explore the movement of cargo via waterways with positive economic value proposition. Empowering our vessel operators with this incentive scheme and encouraging our business enterprises with safe and timely delivery of cargo in a cost-effective manner adds meaningfully to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of transformation via transportation as India sails towards becoming a Viksit Bharat," he added.



SAMBHAL TEMPLE

Administration writes to ASI for carbon dating



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambhal (UP), Dec 15: The Sambhal district administration has written to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for carbon dating of the Bhasma Shankar temple, including a well there, officials said on Sunday...

used to determine the age of archaeological artefacts from ancient sites. Superintendent of Police Krishan Kumar said that all roads leading to the temple have been covered with CCTV cameras and a control room is also being set up there.

Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) personnel have been posted at the site. The Bhasma Shankar temple was reopened on Friday after authorities said that they stumbled upon the covered structure during an anti-encroachment drive.

Referring to the reopening of the temple, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said it did not appear overnight and represents "our enduring heritage and the truth of our history".

Mahant Acharya Vinod Shukla, the temple priest, said worshippers have begun visiting and offering prayers.

Worshippers have started visiting the temple and it is being guarded round the clock, they said. "This is the temple of Kartik Mahadev. A well has been found here. This is Amrit Koop. Security guards have been permanently posted here and CCTV cameras have also been installed. Puja has also started in the temple. There is encroachment here, which is being removed," District Magistrate Rajender Pensiya said.

"We have written a letter to ASI for carbon dating of the temple and the well," he added. Carbon dating is a method

THE TEMPLE IS SITUATED IN THE KHAGGU SARAI AREA WHICH IS JUST OVER A KILOMETRE AWAY FROM THE JAMA MASJID WHERE VIOLENCE HAD TAKEN PLACE NOVEMBER 24

Will not immerse ashes of my son till we get justice: Atul's father

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Samastipur (Bihar), Dec 15: The father of Bengaluru techie Atul Subhash, who died by suicide recently, Sunday called for strict punishment for those who "harassed" his son, asserting that his ashes will not be immersed till justice is served.

Subhash, 34, was found hanging in his house at Bengaluru's Munnekolalu December 9. He left behind lengthy videos and notes, blaming his wife and in-laws for driving him to suicide through "false" cases and "persistent torture".

"I thank the Karnataka Police for arresting them (Subhash's estranged wife and in-laws). All those who harassed my son should be punished so that he gets justice, and his soul rests in peace. I will not im-

merse the ashes of my son till we get justice," Pawan Kumar told reporters here.

"My son was being harassed and tortured for money, and humiliated by his wife... I request Prime Minister Narendra Modi and all concerned... please give us justice," he said. Subhash's estranged wife Nikita Singhania was arrested in Gurugram, Haryana, while her mother Nisha Singhania and brother Anuragh Singhania were picked up from Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj, police said Sunday.

Kumar also sought the custody of his four-year-old grandson. "My son was broken from inside... Even after torture by his wife and in-laws, he didn't tell anyone about it. His suicide note also mentioned that his parents be given custody of his child," Kumar said. He



said Subhash had also received a maintenance order for his son, amounting to ₹40,000 per month.

"She (Subhash's estranged wife) filed several false cases against us and my son. Strict action must be taken against

all those who mentally tortured my son," Kumar said. Bikas Kumar, the brother of Subhash, also spoke to mediapersons in Samastipur, demanding that the "false cases" registered against them be withdrawn. "The others behind

this incident should also be arrested. We will not get justice till all false cases registered against us are withdrawn. We will not immerse the ashes of my brother till we get justice. Our fight will continue," he asserted.

"I am equally concerned about my nephew (son of Subhash). His safety is a matter of serious concern for us. We have not seen him in recent photographs. I want to know his whereabouts through the media. We want his custody as early as possible," added Bikas Kumar.

Earlier in the day, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said Subhash's wife,

mother-in-law and brother-in-law have been apprehended and are in judicial custody. The investigation will follow.

Addressing reporters in Bangalore, Parameshwara said, "He (Subhash) had left behind about a 40-page death note and he has raised several issues, most importantly about the misuse of provisions in the law that were meant for protection of women."

Noting that Subhash also spoke about the "rights of men", the home minister said this has become a topic of discussion across the country.

SUBHASH, 34, WAS FOUND HANGING IN HIS HOUSE AT BENGALURU'S MUNNEKOLALU DECEMBER 9. HE LEFT BEHIND LENGTHY VIDEOS AND NOTES, BLAMING HIS WIFE AND IN-LAWS FOR DRIVING HIM TO SUICIDE THROUGH "FALSE" CASES AND "PERSISTENT TORTURE"

TECHIE SUICIDE

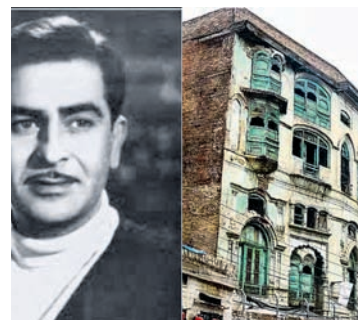
international



We can hopefully see a quick end to the sanctions so that we can see really a rallying around building of Syria
GEIR PEDERSEN | UN ENVOY TO SYRIA

PAKISTANI FANS HONOUR RAJ KAPOOR'S 100TH BIRTH ANNIV

Pakistani cultural enthusiasts and film lovers gathered at the iconic Kapoor House in Peshawar Saturday to celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of legendary Bollywood filmmaker and actor Raj Kapoor



of the day quote

The Ministry of Finance is pleased to announce the expiration of its Consent Solicitation and Exchange Offer related to its International Sovereign Bonds (ISBs), with preliminary results indicating a very high participation from market participants
ANURA KUMARA DISSANAYAKE | PRESIDENT, SRI LANKA

Negotiations with the incumbent Taliban government in Afghanistan is the only solution for maintaining peace and security in the region
ALI AMIN GANDAPUR | CM, KHYBER PAKH-TUNKHWA

I will carry with me all the criticisms, encouragement and support directed toward me, and I will continue to do my utmost for the country until the very last moment
YOON SUK YEOL | PRESIDENT, SOUTH KOREA

Pakistan PM Sharif launches nationwide anti-polio drive

Islamabad, Dec 15: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Sunday launched a nationwide anti-polio drive to vaccinate around 44 million children across the country against the crippling disease. Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only countries in the region where polio is still rampant. Sharif inaugurated the last campaign of the year by administering polio drops to children under the age of five on the occasion while reaffirming their determination to eliminate the disease from Pakistan.

In his address, the premier expressed concern over the rise in polio cases, with 63 new cases reported this year. However, he assured the nation that collaborative efforts by federal and provincial governments would overcome the challenge. "I especially thank the government of Saudi Arabia and Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman for his very valuable contribution towards eradicating polio, not only in Pakistan but also in Afghanistan," Sharif said. He expressed the commitment to eradicate the poliovirus from Pakistan with the help of provincial governments and international partners. The Prime Minister urged the parents to ensure vaccination of their children to protect them from polio.

Hundreds feared dead in Mayotte cyclone

Cyclone Chido swept through French archipelago overnight
REUTERS

Paris, Dec 15: Several hundred people, maybe even thousands, may have been killed by Cyclone Chido in the French archipelago of Mayotte in the Indian Ocean, a senior local French official said Sunday. "I think there will certainly be several hundreds, maybe even several thousands," prefect Francois-Xavier Bieuville said on local media channel Mayotte La Iere.

My thoughts are with our compatriots in Mayotte, who have gone through the most horrific few hours, and who have, for some, lost everything, lost their lives
EMMANUEL MACRON | PRESIDENT, FRANCE

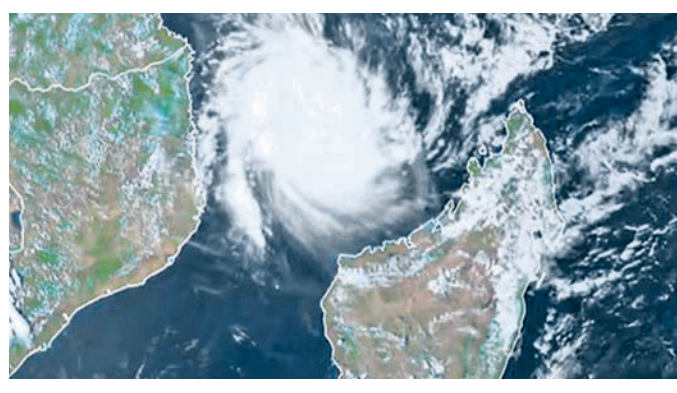
Asked about the death toll of several hundred, the French interior ministry said "it will be difficult to account for all victims" and said a figure could not be determined at this stage. Cyclone Chido swept through Mayotte overnight, Meteor-France said, bringing winds of more than 200 kph (124 mph) and damaging makeshift housing, government buildings and a hospital. It was the strongest storm in more than 90 years to hit the islands, the forecaster said. "My thoughts are with our compatriots in Mayotte, who

have gone through the most horrific few hours, and who have, for some, lost everything, lost their lives," French President Emmanuel Macron said. Aerial footage shared by the French gendarmerie showed the wreckage of hundreds of makeshift houses strewn across the hills of one of Mayotte's islands, which have been a focal point for illegal immigration from nearby Comoros. In the last few decades thousands of people have attempted to make the crossing from Comoros, off the coast of East Africa, to Mayotte, which has a higher standard of living and access to the French welfare system. Over 1,00,000 undocumented migrants live in Mayotte, according to the French interior ministry. It was difficult to ascertain the precise death toll after the cyclone, which also raised concerns about access to food, water and sanitation, authorities said. "For the toll, it's going to be complicated, because Mayotte is a Muslim land where the dead are buried within 24



hours," a French interior ministry official said earlier. Located nearly 8,000 km (5,000 miles) from Paris and a four-day trip by sea, Mayotte is significantly poorer than the rest of France and has grappled with gang violence and social unrest for decades. Some 77% of the people in Mayotte live below the French poverty line. Tensions were stoked earlier this year by a water shortage. The cyclone went on to hit northern Mozambique Sunday, but the full extent of the impact was not clear. Internet

Entire communities were flattened when Cyclone Chido made landfall, causing wind gusts of more than 225km/h



monitor NetBlocks said on X (formerly Twitter) that heavy rain and winds had damaged power and telecommunication infrastructure. France colonised Mayotte in 1843 and annexed the whole archipelago, including

Comoros, in 1904. In a 1974 referendum, 95% backed separation but 63% on Mayotte voted to stay French. Grande Comore, Anjouan and Moheli declared independence in 1975. Mayotte is still ruled from Paris.

SHORT TAKES

CAAN rejects national park's choppers ban

Kathmandu: The Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) has objected to a notice issued by the Sagarmatha National Park authorities restricting helicopters from flying over the national park for commercial purposes. "Our serious attention has been drawn to the notice issued by the national park authorities to impose total restriction on commercial helicopters from flying in the Khumbu region, the gateway to the Mount Everest, in the name of checking sound pollution and protection of environment and wildlife in the region," the CAAN said in a statement. "The park authorities have no right to restrict flying of helicopters over the national park region as the rights to takeoff and land aircraft solely lies with the CAAN," the statement said. The CAAN also directed all the helicopter companies to continue their operations as usual in the national park area.

Russian tanker splits in storm

Moscow: A Russian oil tanker carrying thousands of tonnes of oil products split apart during a heavy storm Sunday, spilling oil into the Kerch Strait, while another tanker was also in distress after sustaining damage, Russian officials said. The vessels were in the Kerch Strait between mainland Russia and Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, when they issued distress signals. Russian investigators opened two criminal cases to look into possible safety violations after at least one person was killed when the 136-metre Volgoneft 212 tanker, with 15 people on board, split in half with its bow sinking.

Brazilian Prez Lula discharged from hosp

Sao Paulo: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was discharged from the hospital Sunday after undergoing surgery to stop a brain bleed. The 79-year-old president's stroke onto the stage of a press conference Sunday morning in a show that he was doing well following the head surgery. "I'm here alive, well, with the urge to work. And I'll tell you something I used to say during the campaign. I'm 79 years old, I have the energy of 30 and the enthusiasm of 20 to build this country," Lula said. Lula's medical team said the surgery went well and that Lula would be able to walk and hold meetings as he rests in his home in the city of Sao Paulo until Thursday.

'Constitution to be amended with consensus of all'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Dec 15: Nepal's Minister for Home Affairs Ramesh Lekhak Sunday said a consensus of all political parties will be ensured to amend the Constitution, a media report said.

Lekhak, speaking at a press meet, stressed on the need for the Constitution amendment for strengthening the federal democratic republic, The Himalayan Times newspaper reported. "The preliminary dialogue on this issue has commenced. But the constitution amendment will not be determined by two political parties," he said. Lekhak said that the Nepali Congress (NC) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN UML), the largest parties in Parliament, had decided to form the incumbent coalition government to promote stability, prevent corruption, strengthen good governance and economic activities and accelerate the pace of development.

The minister further said that the existing political alliance between the NC and CPN (UML) has no issues and it will continue until the next general election. Responding to a question about the arrest of Opposition leader Rabi Lamichhane, he claimed that the government is highly aware of the guaran-



The preliminary dialogue on this issue has commenced. But the constitution amendment will not be determined by two political parties
RAMESH LEKHAK | MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, NEPAL

tee of human rights for each citizen. He added that the government has no feeling of "revenge" against Lamichhane, the chair of Rastriya Swatantra Party, as the current investigation against him is a legal issue. Meanwhile, Nepali Congress spokesperson Prakash Sharan Mahat advised the government to seek and accept foreign loans only on the need-basis as it has been very challenging for the country to repay loans taken after Covid-19. In July, KP Sharma Oli was sworn in as Nepal's Prime Minister for the fourth time to lead a new coalition government.

Panel: Hasina involved in enforced disappearance

The commission's interim report estimates over 3,500 cases, citing a 'systematic design' and the involvement of the Rapid Action Battalion
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 15: An inquiry commission set up by the interim government in Bangladesh has said that it found evidence implicating deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and top-ranking military and police officials from her regime in alleged incidents of enforced disappearance. The five-member Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances submitted an interim report titled "Unfolding The Truth" to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus Saturday. The commission estimated that there would be more than 3,500 enforced disappearances. "The commission has found evidence of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's involvement as the instructor in the incidents of enforced disappearance," the press wing of the office of Chief Adviser said in a statement Saturday night. It said the deposed premier's defence adviser Major General (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, former director general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre and sacked



The five-member Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances submitted an interim report titled 'Unfolding The Truth' to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus

Major General Ziaul Ahsanand senior police officers Monirul Islam and Mohammad Harun-Or-Rashid and several other senior officials were found to

be involved in those incidents. The ex-military and police officers are on the run, mostly believed to be abroad since the ouster of Hasina's Awami League regime August 5 following a student-led uprising. According to the statement, retired Supreme Court judge Mainul Islam Chowdhury, the chairman of the commission, told Yunus that during investigations they found a "systematic design" that allowed incidents of enforced disappearances to go undetected. "Individuals carrying out enforced disappearance or extrajudicial killing (even) lacked knowledge about victims," he said. The report said the police's elite anti-crime Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), which draws men from the Army, Navy, Air Force, regular police and other law enforcement agencies had collaborated with each other to pick up, torture and keep victims in detention and deliberately segmented the operations. Rights activist and commission member Sajjad Hossain said they recorded 1,676 complaints of enforced disappearances and, so far, have examined 758 of them. Of these, 200 people or 27 per cent of the victims never returned while those who returned were mostly shown on records as arrested.

Israel plans to double population on occupied land

REUTERS

Jerusalem, Dec 15: Israel agreed Sunday to double its population on the occupied Golan Heights while saying threats from Syria remained despite the moderate tone of rebel leaders who ousted President Bashar al-Assad a week ago. "Strengthening the Golan is strengthening the State of Israel, and it is especially important at this time. We will continue to hold onto it, cause it to blossom, and settle in it," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said. Israel captured most of the strategic plateau from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War, annexing it in 1981. In 2019 then-President Donald Trump declared US support for Israeli sovereignty over the Golan, but the annexation has not been recognised by most countries. Syria demands Israel withdraw but Israel refuses, citing security concerns. "The immediate risks to the country have not disappeared and the latest developments in Syria increase the strength of the threat - despite the moderate image that the rebel leaders claim to present," Defence Minister Israel Katz said. Netanyahu's office said the government unanimously approved a more than 40-million-shekel (\$11 million) plan to encourage demographic growth in the Golan.

Alleged Chinese spy got close to senior British royal

While Cameron and May distanced themselves from any knowledge of his espionage links, the row involving the businessman, known only as 'H6' for legal reasons, continues to dominate the headlines after a tribunal judge noted that he had an 'unusual' degree of trust from the senior royal



as a "close confidant" of Prince Andrew, the younger brother of King Charles III, intensified Sunday as it emerged that he also met former prime ministers David Cameron and Theresa May. While Cameron and May distanced themselves from any knowledge of his espionage links, the row involving the businessman, known only as "H6" for legal reasons, continues to dominate the headlines

The Chinese Embassy in the UK has denied the espionage allegations, saying 'some individuals in the UK are always eager to fabricate baseless 'spy' stories targeting China'

after a tribunal judge noted that he had an "unusual" degree of trust from the senior royal. Earlier, Andrew, the Duke of York, said in a statement that he had "ceased all contact" with the alleged spy. "David Cameron was leader of the Conservative Party for over a decade and PM for six years. He met thousands of people during that time at hundreds of functions and events. We don't have any further information about this individual," a source close to Cameron, now Lord Cameron, was quoted

as saying by 'Sky News'. Meanwhile, a spokesperson for Theresa May said "as such, she doesn't remember when or where this particular photograph was taken or the man in question". The revelations come after it emerged earlier this week that H6 had been barred from entering the UK due to national security risks. A Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) went on to hear in July that the man was invited to Prince Andrew's birthday party in 2020 and was told by a royal aide that he could act on

the Duke's behalf when dealing with potential investors in China. According to SIAC case details, H6 was first excluded from entering the country in 2023 over national security fears by Suella Braverman, who was then home secretary. In July last year, the Home Office said H6 was considered to have engaged in "covert and deceptive activity" on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party. H6 denied the allegations and appealed that decision in the SIAC, which ruled against him Thursday. In a statement, Prince Andrew's office said the Duke had met the man "through official channels" and there was "nothing of a sensitive nature ever discussed".

Business



Nissan is betting big on India...and the plans (for India) remain intact despite this global turbulence
FRANK TORRES | PRESIDENT (OPERATIONS), NISSAN INDIA

INDIA SEEKS WTO SUBSIDY RULES FOR HIGH SEAS FISHING

India has pitched at the WTO for stricter regulations on subsidies granted by countries that are engaged in high seas fishing activities, an official said. Highlighting the stark disparity, an Indian document submitted at the World Trade Organization (WTO) has noted that it provides a modest \$35 per fisher annually, compared to subsidies as high as \$76,000 per fisher per year in some European nations



of the day quote

The Indian stock market's future trajectory will be influenced by a blend of global and domestic factors
PRAVESH GOUR | SENIOR TECHNICAL ANALYST, SWASTIKA INVESTMART

Around 34 vehicle manufacturers would be participating at the exhibition and showcasing technologies with respect to multiple powertrains
RAJESH MENON | DIRECTOR GENERAL, SIAM

Climate change and agriculture have become very dynamic. The solutions useful four years back might not be useful in the next four years.... Our approach goes beyond selling crop protection solutions
ASHISH DOBHAL | CEO, UPL-SUSTAINABLE AGRISOLUTIONS

DISCOUNTS SHRINK

India's Russian oil binge drops

India became the second biggest buyer of Russian crude oil since Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022, with purchases rising from less than one per cent of the total oil imported to almost 40% of the country's total oil purchases



chases from Moscow. "India's imports of Russian crude oil dropped by a massive 55 per cent in November - the lowest figure since June 2022," the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said in its latest report. Russia remained India's top oil supplier, followed by Iraq and Saudi Arabia. "China has bought 47 per cent of Russia's crude exports, followed by India (37 per cent), the EU (6 per cent), and Turkey (6 per cent)," CREA said without giving absolute numbers. In November, there was a 17 per cent month-on-month increase in the discount on Russia's Urals grade crude oil to an average of \$6.01 per barrel compared to Brent crude

- Russia crude oil imports dip by 55% in Nov - lowest since June 2022
- Russia remained India's top oil supplier, followed by Iraq and Saudi
- Besides crude oil, India bought smaller quantities of coal from Russia

oil. The discount on the ESPO grade narrowed by a massive 15 per cent and was traded at an average discount of \$3.88 per barrel while that on the Sokol blend narrowed by 2 per cent to \$6.65 per barrel, it said. Russia predominantly sells ESPO and Sokol grades of crude oil to India.

LESS COAL IMPORTS

Besides crude oil, India bought smaller quantities of coal from Russia. "From December 5, 2022 until the end of November 2024, China purchased 46 per cent of all Russia's coal exports - India (17 per cent), Turkey (11 per cent), South Korea (10 per cent), and Taiwan (5 per cent) round off the top five buyers list," according to CREA. All fossil fuels taken together, "India dropped to third in the list of largest buyers of Russian fossil fuels in November, contributing 17 per cent (EUR 2.1 billion) to Russia's monthly export earnings from its top five importers. There was a significant 22 per cent drop in Russian revenues from crude oil exports to India in November," it said. While there was an 11 per cent month-on-month decline in the total volume of India's imports of crude oil in November, Russian volumes suffered the most, dropping by a massive 55 per cent. India imports more than 85 per cent of its crude oil, which is refined into fuels like petrol and diesel refineries.

SANCTIONS EFFECT

In an attempt to restrict funds for Russia's war machine, The Group of Seven

(G7) rich nations, the European Union and Australia put an embargo on Russian crude and introduced a \$60 per barrel price cap in December 2022. Over the next 12 months, the price cap and embargo had a significant impact on revenues, and forced Russia to find new markets and ways to transport its oil. Russia did this by offering deep discounts on its Urals grade crude. "It has been two years since the imposition of the price cap. CREA estimates that in this period, the sanctions have forced Russia to drop the price of Urals by an estimated 15 per cent. Since the sanctions, Russia has lost an estimated EUR 14.6 billion in revenues from Urals grade crude exports," the report said. In the second year of the sanctions, CREA estimates that sanctions impacted Russian Urals crude revenues by 10 per cent resulting in losses of EUR 4 billion. This impact was felt heavily for the first half of 2024 when Russian revenues were hit by EUR 2.5 billion. "The price cap has had an impact but has failed to live up to its potential. A lack of enforcement and desire to lower the price cap has meant Russia has found a way to circumvent the cap and find new markets as time has gone by, especially in the second year of the sanctions," it said.

PSBs CLOCK RECORD NET PROFIT IN FY24

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 15: Public Sector Banks (PSBs) in India registered their highest-ever aggregate net profit of ₹1.41 lakh crore in the financial year 2023-24, the Ministry of Finance said Sunday. The gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio steeply declined, dropping to 3.12 per cent in September 2024. Demonstrating continued momentum, they registered a net profit of ₹85,520,600 crore in the first half of 2024-25.



In addition to their stellar performance, PSBs have contributed significantly to shareholder returns, paying a total dividend of ₹61,964 crore over the past three years. This remarkable financial growth underscores the sector's operational efficiency, improved asset quality, and stronger capital base. Beyond their financial achievements, these banks have played a key role in promoting financial inclusion. They have implemented crucial government schemes like the Atal Pension Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, to name a few.

A turning point came in 2015 when the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) initiated the Asset Quality Review (AQR). This exercise aimed to identify and address hidden stress in banks by mandating the transparent recognition of NPAs. It also reclassified previously restructured loans as NPAs, resulting in a sharp increase in reported NPAs. The heightened provisioning requirements during this period impacted the financial parameters of banks, restricting their ability to lend and support productive sectors of the economy, said the ministry. Another indicator of the improved resilience of PSBs is their Capital to Risk (Weighted) Assets Ratio (CRAR), which rose by 3,983 basis points to 15.43 per cent in September 2024, up from 11.45 per cent in March 2015. Notably, this CRAR far exceeds the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) minimum requirement of 11.5 per cent, underscoring the strengthened financial health of these institutions.

Public Sector Banks in India have made remarkable strides in recent years, achieving unprecedented financial milestones and contributing significantly to the nation's economic stability and growth.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: India's import of Russian crude oil dropped in November to its lowest level since June 2022 but the Kremlin continues to be the biggest source of oil for India, according to a monthly tracker report of a European think tank. India became the second biggest buyer of Russian crude oil since Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022, with purchases rising from less than one per cent of the total oil imported to almost 40 per cent of the country's total oil purchases. The rise was primarily because the Russian crude oil was available at a discount to other internationally traded oil due to the price cap and the European nations shunning pur-

POSITIVE INFLOW

FPIs' stellar return

Foreign investors infuse ₹22,766 cr in first two weeks of December in equities



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

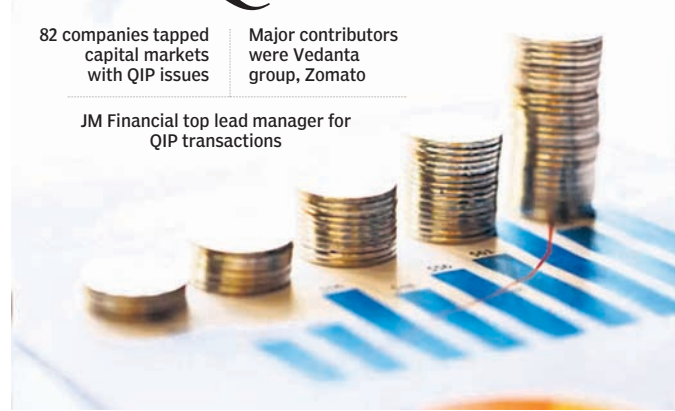
New Delhi, Dec 15: Foreign investors have made a strong comeback to Indian equities with a net investment of ₹22,766 crore in the first two weeks of December driven by expectations of rate cut by the US Federal Reserve. This revival follows significant outflows in the preceding months, with Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) pulling out a net ₹21,612 crore in November and a massive ₹94,017 crore in October -- the worst monthly outflow on record. Interestingly, September had marked a nine-month high for FPI inflows, with a net investment of ₹57,724 crore, highlighting the volatility in foreign investment trends. Looking ahead, the flow of foreign investments into

With the latest inflow, FPI investment has reached at ₹7,747 crore in 2024 so far

Indian equity markets will hinge on several key factors. These include the policies implemented under Donald Trump's presidency, the prevailing inflation and interest rate environment, and the evolving geopolitical landscape, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said. According to the data with the depositories, FPIs have made a net investment of ₹22,766 crore in this month (till December 13). This was driven by expectations of a US Federal Reserve rate cut. On the other hand, FPIs invested ₹4,814 crore in the debt general limit and pulled out ₹666 crore from the debt Voluntary Retention Route (VRR) during the period under review. So far this year, FPIs have invested ₹1.1 lakh crore in the debt market.

India Inc raises record ₹1.21L-cr via QIPs in Nov

This represents a more than two-fold increase compared to the ₹52,350cr mobilised in the previous calendar year



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New Delhi, Dec 15: Fundraising through qualified institutional placements (QIPs) reached an all-time high in 2024, surpassing the ₹1 lakh crore-mark for the first time ever in a calendar year, fuelled by strong stock market conditions and higher valuations. Indian companies have raised ₹1,21,321 crore through QIPs till November, according to data compiled by Prime Database. The sharp increase showed market resilience has been a key factor driving this growth as companies will continue to garner capital through Qualified Institutional Placements (QIPs), analysts said. According to the data, 82 companies have tapped capital markets with QIP issues till November this year, compared with just 35 that raised ₹38,220 crore during the same period last year. QIP is one of the quickest products to raise funds from institutional investors. It is designed for listed firms and investment trusts, which allow them to mo-

bilise funds quickly from institutional investors without the need to submit any pre-issue filings to market regulators. Major contributors to the record-breaking year such as diversified conglomerate Vedanta group and food delivery major Zomato raised as much as ₹8,500 crore each via QIPs. They were followed by Adani Energy Solutions and Varun Beverages, which raised ₹8,373 crore and ₹7,500 crore, respectively. Other significant QIP transactions during CY24 include Samvardhana Motherhood International at ₹6,438 crore and Godrej Properties at ₹6,000 crore and KEI Industries at ₹2,000 crore. In addition, state-owned lender Punjab National Bank, JSW Energy, Prestige Estates Projects, were also among compa-

nies that raised capital through the QIP route to bolster their financial reserves. As per Prime Database, financial services company JM Financial emerged as the top lead manager for the QIP transactions, as it handled 16 issues. "In 2024, promoters have taken advantage of strong market conditions, leveraging higher valuations and upward trends in the secondary market to raise funds. Our performance reflects our superior distribution capabilities and our ability to handle complex transactions and achieve results for our clients," JM Financial Ltd Managing Director Chirag Negandhi told PTI. This year's resurgence highlighted the growing influence of domestic investors and retail participation in capital markets.

Mexico, Canada, ASEAN benefited more than India

India ranked sixth, with a \$36.8bn increase in exports, driven by growth in electronics, pharmaceuticals, and engineering goods

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: Mexico, Canada, and 10-nation Southeast Asian bloc ASEAN benefited more from the US-China trade war than India, economic think tank GTRI said in a report. It said that India has strengthened its local supply chains and produce critical intermediates to reduce reliance on China, while improving cost efficiency and ease of doing business to enhance competitiveness of domestic industries and increase exports to the US. With Donald Trump again becoming the US President, the evolving trade landscape offers

huge opportunities for the Indian industry as he is now planning new tariffs targeting Mexico, Canada, China, and others. The US-China trade war, initiated in 2018 under President Trump with tariffs targeting key sectors, has significantly reshaped global trade flows but failed to achieve its primary goals. "Key beneficiaries of the trade war included Mexico, Canada, and ASEAN nations, which collectively accounted for 57 per cent of the growth in US imports. India also emerged as a significant gainer, with exports to the US rising by \$36.8 billion, driven by sectors like

US-CHINA TRADE WAR



electronics, pharmaceuticals, and engineering goods," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said. Mexico emerged as the biggest winner, with an increase in exports by \$164.3 billion to the US between 2017 and 2023. It was followed by Canada (\$124 billion), Vietnam (\$70.5 billion), South Korea (\$46.3 billion) and

Germany (\$43 billion). The report said that India ranked sixth, with a \$36.8 billion increase in exports, driven by growth in electronics, pharmaceuticals, and engineering goods. Key contributors to India's export growth included smartphones and telecom equipment, which saw a \$6.2 billion in-

crease, accounting for 17.2 per cent of the total rise. Medicines contributed \$4.5 billion (12.4 per cent), petroleum oils added \$2.5 billion (6.8 per cent), and solar cells accounted for \$1.9 billion (5.3 per cent). The US, India's largest trading partner with over \$190 billion in bilateral trade, plays a pivotal role in India's economic landscape and to navigate a potential Trump-led trade era, India can lower import tariffs by modest adjustments and could bring average tariffs down to around 10% without significantly affecting revenue, GTRI noted. The think tank suggested the US to limit the use of Chinese inputs in all products exported to the US by recasting non-preferential rules of origin and this will be a more effective mechanism than imposing higher tariffs.

IIHL hopes to take over RCAP soon

Hinduja Group plans to triple financial services business to \$50bn in 5 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: Hinduja Group company IIHL is expecting to complete the acquisition of debt-ridden Reliance Capital (RCAP) by next month and aims to ramp up banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) business more than three-fold to \$50 billion in the next five years. "Most of the approvals and procedures related to the resolution process of Reliance Capital are complete. Couple of the procedures at the end of the administrator and CoC are to be completed. We hope that all these will be over in the next 4-6 weeks and RCAP should come into the fold of Hinduja Group by the end of January," IIHL Chairman Ashok P Hinduja



said. With the acquisition of RCAP, he said IndusInd International Holdings Ltd (IIHL) is targeting a valuation of \$50 billion by 2030 as against the current valuation of \$15 billion (as on September 30, 2024). Mauritius-based IIHL emerged as the successful suitor with a bid of ₹9,650 crore for the resolution of RCAP. Later, the company paid ₹200 crore to bolster RCAP solvency, which was over and above the bid amount. The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Mumbai, February 27, 2024, approved IIHL's resolution plan and subsequently extended the deadline for completion of the transaction to January 31, 2025.

Australia in pole position

Stellar hundreds from Head, Smith put Oz in commanding situation as the hosts closed the day at a highly satisfying 405 for seven



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brisbane, Dec 15: Travis Head put an insipid Indian bowling attack to sword for his second successive hundred while veteran Steve Smith wore the opposition down with a statement century to put Australia in a favourable position on day two of the third Test here Sunday.

Australia reached a commanding 405 for 7 at stumps courtesy, a 241-run stand between Head (152 off 160) and Smith (101 off 190) for the fourth wicket after the visitors put them in a spot of bother at 75 for three in the morning.

The Indian bowlers, who impressed in the first session, lost their way to allow Head and Co to dominate the proceedings.

Jasprit Bumrah (5/72), who came up with welcome wickets both in the morning and towards the end of play, was once again the stand out bowler for the visitors. It was his second five-wicket haul of the series and the overall tally

stands at 17.

Leaving Bumrah's brilliance aside, India's on-field tactics left a lot to be desired as Head played yet another game changing knock.

While reaching their personal milestones, Smith now is the international batter with joint most Test hundreds (10)

Poor tactical calls

The field placements in early part of Head's innings were questionable with India having a deep point and deep square leg, allowing the explosive batter to pace his innings with singles and doubles earned through cuts and whips off legs.

The short balls were finally attempted when Head was well set and he duly put them away with disdain but Rohit Sharma not playing a third man for his ramp shot looked a bit odd. It was more of reactive captaincy from Rohit rather than being pro-active.

His special effort included 18 boundaries. Even after tea, too

against India alongside Joe Root followed by Sir Vivian Richards and Sir Garfield Sobers (8 each).

Head, since his century in WTC final at the Oval in 2023 has been India's nemesis with another classic ton in ODI World Cup final and two more in the current series. No player in last one year has scored more runs against India across formats.

many runs were conceded with Ravindra Jadeja (0/76 in 16 overs) and Nitish Reddy (1/65 in 13 overs) opening the bowling as Rohit Sharma chose to preserve his front-line pacers for the new ball.

Smith's hundred too was of high quality. He preferred to grind it out in the first

The hands were moving well, which has always been integral to his game.

There was a scare in India's

major the an camp as Siraj walked off the field after feeling discomfort in his left leg in the middle of his over. He was seen holding his left knee but returned to the field much to India's relief.

The injury scare came after Siraj and Labuschagne shared a light moment as the Indian pacer walked towards the batter to swap the bails only for them to be swapped back.

Rain is predicted for the next three days and is likely to impact the outcome of the game controlled by Australia at the moment.

The last three years have probably been the hardest that I've experienced in my career

STEVE SMITH

Head's hundred came after a match-winning 140 in Adelaide while it was a classical Test match knock for Smith, who reached three figures for the first time in 25 innings, silencing his detractors

Jasprit comes on, I was a bit lucky with a few good spells. He goes for the base of the stumps early. I think it's about reacting. He has a good bouncer. He's got brilliant wicket-taking balls

TRAVIS HEAD

India need to get better with old ball: Morkel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brisbane, Dec 15: Bowling coach Morne Morkel Sunday accepted that Indian bowlers failed to execute plans against Australian century-maker Travis Head and exhorted them to tidy up their act with the old ball between overs 50 and 80.

Head and fellow centurion Steve Smith helped the hosts to clobber 171 runs in 31 overs in the third session on the second day of the third Test here, adding to a wicketless post-lunch segment.



Yes, we've got the game plans, but are we executing those game plans with a softer ball from both ends? That's something we need to get better at

MORNE MORKEL | INDIA'S BOWLING COACH

"First of all, we can say he's (Head) in pretty good form. But I think for us with the ball, if you look at it from overs 50 to 80, even in the last game, is where we fall short, leaking (runs) a little bit. So, that's one area I think we need to get better at," Morkel said in the post-day press conference.

Morkel said the Indian bowlers could not sustain the momentum after taking three wickets in the morning session.



"First up with the ball this morning, we were pretty good, at 3 for 70, but took nothing away from two world-class players, Smith we know, he's a guy who also can bat long and score runs. They (Smith and Head) put a partnership there and put us under pressure with a softer ball. It's definitely an area that we need to focus on, maybe deeper in the innings," he added.

The former South African quick explained the pre-set plan against Head, though it eventually fell flat on its back.

"Our plan going into this game was to bowl a little bit more over the wicket, a straighter line. We felt he played it quite nicely in Adelaide when we came around (the wicket). The margins to him are just so small and like I said, once he's in, what is the best way for the team and for you (is) to maybe slow down the scoring rate because you know he's going to be aggressive. The best way (of controlling Head) is bringing a little bit of control into the game and like I said, from over 50 with that softer ball, that's where we're leaking (runs). When Head comes on straight, the pitch kind of feels to (be favourable) a side," he added.

ODISHA MASTERS

Rithvik bags maiden Super 100 title; Tanvi runner-up



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Dec 15: India's Rithvik Sanjeevi Satish Kumar capped off an impressive week by claiming his maiden BWF Super 100 title after defeating compatriot Tharun Manneppalli in the men's singles final at the Odisha Masters here Sunday.

The 21-year-old, who won the Telangana International Challenge last month and finished as runner-up at the Sri Lanka International Challenge in February, triumphed 21-18, 21-16 over Tharun, a runner-up at the Senior National Championship.

"My experience here has been very good. In Odisha, badminton is growing and to see people filling the stadium was fantastic," said Rithvik, who trains at Hatsun Badminton center in Tamil Nadu.

"I gave my best, every match was very competitive and all the players were almost equal. Only thing differs each player is the mind set. This is my first super 100 title and I am very happy to celebrate this."

Rithvik had also won a gold medal at the Sub-Junior National Championship in Bhubaneswar in 2019. He also won a silver medal in the Bangladesh International Challenge in 2021.

In the women's singles final,

15-year-old Tanvi Sharma, who claimed the Bonn International title earlier this year, was defeated 14-21, 16-21 by Chinese qualifier Cai Yan Yan in just 35 minutes. The 43-minute summit clash between Rithvik and Tharun lived up to expectations as the duo fought tooth and nail for supremacy.

While Rithvik, ranked 78th in the world, established an early 9-3 lead, Tharun fought back, narrowing the gap to 9-10, and kept himself within striking distance.

However, Rithvik managed to stay ahead until 19-18 before grabbing the two necessary points to claim the opening game.

After the break, Rithvik took control, quickly moving to a 7-2 lead. Tharun attempted to close the gap, but Rithvik didn't give his opponent much chance to make a comeback.



India retain Women's Asia Cup

Nidhi stands tall as evens triumph over three-time champs China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Muscat, Dec 15: India's goalkeeper Nidhi stole the limelight in the penalty shootout, making three sensational saves to help India overcome three-time champions China 3-2 (1-1) and clinch their second consecutive Women's Junior Asia Cup hockey title here Sunday.

Nidhi's heroics capped off a stellar performance, having already stood tall during regulation time by thwarting multiple attempts from the Chinese forwards as the four quarters ended in a nerve-wracking 1-1 stalemate.

While skipper Jinzhuang Tan scored for China in the 30th minute, Siwach Kanika's strike early in the second half (41st minute) brought India back into the game in an intense battle for supremacy.

Sakshi Rana gave India a perfect start in the shootout by converting the first attempt, while Nidhi denied China's



opener. China fought back as Hao Guoting equalised, and after misses from Mumtaz Khan and Kanika Siwach, it was Ishika's top-corner strike that kept India level at 2-2.

Nidhi's heroics in the final two attempts, blocking shots from Li Jingyi and Zuo Dandan, set the stage for Sunelita Toppo, who sealed the win with a composed finish to seal a memorable victory for India.

The game began with China taking early control, pressing hard against the Indian defense in the opening minutes.

Nidhi made back-to-back saves in the second quarter to keep the scores level after 25 minutes. Despite India's dom-

Hockey India announced a reward of ₹2 lakh for every player and ₹1 lakh for each support staff member for winning the championship

inance in possession, their inability to capitalise on penalty corners -- missing two golden chances in the first quarter -- proved costly.

China struck first in dramatic fashion right before half-time. A penalty stroke was

awarded to the Chinese side, and they converted clinically to give them a significant edge going into the break.

India began the second-half with renewed vigour and a sense of urgency as they dominated proceedings in the third quarter and were finally rewarded in the 41st minute.

A penalty corner opportunity saw the ball rebound to an Indian attacker, who slotted it home to level the score at 1-1.

The goal reignited India's hopes and set the stage for a dramatic final quarter.

It was a tense affair, with both India and China pushing for the winner but failing to score the decisive goal.

India Women win T20I against WI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Navi Mumbai, Dec 15: India Women extended their unbeaten run against the West Indies to nine consecutive T20I victories with a dominating 49-run win in the series opener here Sunday.

After Jemimah Rodrigues (73) and Smriti Mandhana (54) powered India to their highest-ever total of 195 for four against the Caribbean side and their third highest overall in the format, the West Indies responded with 146 for seven.

At the top, young Qiana Joseph dazzled with a 33-ball 49, while veteran Deandra Dottin (52) recorded her first fifty since making a comeback to T20Is earlier this year, but their efforts were not enough.

West Indies' hopes were dealt a body blow in the second over when substitute fielder Minnu Mani produced a superb athletic catch to see the back of West Indies' skipper Hayley Matthews (1) off Titas Sadhu (3/37).

Joseph cracked five fours and three sixes to keep the scoreboard ticking but West Indies could not produce big partnerships in the middle.

24 nations to participate in inaugural Kho Kho WC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 15: Australia, USA, New Zealand, Germany, England, Poland and the Netherlands are among 24 countries that have confirmed their participation in the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup, to be held at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium and Noida Indoor Stadium from January 13-19, 2025.

A total of 24 countries from all six continents will have 41 international teams in the week-long mega event, said Sudhanshu Mittal, president of Kho Kho Federation of India, who is also chairman of the World Cup organising committee.

As many as 21 men and 20 women teams from Europe, Oceania, Asia, Africa, North America and the South American continents will compete

for the world title, which will be held on a league-cum-knockout basis, he added.

He said that 615 players and 125 support staff will take part in the global event. Each team will comprise 15 players, one coach, one manager, and international technical officials.

The USA is the sole team from North America to take part in the championship, while England, Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland will represent Europe. USA will send only men's team while England, Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland will send both men's and women's teams.

Australia and New Zealand will represent Oceania, while Argentina, Brazil and Peru will represent South America. Australia will send both men's and women's teams, while New



Zealand will be represented by a women's team only.

Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda will represent Africa. Kenya and South Africa will

send both men's and women's teams while Ghana will send a men's team and Uganda will send a women's team only. Argentina and Brazil will be re-

resented by only men's teams, while Peru will send both men's and women's teams.

India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, South Korea, and Sri Lanka teams have confirmed their participation from Asia. Among Asian countries, Indonesia will send only the women's team, while all other countries will send both the men's and women's teams.

Mittal said that all teams have shared their scheduled arrivals. Sri Lanka will arrive January 10, while all other teams will arrive January 11 at Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi.

He said that host country India will provide accommodation, catering, and transport facilities to the participating teams during the entire World Cup championship.