



Rashmika's revelation

Actor Rashmika Mandanna shares the special connection she has formed with co-actor Salman Khan

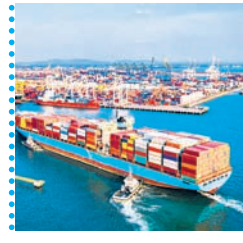
LEISURE | P2



Gaza death toll

The death toll in the Gaza Strip from the 14-month war between Israel and Hamas militants has topped 45,000

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Trade deficit widens

India's trade deficit widens to an all-time high of \$37.84 billion due to record surge in gold imports

BUSINESS | P11



Rousing welcome

Newly-crowned world chess champion D Gukesh returns home to an enthusiastic reception with hundreds of fans lined up

SPORTS | P12

Youth Cong pickets face wrath of bees

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: Several members of the youth wing of the Congress were seen fleeing in panic to escape an attack by a swarm of bees during a protest here Monday.

Holding party flags and banners, the youth Congress activists took out a protest march to gherao the residence of senior IAS officer Bishnupada Sethi here over his alleged involvement in a corruption case, which is under investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

When the youth Congress activists reached near Sethi's house, suddenly, a swarm of bees started attacking them. The agitators started running helter-skelter to protect themselves. Some of the protesters were seen covering themselves with the banners they brought for the agitation. The deployed police personnel and journalists covering the youth Congress protest also faced the bee attack. Many of them laid down on the ground covering their faces to protect themselves from the bees.

After sometime, as the bees went away, the youth Congress activists resumed their protest and engaged in a scuffle with the police when they staged a march towards Sethi's home.

When the police prevented them mid-way, the youth Congress members hurled eggs and tomatoes at the house of the IAS officer. The police detained several protesters.

Notably, the CBI December 10 issued a summons to Sethi, the Principal Secretary of ST&SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare Department in connection with a ₹10 lakh bribery case. Sethi also holds the additional charge as Principal Secretary of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department.

The CBI has arrested three persons including Chanchal Mukherjee, group general manager, Bridge and Roof Construction Company Ltd, Bhubaneswar in this case. P3



STINGS AMID STR: Youth Congress workers try to protect themselves from a swarm of attacking bees during a protest, in Bhubaneswar, Monday

PTI PHOTO

15 PLACES RECORD TEMP BELOW 10 DEGREE CELSIUS

Cold bites Odisha

Eastern India, particularly Odisha, has witnessed some of the most extreme manifestations of climate change in 2024. The region experienced its hottest April on record this year as a heatwave scorched parts of the country amid a general election, bringing down the voter turnout. The following summer months also saw multiple heatwaves testing the limits of human endurance. Beyond the political state boundaries, the geographical region experienced record-breaking heat, with Baripada, in May, becoming the hottest place on the planet, registering temperatures exceeding 50°C. Over the summer, at least 30 people died of heatstroke in the state, as per official data, while many deaths went unreported. However, just months later, the region is facing an unusual coldwave, with temperatures plummeting to near-record lows for this time of year. With erratic weather patterns becoming the new normal, the paradoxical shifts between scorching heat and biting cold highlight the urgent need for adaptive strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change on vulnerable regions like Odisha



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: With a coldwave sweeping across Odisha, 15 places recorded temperatures below 10 degree Celsius with Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district, the coldest in the state at 1 degree Celsius.

The IMD Monday forecast the continuance of the coldwave weather condition for the next two days. The weathermen said that the prevailing cold weather was due to the dry and cold northwesterly winds flowing towards the state.

According to the Regional Meteorological Centre, Bhubaneswar, as many as 15 stations recorded minimum temperature below 10 degree Celsius Monday morning. The Steel City of Rourkela recorded a minimum of 5.7 degree Celsius in the plains, the mercury level fell to 4.8 degree at G Udaygiri in the hills.

No large change in minimum temperature (night temperature)

during next two days and thereafter gradual rise by 3-5 degree Celsius for subsequent three days over the districts of Odisha, the Met office said, adding that cold wave conditions are likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Jharsuguda, Sundargarh and Angul Tuesday.

The weather observatories placed inside Similipal National Park said that the lowest of 1 degree Celsius was recorded at Upar Barakamuda followed by 3 degree Celsius at Chahala, 4 degree C at Nawana, 5 degree C at Barehipani, 6 degree at Guruguria and 10 degree at Ramatirtha in Mayurbhanj district.

Reports of heavy frosting (a thin layer of ice crystals that forms on a surface) were received from different places in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts. The other places which recorded below 10 degree Celsius were G Udaygiri (4.8), Similiguda (5.3), Rourkela (5.7), Phulbani (7), Jharsuguda (7.1), Daringbadi (7.5), Bhawanipatna (7.8), Angul (8), Kirei (8.3), Chipilima (8.4), Keonjhar (8.8), Sundargarh (9), Jagatsinghpur (9.5), Koraput and Dhenkanal (9.6).

The twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack recorded 10.9 degree Celsius and 11 degree Celsius, respectively.

PIL in SC seeks pan-India SOP

Top court asks Centre to reply while appreciating the "plea for common woman"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Supreme Court Monday agreed to examine a plea seeking directions to frame pan-India guidelines for a safe environment for women, children and transpersons.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan issued notice to different ministries of the Centre and its instrumentalities and posted the matter in January, 2025. The bench said the areas lacking in the implementation of "punitive and penal laws" needed to be seen. The notice was issued through the office of the attorney general.

"We appreciate you seeking relief for the common woman, who faces struggle in day-to-day life," said Justice Surya Kant. Senior advocate Mahalakshmi Pavani, appearing for the petitioner

WOMEN'S SAFETY

Supreme Court Women Lawyers Association, said several incidents of sexual abuse against women taking place in smaller cities went unreported and were punished under the carpet.

"After the RG Kar Medical College Hospital incident of Kolkata where a trainee doctor was raped and murdered, around 95 incidents of sexual violence have taken place but were not highlighted," Pavani said, "like Scandinavian countries, offenders should get punishments such as chemical castration".

She also sought a ban on the availability of free online pornographic content by implementing robust safeguards to prevent its dissemination.

The bench said though it will not entertain many prayers mentioned in the petition for

being "barbaric" and "harsh", it would examine "some very innovative" issues.

Referring to one such issue, Justice Surya Kant said the question of maintaining proper behaviour in public transport was worth consideration and there was a need to create awareness when it came to travel in buses, metros and trains.

The dos and don'ts in public utility vehicles need to be publicised, he said. "The issue of proper social behaviour in public transport should not only be taught but needs to be implemented strictly as there were some inappropriate incidents reported from airlines also," the bench said. Pavani said Monday was the anniversary of the horrific 2012 Nirbhaya case, where a 23-year-old woman was gangraped and assaulted in a bus, succumbing to injuries later.

Centre may table ONOE Bill today

New Delhi: A Constitutional Amendment Bill, popularly being referred to as the Bill on 'One Nation, One Election' for holding Lok Sabha and Assembly elections simultaneously, is likely to be introduced in Parliament Tuesday and could be referred to a joint committee of the two Houses.

After tigress Zeenat, Jamuna leaves STR

Baripada: The state Forest department's effort to infuse a fresh genetic pool among the big cats in Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Mayurbhanj district has been pushed into uncertainty as another tigress 'Jamuna' has moved out of the park and strayed into Kuldiha wildlife sanctuary. P5

Tabla legend Zakir Hussain no more



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: Zakir Hussain, the exuberant maestro of tabla who once called the instrument his "mate, brother and friend" and embodied the universality of music in his 60-year career, died in a San Francisco hospital early Monday. He was 73.

Hussain, the globally recognised musician and one of India's most celebrated, was suffering from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a lung disease, his family said in a statement.

Confirmation of the death of the music legend - who cruised through genres, be it western or jazz, with the same ease and mastery with which he drummed out rhythm and magic from the tabla - came after hours of fevered speculation on social media. MORE P2

Inside Assad's abandoned presidential palace in Syria

Rebel fighters and civilians strolled through the grounds of Bashar al-Assad's presidential palace in Syria's capital Damascus last week, stepping on shredded posters of the former dictator who had fled to Russia a few days earlier.

Assad's now-abandoned presidential palace, 'The People's Palace', spans over 3,10,000 sqft area on Mount Mezzeh in western Damascus. The luxurious compound, made up of three six-storey buildings and surrounded by manicured gardens, was a symbol of the dictator's power.

Designed by a Japanese architect, the complex is a relic of authoritarian architecture, with vast, cuboid halls.

Rooms once filled with high-end

furnishings were stripped bare by militants and other jubilant intruders, who roamed the halls with a mix of defiance and glee.

According to a WSJ reporter, who toured the sprawling estate last week, in Assad's abandoned office, his desk and floor were littered with books and papers: a history of the Russian military, a map of north-eastern Syria, a biography of himself. Strips of benzodiazepine anti-anxiety pills were in their packaging on the desk.

On one of the yellowed windows overlooking Damascus, someone had spray-painted, "God damn your soul, Hafez," a reference to Bashar's late father, Hafez al-Assad, who ruled Syria for some three decades.

The palace has at least two



rooms for cabinet meetings: one above ground and one underground. The subterranean room is part of a bunker that appeared to be built for a last stand.

In the cabinet room beneath the palace, brass plates label the

seats for the defence minister and various military commanders. At the table's head, Assad's place is marked: The Commander in Chief. The room is connected to underground living quarters, with a bedroom and

bathroom, as well as accommodations for staff.

The palace afforded a glimpse into the last days of a dictator who for more than a decade used torture, bombings and chemical weapons in a war to suppress a rebellion against him, which began during the Arab Spring protests in 2011.

After a years-long civil war, the regime crumbled in less than two weeks as its allies, Russia and Iran, weren't able to help it stop a rebel advance. Rebels aligned with the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) seized a series of Syrian cities, paving way for a takeover of the capital December 8.

HTS fighters secured the palace after crowds of euphoric Syrians stormed into the com-

plex December 8, carting away furniture and artwork. Some took videos of themselves as they stumbled into a garage full of sports cars, including Aston Martins and a Lamborghini.

Last week, in the entry hall to the wing of the palace housing Assad's office, a rebel soldier with an AK-47 slung over his shoulder meandered with two comrades down a strip of red carpet that bisects a marble floor.

"The nightmare is over," said the soldier, Mustafa Hassan, a former history teacher from the Syrian city of Raqqa who joined the 2011 protests and took up arms in the rebellion. He was later imprisoned by Islamic State when the extremist group took over the city.

WSJ & AGENCIES

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
The day may start with a dilemma, but that's exactly how your skills will come into play. As evening approaches, you will be applauded for your outstanding performance. If Ganesha is particularly generous today, you may sign new agreements.

TAURUS
Priorities and money matters will line up impatiently to knock on your door (and desk). Your financial constraints will get an outburst today. People may be taken by surprise with the way you get poignant. You will also enjoy the higher accountability reposed on you, predicts Ganesha.

GEMINI
Today, you will get an opportunity to rejuvenate yourself with seamless energy. How? Ganesha's guess is that you will find — or at least you will believe that you have found — your purpose in life. It will keep you excited throughout the day, and maybe even for days to come. You may spend lavishly to improve your personal appearance.

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

LEO
You are blessed with a visionary's creative streak. Perhaps, that's why, you see things differently from others. Today, thanks to the stars, your creative side will surge forth with renewed vigour. You will generate ideas effortlessly and continuously as you reach your creative peak.

VIRGO
There will be dirt on your shoulder today, so dust it off, says Ganesha, because every time you fall you will get up stronger than before. Your logic and analytical skills will help you find the necessary precision to accomplish tasks at work. You may spend the evening with a close friend or your beloved, engrossed in a stimulating conversation.

LIBRA
There are many kinds of worries that you must equip yourself to deal with. To do this, you may have to learn and follow the basic steps of problem-solving techniques. The steps involve obtaining facts, analysing them and then arriving at a decision based upon your observations.

SCORPIO
Ganesha feels a taxing and demanding day may be at hand today. Things might baffle you so much that you might lose your ability to think clearly. The battle is not lost because your power of resilience will be the silver lining. Address one problem at a time and take the slow and steady path, advises Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
You will discover a flair for flirting as you puppet words to your romantic will with ease and grace. Most of today will be spent in the company of a loved one, perhaps a picnic for two, or a day-long romantic date. Stay prepared for the worst as this may not necessarily blossom into a long-lasting relationship, warns Ganesha.

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

AQUARIUS
You have your head on your shoulders and feet on the ground. Congratulations! You've covered the first step to success. Step two, says Ganesha, involves an inquisitive mind and a questioning attitude. Later, you may resort to shortcuts and compromise a tad in quality.

PISCES
Your fount of creativity spouts everyday like there is no tomorrow. However, you need to be organised and in position to implement all those revolutionary ideas that occur to you in a jiffy, that lesser mortals take aeons to dream up. Your oratory will win you many admirers today, so let go of your inhibitions, says Ganesha.

KIDMAN ALMOST QUIT AFTER GIVING BIRTH TO DAUGHTER



Hollywood star Nicole Kidman shared that she almost left Hollywood for good in 2008. After moving to Nashville and giving birth to her first daughter with country superstar Keith Urban, the Academy Award-winning actress thought she was "pretty much done" with acting.

HILTON'S SHOW FOR TWO 'SPECIAL FANS'



Reality star and socialite Paris Hilton is singing to two of her adoring fans, her kids. She shared a sweet video, which garners global appreciation, in which she is seen holding a toy microphone and kneeling on the floor next to son Phoenix, and daughter, London.



With members of Indian Jazz fusion band Shakti



With father Ustad Alla Rakha

An Indian who belonged to the globe

The four-time Grammy winner, who collaborated with international artists like George Harrison, John Handy and Van Morrison, was the recipient of countless honours, including Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, the USA's National Heritage Fellowship and Officer in France's Order of Arts and Letters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

His fingers flew, fluttered and floated in quicksilver changes of raga and rhythm, drumming up music and magic. Zakir Hussain was the maestro of tabla, percussionist, composer and even actor — a legend who was India's very own and yet belonged to the world.

The artiste, a marquee name in India and abroad, leaves behind more than 60 years of music. He played on the stage alongside some of the greatest Indian and international musicians in a fusion of Indian classical and world music, giving the tabla a whole new identity.

The great percussionist created music across genres and styles, including in his repertoire jazz and concertos, naturally developing an "all-inclusive musical creativity" after learning and playing under the tutelage of his father and renowned tabla player, Alla Rakha.

"The mindset as I was growing up tuned itself to the idea that music is music, it's not Indian music or that music, so when I actual-

ly started working with musicians who were non-Indian it seemed like a natural handshake," Hussain told this agency almost a year ago ahead of a performance in Goa.

As the son of Alla Rakha, one of the greatest tabla players of all time, Hussain was to the music born.

He started early. The child prodigy performed his first concert at the age of seven and began touring at 12. After completing his education in Mumbai, where he was born, he moved to the United States in 1970.

The borders melted away when it came to his music.

Hussain contributed to many groundbreaking collaborations, including Masters of Percussion, Planet Drum and Global Drum Project with Mickey Hart, Tabla Beat Science, Sangam with Charles Lloyd and Eric Harland, Cross-Curements with Dave Holland and Chris Pot-

ter, in trio with Béla Fleck and Edgar Meyer, and, most recently, with Herbie Hancock.

He is survived by his wife Antonia Minnecola and two daughters, Anisa Qureshi and Isabella Qureshi.

As his countless fans bid farewell to the artiste who transcended boundaries, of music and of geography, and went too soon, many could only say — "Wah Ustad".

Celebs mourn

Mumbai: Ustad Zakir Hussain touched many lives, young and old, people in positions of power and the common man. Such is the impact of one of the greatest tabla players that his demise feels like a personal loss to many. Cutting across the party lines, leaders including President Droupadi Murmu, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoned the death saying he will be remembered as a "true genius" who mesmerised generations of music lovers across the world.

"He was a bridge between the musical traditions of India and the West. I had the privilege of conferring the Padma Vibhushan upon him," Murmu wrote in a post on X.

Paying rich tributes, Prime Minister Modi said, "His iconic performances and soulful compositions will contribute to inspire generations of musicians and music lovers alike. My heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and the global music community," the prime minister wrote on X.

Several members of the film fraternity like Kamal Haasan, Akshay Kumar, AR Rahman, Mohanlal, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Hansal Mehta, and a galaxy of stars shared their condolences on his demise.

Lesser known facts about the maestro

- The composer had reservations against performing at private gatherings.
- He would ask the organisers to close the doors once the performance begins and not allow latecomers.
- The percussionist was once voted the Sexiest Man by women readers of a magazine in 1994 in a competition against the likes of Amitabh Bachchan.
- Besides his work as a tabla player, Hussain also composed music for many movies, including Manto and Mr and Mrs Iyer.
- He also acted in movies such as Heat and Dust, The Perfect Murder and Saaz.

Private gatherings, corporate events or weddings are places where people come to socialise, to drink and perhaps have a meal. That's not the way music should be heard. For me, it's the concert hall or the theatre-people take their seats, the hall darkens and we musicians take our place

ZAKIR HUSSAIN



1951 - 2024



Rashmika's special connection



Mumbai: Rashmika Mandanna, who is basking on recent success in *Pushpa 2*, is also gearing up for her next major projects, including *Sikandar*, alongside Bollywood superstar Salman Khan. In a recent interview, she shared insights about her experiences with Salman, emphasising the special connection she has formed with the actor.

During her conversation with Siddharth Kannan, Rashmika expressed her desire to keep her discussions with Salman Khan. She stated, "Whatever Salman sir and I talk about will always remain between us. I think it's important to hold on to these connections without flaunting them. "Rashmika described working with Salman as a "dream come true," noting his humble and caring nature.

She recalled an incident when she fell ill on set; Salman immediately looked after her by ensuring she received healthy food and warm water. "He's such a special person and so down-to-earth and grounded," she remarked, emphasizing how he made her feel valued during their time together. AGENCIES

Diljit to not hold concert in India

Mumbai: Punjabi superstar Diljit Dosanjh has declared that he won't hold any more concerts in India unless the government improves the country's concert infrastructure. Currently on a multi-city tour, Diljit made this announcement during his performance in Chandigarh recently.

In a fan-shared video from the concert, Dosanjh voiced his frustration over India's 'inadequate' concert infrastructure. Taking centre stage, he addressed the audience and said, "I want to tell the designated authorities that India does not have the infrastructure for live shows. This is a big revenue generating space. It also gives livelihood to many. Please focus on this space as well."

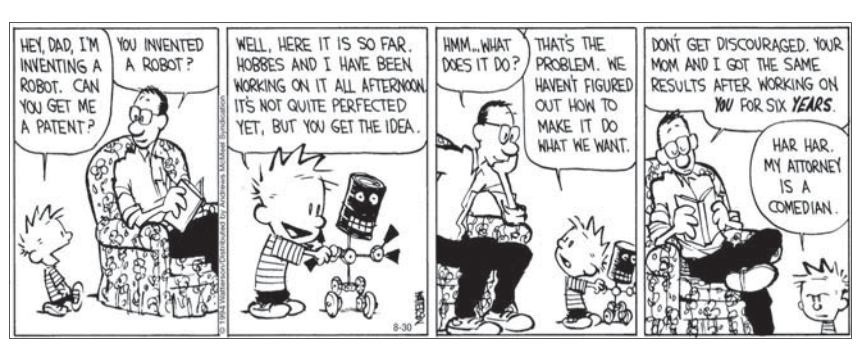
Diljit Dosanjh criticises India's concert infrastructure; says, "I will not perform here until things improve here." "I will try to set up a stage in the middle while the crowd is distributed around it (to improve concert experience)," Diljit said. He further added, "I will not perform shows here until things improve here. Instead of troubling us, improve infrastructure." Dil-concerts faced criticism after tickets were reportedly being resold at exorbitant prices. AGENCIES



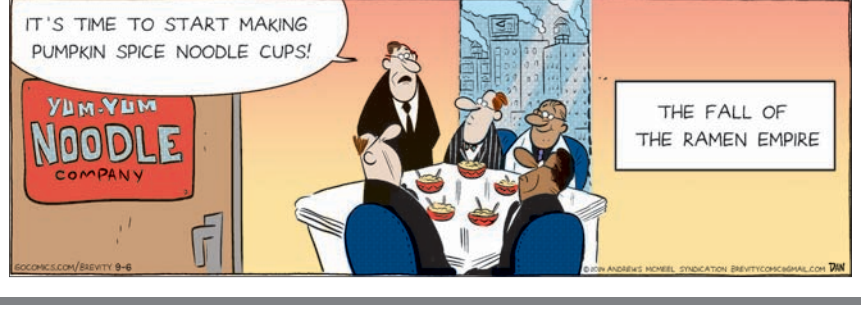
PEANUTS



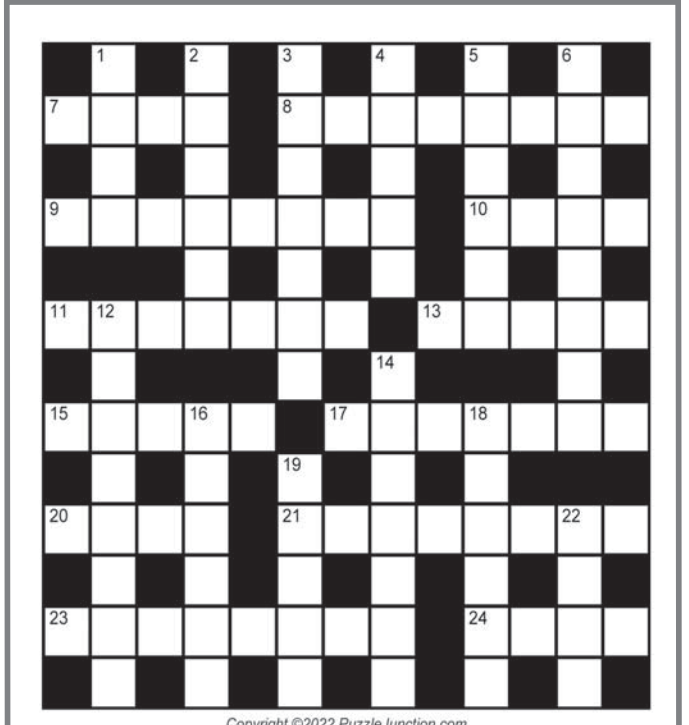
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY

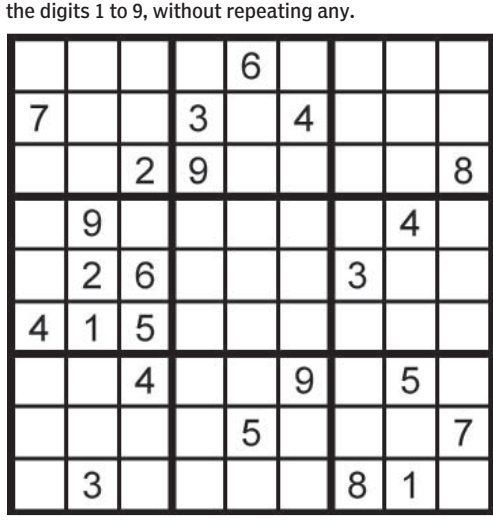


CROSSWORD

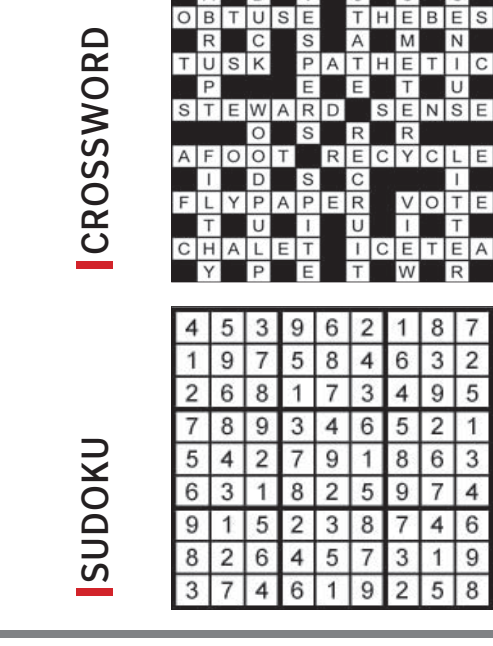


- Across**
- 7 Heavenly body
 - 8 Whiplash preventer
 - 9 Greybeard (3-5)
 - 10 Beer gardens
 - 11 Bantu language
 - 13 Whale food
 - 15 Slightly intoxicated
 - 17 Scavenger (4,3)
 - 20 Scottish dog breed
 - 21 Give-and-take, verbally
 - 23 Child transport
 - 24 Timbre
- Down**
- 1 A young horse
 - 2 Squealer
 - 3 Sewing aid
 - 4 Inner circle
 - 5 Strait-laced
 - 6 Queen of Castile
 - 12 Face fungus
 - 14 Underwater bloodsucker
 - 16 Oration
 - 18 Martial art
 - 19 True health
 - 22 Sicilian erupter

SUDOKU



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Deula Karan servitor Chandra Sekhar Mangaraj carries 'Pahili Bhoga' of the sibling deities of Srimandir for devotees in Puri, Monday



PICTURE: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

downtown

4TH PHASE SUBHADRA INSTALMENT ON HOLD

Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida appeals to beneficiaries to get themselves verified through e-KYC and biometric systems



lakh beneficiaries will get the financial assistance," Parida said.

She also urged people to use Subhadra grievance portal to report issues, if any, they are facing. Additionally, she mentioned that revenue inspectors (RIs) are conducting field verification while Anganwadi workers are visiting villages to ensure proper verification.

"Especially those with land-related issues or discrepancies in their bank and Aadhaar details have been temporarily excluded from the list. The verification team is working to resolve these issues, and beneficiaries are encouraged to submit their correct details to the Subhadra inquiry team. Additionally, people can submit a letter explaining the details of their rejection to the block office," the Deputy CM said.

The Deputy CM also informed about action taken against common service centres (CSCs) for violating Sub-

hadra Yojana norms. "As many as 52 CSCs have been blacklisted for dereliction of duty and police complaints filed against 14 CSCs for allegedly receiving money from Subhadra Yojana applicants," she added.

Over 80.45 lakh women beneficiaries have received financial assistance under the scheme so far.

Significantly, the state government has already disbursed Rs 5,000 each to about 60 lakh beneficiaries in two phases. While around 25 lakh women received the money in the first phase, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the scheme September 17, the amount was credited to 35 lakh bank accounts in the second phase October 9.

In the third phase, around 20 lakh women received the payments under the flagship scheme of the state government, which aims to cover over 1 crore women.

Under the scheme, all eligible beneficiaries aged between 21 and 60 years will receive Rs 50,000 over five years – from their rejection to the block office," the Deputy CM said.

While the state government had initially planned to release the funds for the fourth phase December 25, the verification process has caused the delay.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: Deputy Chief Minister and Women & Child Development Minister Pravatī Parida Monday said that the fourth phase of the first instalment of Subhadra money, which was scheduled to be disbursed December 25, has been put on hold as the verification process of the beneficiaries is yet to be completed.

"The release of the fourth-phase money for the first instalment, scheduled for December 25, has been put on hold because the verification process is still underway," said the Deputy Chief Minister.

She appealed to the beneficiaries to get themselves verified through e-KYC and biometric.

"This is the last chance for them. In this phase, over 20

CM HEARS GRIEVANCES



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday held a session here where he heard the grievances of the people.

It was held at the office of

the Chief Minister's Grievance Cell. After reaching there, Majhi went to the about 30 differently-abled persons gathered and heard their grievances. He asked officers concerned for their redressal.

About 1,000 persons had registered their grievances at the portal of the cell.

Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra, Co-

operation Minister Pradip Balsamant, Forest Minister Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia and Rural Development Minister Rabi Narayan Naik also heard the grievances of the people.

BJD's organisational elections in January

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: The Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Monday announced that its organisational elections would be held next month.

The announcement was made by former minister Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak, convener of BJD's membership committee.

"BJD president Naveen Patnaik has instructed us to hold the organisational elections in January," Nayak told reporters. Stating that the membership drive has been going on smoothly, he said the party is likely to meet its target by December 21. The BJD has set a target to enrol 1 crore members.

Nayak said that after the drive is completed, BJD's coordination committee chairperson Debi Prasad Mishra will verify the list of members.

"Mishra will submit a report to the party president. After that, the final list of members will be released. The membership drive can continue after the organisational elections also," he said, adding that ward committees have been formed in many places. Patnaik continues to remain the president of the party since its formation December 26, 1997.

Odisha Police to get new cybercrime wing: CM

STATE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO ESTABLISH CYBER POLICE STATIONS IN ALL DISTRICTS

PNN & AGENCIES

Cuttack, Dec 16: The state government has been planning to set up a new cybercrime wing within Odisha Police to meet the new age challenges, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said Monday.

Addressing the valedictory session of the 69th Police Duty Meet here, Majhi said cyber fraud, digital arrest and investment fraud were increasing every day.

"Keeping this in mind, our government is determined to strengthen and modernise the cyber cell of the police department. For this, a goal has been set to establish cyber police stations in all the districts. Apart from this, a cybercrime branch will be created in the state for high-level investigation and monitoring of cyber-crimes with a senior officer in charge," Majhi said.

He also expressed concern over low conviction rates in crimes against women. "The main reason for the low conviction rate is the lack of professional investigation and the severe lack of political will in



the past," Majhi said, adding that the state's conviction rate should at least be taken to the national average.

"For this, the state government is setting up more women's courts. A policy decision has been taken to set up women's courts in four districts. Now, the police will investigate professionally and scientifically, and give irrefutable evidence," he said.

The CM said the state government has zero tolerance towards violence against women.

From the programme, Majhi inaugurated new police stations at Astaranga, Balanga and Delang in Puri district.

He said modernisation of the police force, reforms in the police system, infrastructure for investigation and trained human resources are need of the hour.

"A half-prepared police force will become a textbook for catching and punishing criminals," he said, noting that all police stations will be provided with the required number

The main reason for the low conviction rate (in crimes against women) is the lack of professional investigation and the severe lack of political will in the past. The state's conviction rate should at least be taken to the national average

MOHAN CHARAN MAJHI | CHIEF MINISTER

of vehicles for policing.

He said that in order to enhance the efficiency of the force, the state government has decided to fill about 5,000 posts.

The CM lauded the police for successfully solving some cases recently.

Majhi also asked the police to focus on 'criminals who are trying to create chaos in the society in a planned manner'.

"The protection that was given to such criminals earlier will no longer be given. Take strict action against them," Majhi told the gathering of senior officers.

10 injured as bus overturns in Khurda



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: At least 10 passengers of a private bus were injured after the vehicle overturned in Khurda district Monday, police said.

The incident took place near Baghamari early in the morning. The Bhubaneswar-bound bus coming from Bargarh had 60 passengers on board.

Around 3am, the speeding vehicle hit a roadside utility pole and overturned, a police officer said. The injured passengers were rescued and admitted to Khurda district headquarters hospital, he said.

It is suspected that the accident took place either because the driver fell asleep or he could not see the electric pole due to fog, the officer said, adding that further investigation is underway.

First in Odisha: 8 convicted of killing elephant for tusks

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: In a first in Odisha, a local court in Boudh Monday convicted eight persons of killing an elephant and removing its tusks for pecuniary gains in the district in 2016.

The convicts were identified as Babuli Mahalik, Panchanan Kanhar, Manoranjan Pradhan, Murali Mahalik, Gopal Naik, Prakash Behera, Dharmaraj Nayak, Subhaya Pradhan, and Manmath Kanhar. However, the trial against Gopal was abated due to his death during the proceedings.

All the accused were convicted under Sections 29, 379 and 34 of the IPC, Section 9(B) of the Indian Explosives Act, Section 4 of the Explosive Substances Act, Section 51 of the Wildlife Protection Act, and Section 27 of the Odisha Forest Act.

CJM-cum-ASJ of Boudh Bisweswar Biswaprakash Ray awarded five-year rigorous imprisonment (RI) to Murali, Babuli, Prakash and Dharmaraj and also slapped a penalty of

Rs 5,000 on them for offenses under Section 4 of the Explosive Substances Act.

They were also sentenced to RI for three years and a fine of Rs 10,000 for offences under Sections 379 and 34 of IPC, RI for three years and a fine of Rs 10,000 for offences under Section 429 of IPC, and RI for one year and a fine for offences under Section 9(B) of the Indian Explosives Act. All sentences will run concurrently, the court said.

The court issued non-bailable warrants (NBW) against the other accused, who are on the run.

According to the prosecution, at around 11am June 1, 2016, after receiving reliable information from the DVF team about the suspicious movement of nine individuals in Mundeswari reserve forest of Boudh, a team of the Boudh police conducted a raid.

During the operation, nine individuals were intercepted, and elephant tusks, arms, explosives, and gunny bags were recovered from their

possession.

During search, three SB-ML guns were recovered from Manoranjan, Gopal and Prakash, an axe from Babuli and a gunny bag containing eight pieces of elephant tusks from Panchanan Kanhar.

"A bag containing explosive materials, three small bottles, two syringes, pellets, a search light, a battery, a charger and a screwdriver were recovered from Murali," the prosecution said, adding that during investigation, all the suspects confessed to killing the elephant and removing its tusks to sell them for monetary gains.

The trial against the accused involved the examination of 22 witnesses and the submission of 19 documents by the prosecution.

This marks the eleventh case handled by the Special Task Force (STF) of the Odisha Police where accused have been convicted under the Wildlife Protection Act. To date, trials have been completed in 11 wildlife-related cases, all resulting in convictions.

BJD yet to decide on Dhankhar no-trust move

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: Odisha's Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD), headed by former chief minister Naveen Patnaik, has not taken any decision on the proposed no-confidence motion by the INDIA bloc against Rajya Sabha (RS) Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar.

An RS member of the BJD, however, claimed that the party is with Dhankhar, also the Vice President. BJD MLA Dhruba Sahoo, considered close to the decision-makers in the party, said they have not yet taken any decision in regard to the move against the RS chairman.

"The BJD still maintains equal distance from both the NDA and INDIA. The BJD MPs have all along opposed the NDA government's stand in the RS," Sahoo said.

BJD RS MP Niranjan Bisi said the party is with Dhankhar. "We do not feel that the RS Chairman has been working beyond the ambit of the Constitution or democracy," Bisi told reporters here.

Neither Sahoo nor Bisi is a spokesperson of the party. BJD president Naveen Pat-

BRIBERY CASE

CBI COURT SENDS TOP PSU OFFICIAL, 2 MORE TO PRISON

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: A CBI court Monday remanded three persons including group general manager of the Central public sector unit Bridge and Roof Company (India) Limited, Chanchal Mukherjee, to jail custody in a bribery case.

They were produced before the court after their five-day CBI custody ended.

Apart from Mukherjee, the CBI had arrested contractors Santosh Moharana and Debadutta Mohapatra after catching them red-handed taking bribe of ₹10 lakh inside a car near a star hotel here December 7.

The Central agency has also issued summons to senior IAS officer Bishnupada Sethi.

Mukherjee's lawyer Rajesh Mishra said he applied for bail for Mukherjee which will be heard December 18.

Meanwhile, senior officials of the CBI visited the agency's Odisha office and took stock of the investigation made so far.

The CBI has meanwhile arrested the three persons and

grilled drivers of Sethi, a senior IAS officer posted as 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.

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."

On October 19, 2024, Sethi wrote to Mukherjee regarding assignments of projects for upgrading an ashram school to a high school and a high school to a 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.

Youth Cong: Raise age limit for govt jobs to 43

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: A delegation led by National General Secretary of Indian Youth Congress Smruti Ranjan Lenka Monday urged Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja to extend the upper age limit to 43 years in government jobs in the state.

In a memorandum to Ahuja, Lenka said, "We are writing to request the state government to consider raising the upper age limit for candidates applying for state government jobs to 43 years. As you are aware, there have been significant challenges faced by youths, particularly in the recent years, which have affected their ability to pursue and complete academic qualifications in a timely manner."

He said, "Several factors, including socio-economic conditions, health-related issues, and disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, have led to delays in the educational journey for many aspiring candidates. Additionally, the increasing competitiveness of exams and recruitment processes often means that even after completing formal education, many individuals are unable to apply for government jobs due to the existing age restrictions."



naik last week had said that his party was examining the matter related to the no-trust motion against Dhankhar.

BJP MP Rudra Narayan Pani said that his party would not hesitate to welcome the BJD's decision if it supports the RS Chairman and opposes the INDIA bloc's move.

In a first, parties of the Opposition INDIA bloc spearheaded by the Congress December 10 submitted a notice in the RS for moving a no-confidence motion against Dhankhar, accusing him of being "extremely partisan" in his role as the Chairman of the Upper House.

The BJD has seven members in the Upper House of Parliament after two of its MPs resigned, joined the BJP and got elected to the RS.

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	27.8°	25.5°
Min Temp	10.9°	11.0°
Humidity	51%	78%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
Mainly clear sky

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VAR.
SENSEX	81,748.57	↓ 384.55
NIFTY	24,668.25	↓ 100.05
DOLLAR	85.03	↑ 0.15
EURO	89.22	↑ 0.21
GOLD	₹76,580	↓ ₹12
SILVER	₹91,250	↑ ₹211

CLASSIFIED
LOST

I, Banita Kumar, W/o Sananda Kumar Nag, R/o Anand Nagar, Balangir Town, P.O.-Rajendra College, Dist.- Balangir have passed the ICSE Examination- 2010. I was issued with a Board Certificate along with Mark Sheet vide Roll No. P/3524/063 and +2 Commerce Mark Sheet and Certificate vide Roll No. B/8270/007, ISC Examination-2012. Both are through The Assembly of God School, Jharsuguda, Odisha. That the original pass certificate - cum - Mark sheet as mentioned above has been eaten by white Ants and the same are beyond recovery.

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an Affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate (P), Uditnagar, Rourkela I, Damodara Behera, R/o. D/197, Sector-20, Rourkela, Dist. - Sundargarh, Odisha declared that my daughter Sradhanjali Behera passed in the year 2024. But in pass certificate of ISCE, New Delhi vide unique ID No.8070288 where my wife's name inadvertently recorded as Priyadarshani Behera instead of her actual name Priyadarshini Behera. I am swearing this affidavit to make necessary correction.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Puri vide affidavit No. 14AA 518676 dated 13.12.24. I, K. Dharendra Patra, S/o. K. Shyam Sundar Patra, Talanuasahi, Ps-Kumbharapada, Post/Dist-Puri- 752001, Odisha my passport entered as Dharendra Patra, S/o-Shyam Sundar Patra. As per my Aadhaar and Pan Card K. Dharendra Patra, S/o- K. Shyam Sundar Patra is one and same person for all purposes. Sd./- K. Dharendra Patra

BMC, Oil India Ltd to establish biogas plant



State-of-the-art facility to promote sustainable waste management and clean energy production

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: In a move towards sustainable waste management and environmental conservation, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has signed a MoU with Oil India Ltd to establish a 200 TDP (Tons per Day) compressed biogas (CGB) here Monday.

The advanced facility, to be developed at a cost of ₹175 crore, will be constructed on an 8-acre site at Meherpalli in Bhubaneswar. Construction is expected to be completed within two years.

Speaking at the event, Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra

Mahapatra highlighted the plant's transformative potential. "The facility will process 200 tons of biodegradable waste daily to produce 8-9 tons of compressed biogas. With capacity expansion, it will scale up to 17 tons of biogas daily, along with generating 15 tons of organic manure daily. This will support sustainable agriculture and clean energy adoption," he said.

The minister added that the project is designed to accommodate the City's growing waste management needs. With Bhubaneswar's population projected to reach 1.38 million by 2027, waste generation is expected to rise to 1,000 TPD. The plant's scalable design ensures it can meet future demands without requiring additional infrastructure.

"The initiative aligns with compliance under SWM Rules 2016 and CPCB guidelines, ensuring environmentally safe operations," Mahapatra noted.

He also announced plans to establish seven more biogas plants across the state includ-

Plant to be developed at a cost of ₹175 crore, will be constructed on an 8-acre site at Meherpalli in Capital

The facility will process 200 tons of biodegradable waste daily to produce 8-9 tons of compressed biogas

ing Puri, Konark, Cuttack, Rourkela, Berhampur, Sambalpur, and Boudh.

BMC Commissioner Rajesh Prabhakar Patil emphasised the project's alignment with the City's vision of becoming a "zero-landfill city." He remarked, "This landmark initiative underscores our commitment to environmental sustainability, innovative waste management, and collaboration with key stakeholders," Patil said.

Housing and Urban Development department secretary Usha Padhee described the partnership as a testament to the balance between environmental conservation and urban development. "This collaboration demonstrates that progress, sustainability, and people's well-being can coexist harmoniously," she said.

Oil India Ltd managing director Ranjit Rath highlighted the multifaceted benefits of the project, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, creating job opportunities, and providing a clean, renewable energy source.

In addition to producing compressed biogas, the plant will generate organic fertilizers, promoting sustainable farming in the region. The initiative supports India's renewable energy goals while reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

KiiT Int'l School marks 10th Foundation Day of SEN Globe



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: KiiT International School marked the 10th Foundation Day of its Special Educational Needs (SEN) Globe initiative, celebrating with inspiring speeches from prominent dignitaries, including Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy and KiiT and KISS founder Achyuta Samanta.

As the chief guest, Speaker Padhy praised SEN Globe for its unique contribution to inclusive education. She encouraged parents of children with special needs to embrace their roles as a noble opportunity to make a difference. Highlighting the importance of vocational training, Padhy shared her experiences from Australia, where special education programmes empower children through skills like toy-making. She urged teachers and therapists to remain dedicated to their work, emphasising that children with special needs are also valuable nation-builders.

self-reliant and contribute meaningfully to society," she said.

Samanta, emphasising the rights of special children, highlighted SEN Globe's approach as the only program in the country that integrates special needs students with their peers in a mainstream school setting. "Here, children with special needs are taught alongside regular students, not in isolation," Samanta stated. He also shared that 10 students from SEN Globe have advanced to higher education at KiiT University, underscoring the program's success.

KiiT International School chairperson Monalisa Bal stressed the importance of inclusive education, fostering a sense of belonging for all students. KiiT and KISS President Saswati Bal congratulated parents and teachers for their contributions to shaping the futures of special children.

The event also featured the school's first-ever investiture ceremony, where the newly-elected Head Boy and Head Girl received their badges from Speaker Padhy.

The programme concluded with the felicitation of eminent educators UN Dash and Haresh Mishra for their significant contributions to education.

Red Swastik donates 120 electronic prosthetic hands

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: The Red Swastik Odisha Chapter, in collaboration with the Inali Foundation, organised a special event at the Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Auditorium Monday to mark World Disability Month.

During the event, electronic prosthetic hands were distributed to 120 differently-abled individuals, and 60 blankets were provided to those in need. The ceremony was graced by Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, who attended as the chief guest.



Speaking at the event, Singh Deo expressed his gratitude for being part of the occasion. "I am grateful to be part of this programme. The work done by the Red Swastik organisation is truly remarkable, and I assure my full support for any future endeavours, not just as Deputy Chief Minister but also as KV Singh Deo," he said.

Utkal Chamber of Commerce president Prabodh Mohanty also praised the efforts of Red Swastik, acknowledging the organisation's ongoing initiatives to uplift marginalised communities. Red Swastik Odisha secretary Debasish Pattnaik highlighted the impact of the organisation's work and its contributions to society.

Narasingha Panda to get Bagdevi Samman-2024

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: Eminent Sanskrit scholar Narasingha Charan Panda has been selected for the prestigious Bagdevi Samman-2024 by the Keshab-Subhadra Foundation.

The award recognizes his remarkable contributions to the preservation and promotion of Sanskrit, as well as his efforts to spread its knowledge globally.

Panda's illustrious career spans decades of teaching and research. Currently serving as the Dean of the School of Languages and Professor in the department of Sanskrit at the Central University of Odisha (CUO), he also holds the position of acting Registrar. Additionally, he has served in key roles such as acting vice-chancellor and acting finance officer of the university.

His academic journey includes significant tenures at Banaras Hindu University and Panjab University, earning him widespread admiration in the academic community. Panda's international contributions are also noteworthy, with four years of service as a Professor in Thailand and Mauritius, where he displayed exceptional expertise in Sanskrit scholarship.

Subhransu receives Akshaya Upanyasa Puraskar for 'Itara'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: "A book can't change society directly, and I cannot guarantee that writing a novel will bring about any significant change. However, literature has always served as a catalyst for change. It can fuel the idea of transformation," said Odia author Subhransu Panda after receiving the Akshaya Upanyasa Puraskar 2024 for his acclaimed novel 'Itara' Monday.

Panda received the prestigious award from the Pratibha Ray Foundation Trust. Instituted in 2021 by renowned Indian author Padma Bhushan Pratibha Ray in memory of her late spouse, the award includes a plaque, a certificate, and a cash prize of ₹51,000. It is presented annually to an Odia novelist under the age of 50.

'Itara', published by Odisha's leading publishing house Pen In Books, is a groundbreaking work. The novel is the first Odia literary work to address



LGBTQ+ issues, focusing on the life struggles and plight of transwomen in Odisha.

The award ceremony, organised by the Pratibha Ray Foundation Trust and presided over by Ray, attracted a large gathering of writers and readers.

Itara narrates the life journey of Gobinda, a Kinnara (eunuch/transgender), and explores the struggles of many Kinnaras through this one character.

Throughout the novel, Gobinda adopts multiple identities, including Baba, Tila, Gopi, Leena, and Kareena, despite society, including her own family, urging her to live as Gobinda. The author captures the emotional and social challenges faced by trans individuals in a compelling narrative.

State-level e-Governance workshop begins at NIC

Three-day workshop focuses on the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing governance and welfare schemes in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: A three-day state-level e-governance workshop kicked off at the Dr N Sheshagiri Memorial Hall of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in Bhubaneswar Monday.

Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja inaugurated the event, which showcased innovations by young NIC scientists through 14 exhibits featuring models and simulations powered by artificial intelligence (AI).

Addressing the gathering, Ahuja highlighted the trans-



formative potential of AI in enhancing welfare schemes at both the central and state levels. He encouraged the participants to explore innovative uses of AI to improve efficiency and effectiveness in governance.

Chief electoral officer RS Gopalan, the guest of honour, discussed the role of AI in governance, particularly focusing on its application in policy intelligence and ensuring safety in generative AI systems.

The workshop drew enthusiastic participation from NIC scientists, District Informatics Officers, and staff, who engaged in discussions on integrating AI into future projects. During the event, the 'Project Profile for the Year 2025' and a booklet titled Gov. AI Exhibition were unveiled by the dignitaries.

Deputy Director General and State Informatics Officer Ashok Kumar Hota presided over the programme.

Tailor's tag on shirt helps police to crack a murder case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Dec 16: A tailor's tag on a blood-stained shirt found near the crime scene helped the Odisha Police to crack a mysterious murder case and arrest three people, an officer said.

The police December 13 recovered the body of a 35-year-old woman on the banks of Kathjodi river in Cuttack under Kandarpur police station.

The deceased remained unidentified and nobody lodged any complaint at any police station in the state. The police had no clue other than getting a weapon of offence—a chopper. It was a big challenge for the police to crack the case, said

Cuttack DCP Jagmohan Meena.

Meena said though tattoos were found on both the hands of the deceased woman, they could not help her identification. One blood-stained shirt and pant were found on the water body near the spot. It was found that both the wearing apparel had a tag of 'New Star Tailors' stitched, he said.

"This clue was focused upon. Around 10 tailors with this name or similar name in Odisha were verified and their tag design was compared with the tag of the shirt and pant found at the spot. However, there was no match found. A tailor in Ganjam district informed that such kinds of tags are being used in



Gujarat," Meena said. The DCP said the Gujarat

police was contacted and they found such a tailor in Surat

The tailor's tag had a number '3833' which was matched and upon search, it was seen that the shirt was stitched for one person named 'Babu'.

"There was no other detail available. However, the tailor gave one important clue that he had to return ₹100 to the customer 'babu' but he did not have the change. So, he transferred ₹100 on the e-wallet of one mobile number. That number was contacted and it was found that he is a friend of 'babu'.

"Details of 'Babu' were received. He was found to be Jagannath Duhuri (27) @ Babu @ Bapi of Kendrapada. It was found that he (Babu) was going back to Surat by train. The train

was passing through Rayagada when he was nabbed," Meena said.

On further verification and interrogation, it was found that he was the brother-in-law of the deceased. He also revealed that he committed crime with the help of his brother Balaram Duhuri and cousin Hapi Duhuri. All three have been apprehended, police said.

"Balaram Duhuri was the husband of the deceased woman. The motive of the crime is chronic marital dispute between the deceased and her husband. Balaram doubted that the deceased was having an extra-marital affair with someone," the DCP said.

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MISCREANTS OPEN FIRE AT FOREST VAN IN RAYAGADA

POST NEWS NETWORK
Muniguda, Dec 16: A vehicle carrying Forest department Special Task Force (STF) sleuths and personnel from the Muniguda forest range came under fire near Jarapa Chhak in Rayagada district while transporting five arrested accused involved in ivory smuggling, officials said Monday. Police said four rounds were fired at the van by unidentified miscreants, shattering the vehicle's windshield and the windshields of another vehicle trailing it. However, no one was hurt in the incident. Police said acting on a tip off, the joint team of STF and Forest personnel raided a location

between Patraguda and Bhu-rasikhuma villages Saturday and seized two pieces of ivory. Five suspects who were trying to negotiate the sale of the banned wildlife articles were taken into custody. A case was registered in this connection and the accused were to be produced in the court Monday. However, while transporting the accused to the court, the vehicle carrying forest personnel and the accused was blocked by some miscreants near Jarapa Chhak before they fired four rounds. The Forest department and the Muniguda police have launched separate investigations into the incident, Rayagada ACF Sandeep Prusti said Monday.

Croc census: Bhitarkanika to remain shut from Jan 14

RAJNAGAR: The Bhitarkanika National Park under this block in Kendrapara district will be shut for visitors from January 14 for the annual crocodile census, a report said Monday. The nine-day ban on entry of tourists into the park will come into effect January 14 and continue till January 22, 2025 in view of the annual census of saltwater crocodiles, Rajnagar DFO Sudarshan Gopinath Yadav said. The census will be carried out under the direct supervision of DFO where enumerators assisted by trained local Forest staff and herpetologists, including noted crocodile researcher Sudhakar Kar, would cover the Bhitarkanika river system. Besides, innumerable creeks, water bodies and nullahs will also be covered during the exercise, he added.



SOCCER TOURNEY: Players of Radharaman Club, Cuttack and YDC, Manipur struggle for the ball at the 6th All India Invitation Football Tournament held at the Dhenkanal Stadium Monday. Radharaman Club, Cuttack won the match by 2-1 goals
OP PHOTO

After Zeenat, Jamuna moves out of Similipal

UNCERTAINTY HANGS OVER TIGER GENETIC DIVERSITY IN THE PARK

POST NEWS NETWORK
Baripada, Dec 16: The state Forest department's efforts to infuse a fresh genetic pool among the big cats in Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district has been pushed into uncertainty as another tigress, 'Jamuna', has moved out of the park and strayed into Kuldiha wildlife sanctuary in Balasore district. The incident comes days after tigress 'Zeenat' who had been relocated from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra moved into the forests of neighbouring Jharkhand. Sources said Monday that Jamuna, who had also been relocated from Maharashtra, crossed the Similipal Tiger Reserve Sunday night and reached Kuldiha in neighbouring Balasore district. The development has only added to the difficulties of Forest department personnel who are on their toes and spending sleepless nights to make Zeenat return to Similipal. Zeenat has been roaming in Jharkhand's forests for the past eight days and is showing no signs of returning to Similipal. Sources said Forest personnel are actively tracking both the big cats. Experts believe that lack of suitable habitats within Similipal might be driving the tigresses to explore nearby forests. Regional Chief Wildlife Warden and Field Director of Tiger Conservation Project,



Prakash Chand Gogineni, confirmed that both Zeenat and Jamuna are being tracked to ensure their safety. The tigresses were relocated to Similipal from Maharashtra as part of an initiative to boost big cat population and bring change in their genetic diversity in the reserve. However, their recent movements away from the sanctuary have raised concerns about the viability of these efforts. Zeenat has been observed in Jharkhand's Chiabandhi, Machhapada, and Rajabasa forests, approximately 40 kilometers from Similipal, since December 8. Forest officials from Odisha and Jharkhand are monitoring her movement round the clock with a team of 15 personnel, including three trained teams from the Similipal Tiger Conservation Project. Side by side, Yamuna left Similipal and made her way into Kuldiha wildlife sanctuary via Sukhuapata hill under Kap-



Road mishap: Boy killed, mother & brother critical

NAYAGARH: A 10-year-old boy was killed while his mother and elder brother were critically injured after a speeding car ran over them on Bolangir-Khordha NH 57 near Kumbharabada village under Banigochha police limits in Nayagarh district Monday morning, police said. The deceased has been identified as Shubhankar Nayak, while the injured are Jyotsnarani Nayak and her elder son Subham Nayak, 12. According to reports, Jyotsnarani along with her two sons was trying to cross the road (NH 57) in front of her house to go to their farmland on the other side when a speeding car (Regd No- OD 03 V 7430), heading towards Sonepur, hit them. In the impact of the collision, while Subhankar died on the spot, Jyotsnarani and Subham sustained critical injuries. They were later admitted to the Nayagarh district headquarters hospital (DHH) where they are stated to be in serious condition. The Banigochha police have seized the car and detained the driver for questioning. The body has been sent for post-mortem.

Extreme cold wave sweeps Rourkela

POST NEWS NETWORK
Rourkela, Dec 16: With intense cold wave sweeping across Sundargarh district, night temperature is dipping considerably, making life extremely hard for the residents. Blinding fog during evening and early morning coupled with mild cold breeze, especially during the wee hours and dusk, is causing temperature to fall considerably. Veterans say the present weather condition has brought alive memories of the Steel City in the olden days. Sources in the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) Environment department said while December 13 the minimum temperature recorded in the City was 11.4 degrees Celsius, it was 11.0 degrees Celsius December 14, and 10.1 degrees Celsius December 15. The lowest in the season of 9.7 degrees Celsius was recorded December 16 morning, indicating the gradual



fall of temperature. At the same time, in Sundargarh the mercury dipped to 9 degrees Celsius, while Bonai shivered at 7.5 degrees Celsius. City resident Khokan Pradhan said, "I was driving back home from Rajgangpur in my car when it showed 9.9 degrees Celsius on my digital dashboard at around 10 pm as I neared the Bagbudi basti area." Other motorists also narrated similarly. Another resident, who has a weather thermometer at home, said, "My device showed 9 degrees Celsius when I went to drop my daughter in the school bus in the morning. I saw the same

reading on my car's dashboard." The extreme cold condition has rendered roads in the City wear a deserted look after 8 pm. "Guests at my son's wedding reception hurried back home early because of the intense cold wave. By 9.30 pm the function was over," said Dr Prabhat Mallick, a noted historian from the City. Bonfires have become a common sight in the morning hours as pavement dwellers, homeless people and stray animals huddle around to get respite from the biting cold and dew. Elsewhere in the district, major urban centres like Sundargarh, Talsara, Rajgangpur, Biramitrapur and Bonai are experiencing intense cold wave. The mining town of Koira, also known for its extreme winter, saw dews solidifying into snowflakes a couple of days ago. "It looked like a white sheet spread across the entire area as mercury dropped considerably low," said a Koira resident.

Satellite survey flags land discrepancies

POST NEWS NETWORK
PADDY PROCUREMENT IN SUBARNAPUR
Sonepur, Dec 16: As the procurement of Kharif paddy began in Subarnapur district Tuesday, an increasing number of suspected land discrepancies have been reported following farmer registrations and subsequent satellite surveillance. During the 2023-24 Kharif season, more than 24,000 suspected land discrepancy cases were reported. After the government announced purchase price of ₹3,100 per quintal of paddy, the number rose to 32,000 this year. By Thursday evening, 27,698 of these cases had been flagged following field verification. Sources said the irregularities were revealed through satellite surveys, which identified registered lands that did not have paddy cultivation. Some areas, including barren plots, roads, ponds, and reservoirs, were falsely listed as cultivated for taking benefits of government paddy procurement. The majority of the suspected cases were received from Biramaharajpur, Ulunda, and Binka blocks, where women's self-help groups (SHGs) were allegedly involved in registering non-cultivated lands. For the 2024-25 Kharif sea-

son, approximately 80,000 hectares of land in Subarnapur district have been reported as paddy cultivated. Around 68,824 farmers are registered with Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) and women SHGs to sell their paddy. However, allegations of fraudulent registrations surfaced, with claims that some individuals were attempting to sell paddy from non-cultivated lands at government rates. Revenue inspectors, agricultural staff, PACS secretaries, SHG leaders, and irrigation department employees flagged suspicious registrations during field inspections. Sources said due to limited staff to investigate thousands of hectares, some discrepancies remain unresolved. To improve accuracy, the government conducted an additional satellite survey. After surveying 866 villages across six tehsils, 32,346 plots were identified as non-cultivated. Satellite data was cross-verified by 307 field staff, including PACS and SHG officials. By Thursday evening, 31,911 plots (99%) had been surveyed, confirming non-cultivation on several of them. Farmers involved in false registrations have been denied paddy sale tokens.

AN INVESTOR EDUCATION AND AWARENESS INITIATIVE
Do join us to learn more about Mutual Funds.
Date and Venue:
Thursday, 19th December 2024; 6:30 p.m. onwards.
at Hotel New Marrion, 6, Janpath Road, Industrial Area, Kharvela Nagar, Bhubaneswar - 751 002, Odisha.
For registration, please contact:
Manas Mohanty, Mobile: 99370 26801 / Sanket Swaroop, Mobile: 99370 81778.
Registration is compulsory. The registration time will be from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
No walk-ins will be allowed.

HDFC MUTUAL FUND
An Investor Education and Awareness Initiative
Visit [https://www.hdfcfund.com/information-learn-how-to-know-more-about-the-process-to-complete-a-one-time-know-your-customer-\(KYC\)-requirement-to-invest-in-mutual-funds](https://www.hdfcfund.com/information-learn-how-to-know-more-about-the-process-to-complete-a-one-time-know-your-customer-(KYC)-requirement-to-invest-in-mutual-funds). Investors should only deal with registered Mutual Funds, details of which can be verified on the SEBI website (www.sebi.gov.in/intermediaries.html). For any queries, complaints & grievance redressal, investors may reach out to the AMC's and / or Investor Relations Officers. Additionally, investors may also lodge complaints directly with the AMC's, if they are unsatisfied with the resolutions given by AMC's they may raise complaint through the SCORES portal on <https://scores.gov.in>. SCORES portal facilitates investors to lodge complaint online with SEBI and subsequently view its status. In case the investor is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaints raised directly with the AMC's or through the SCORES portal, they may file any complaint on the Smart ODR on <https://smartodr.in/login>.
Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

Bank of India
Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, Jaydev Vihar, Bhubaneswar-751015
CORRIGENDUM
With reference to the "Gold Auction Notice" published in "The Orissa Post" on 14.12.2024, the Last Date for deposit of dues by the borrower(s) should be read as "26.12.2024" instead of "23.12.2024" and the auction will be held at Concerned Branch Premises on "27.12.2024" instead of "24.12.2024". All other Facts will remain unchanged.
Dt.16.12.2024 Zonal Manager, Bank of India

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, KEONJHAR WILDLIFE DIVISION, ANANDAPUR
A/PO - Salapada, Dist. - Keonjhar, Pin - 758020, Telephone - 06731 - 220322, e-mail id : dfo.keonjharwl@odisha.gov.in
e-Procurement Notice for SMC works Identification No.
Bid Identification No. DFO-KJR WL-03 of 2024-25
TENDER CALL NOTICE
No. 6096 / Dt. 13.12.2024 //

1. Name of the work : Construction of Wire Mesh Loose Boulder Check Dam under OMBADC (Compensation Money).	2. Total No. of works : 12 (Twelve) Nos. (Percentage rate Tender)	3. Estimated cost : Approx. Estimate Cost 5.15 lakhs to 16.84 lakhs.	4. Class of Contractor : 'C' Class & 'D' Class.	5. other Details :
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding	Last date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender : Divisional Forest Officer, Keonjhar Wildlife Division, Anandapur
1	2	3	4	5
Divisional Forest Officer, Keonjhar Wildlife Division, Anandapur	On line DFO-KJR WL-03 of 2024-25	20.12.2024 From 10:00 A.M.	30.12.2024 up to 5:00 P.M.	29.12.2024 up to 3:00 P.M.
				31.12.2024 11.30 A.M.
				1% of Estimated Cost

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in and www.tenders.ori.nic.in
Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer, Keonjhar Wildlife Division, Anandapur
OIPR-08042/11/0024/2425

Country-made pistol, ammo seized; 2 held

POST NEWS NETWORK
Rourkela, Dec 16: During the ongoing crackdown against illicit firearm trade in the City, the Sector-3 police here arrested two persons and seized a country-made pistol and live ammunition from their possession Sunday night. SDPO Pushpanjali Ningi identified the arrested accused as Vicky Choudhury, a resident of Sector-6, and Sumit Ranjan Rout, who lives in Sector-15 area of the Steel City. Giving details of the case, Ningi said Sunday night a team from Sector -3 police station, led by SI Rabin-dra Bhoir, received information that a deal on illegal firearm was going to be finalised in the area. Accordingly, separate teams were formed

which mounted patrolling at various places. Late in the night, one of the teams patrolling near Sector-4 Hanuman temple spotted a speeding Suzuki Maruti Wagon R approaching from Sector-6 direction. The cops immediately stopped the vehicle. During a search of the vehicle, they found a loaded country-made pistol, some live bullets and a magazine along with two mobile phones. The two occupants of the car, Vicky and Sumit, were rounded up and taken to the police station. Vicky, during questioning, alleged-

ly told the cops that he got the pistol from one of his relatives and had plans to sell it off to another person. Describing the seizure as a 'big success', Negi said, "We are going to further intensify our crackdown against illegal firearms and narcotic drugs supply activities. The culprits will be dealt with severely." She however, refrained from divulging more details about Sunday's seizure saying it would hamper further investigations into the case. "We are trying to bring the prospective buyer and the person from whom the firearm and ammo had been procured to justice," she said. Significantly, this is the first time in the City that a firearm has been seized from ordinary citizens having no criminal antecedents.

Bank of India
Zonal Office : Star House, 1/1D, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015
POSSESSION NOTICE
[Rule-8(1)] of security Interest (Enforcement) Rules-2002
Whereas the undersigned being the **Authorised Officer of Bank of India** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower / Guarantor in the loan account given below to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice plus interest & expenses thereon within 60 days from the date of the said Notice.
The Borrower/Guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Guarantor and the Public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The Borrower / Guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Bank of India, Paradeep Branch** for an amount mentioned below with interest & other expenses thereon, less the amount repaid after the date of the said Notice.
The Borrower/Guarantor's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the Secured Assets.

PARADEEP BRANCH Name & Address of Borrower / Guarantor	Liabilities due as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice/Date of Possession	Description of the Immovable Property
Borrower/Mortgagor: Mrs Geetanjali Sahoo, Guarantor: Mr Ranjan Kumar Sahoo, both are addresses at Plot No.1743, Udayabata, Paradeep Garh, Paradeep, Jagatsinghpur- 754142.	Rs.20,40,323.90 + interest, & expenses thereon	25.07.2024 11.12.2024	All that part and parcel of property consisting of land and building situated over Khata No.666, Plot No.1532/1743, Area: Ac.0.04 dec. Kisan: Gharabari, at Mouza: Udaybat, Udayabata, Paradeep Garh, Paradeep, Jagatsinghpur- 754142.

SRO: Kujanga situated within the Registration District of Jagatsinghpur, in the name of Mrs Geetanjali Sahoo, Bounded by North- Govt. Land, South- Satyabrat Rout, East- Bikram Senapati, West- Road
Place : Bhubaneswar, Date : 16.12.2024
Authorised Officer, Bank of India

FOCUS TECHNOLOGY

CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP



With AI and other new technologies evolving rapidly, lifelong learning will become the new normal. The process can be divided into developing skills that meet immediate needs, anticipate future needs, and furnish always-in-demand expertise

the US provide free training in AI to young learners. And while this process may begin in the classroom, we can also expect to see more opportunities for upskilling as the relevant technologies evolve. For anyone who wants to stay competitive in the job market, lifelong learning has become indispensable.

Finally, AI and automation technologies can make existing education platforms far more effective, as we are likely to see in 2025. AI-powered solutions have reached a tipping point from being a nice-to-have to a must-have. Educators, whether in schools or other organisations, will find new ways to apply AI-powered tools to personalise and tailor learning experiences, understand students' needs and match them with relevant courses, or enhance coaching and feedback.

The same technologies can also enhance customer-service aspects of education. For example, at IBM, we have already seen the benefits of using AI to analyse feedback from more than 60,000 learners in 47 languages, which led us to simplify online registration and other parts of the process. In the coming years, education systems and platforms will also benefit from multimodal AI models that can process audio, video, charts, and images to provide an even more effective, individualised learning experience.

By embracing AI, we can enhance learning and professional outcomes, improve operational efficiency, and reduce costs across the economy. But all of that will require developing the skilled workforce we need.

The writer is Vice President and Chief Impact Officer at IBM.
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could expose companies to a wide range of security, compliance, and reputational risks. In addition, the workforce will need AI ethics skills to manage new AI agents: tools that can automate complex tasks that would otherwise require human resources.

Shadow and agentic AI both demand new guardrails to help users protect AI applications based on responsible AI practices. To this end, education providers will begin to emphasise training on the fundamentals of AI explainability, fairness, robustness, transparency, and privacy. Without a basic understanding of how AI models generate their output, for example, those responsible for protecting data or controlling autonomous systems will be ill-equipped for the task.

With AI and other new technologies evolving rapidly, lifelong learning will become the new normal. The process can be divided into developing skills that meet immediate needs, anticipate future needs, and furnish always-in-demand expertise.

Many traditional roles

within an organisation will soon change. For example, some employees who currently work independently (who don't manage other people) may join new types of teams in which humans manage AI agents. And to prepare them for this fundamental change, demand for online courses and digital credentials in AI-related fields like natural language processing and machine learning will likely increase. Moreover, the future use of quantum computing will continue to drive the need for new skills. And the steady rise in the number and variety of cyberattacks – such as “harvest now and decrypt later” (HNDL) hacks – underscores the importance of up-to-date cybersecurity skills.

That is why our organisation is working with community colleges across four US states to offer a new cybersecurity certificate that will prepare students for in-demand roles across the workforce. Similarly, our collaborations with Singapore Polytechnic and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in

With artificial intelligence poised to reshape industries worldwide, a paradox is emerging. Despite growing demand for people with the knowledge to leverage the technology's potential, AI-related skills remain in short supply.

The scarcity of AI-related skills – from proficiency in machine learning, prompt engineering, and data science to an understanding of AI's ethical implications – is becoming a major obstacle to deploying the technology effectively. In one recent report, 47 per cent of executives say their employees lack the necessary skills. This will affect companies' ability to move AI projects from conception to implementation. A 2023 report from the World Economic Forum finds that “six in 10 workers will require training before 2027, but only half of workers are seen to have access to adequate training opportunities today.”

This skills gap bodes ill not only for individual career growth, but also for economic growth more broadly. Capitalising on the opportunities that AI presents will require updated approaches to education and training. In the coming year, educational and vocational institutions will likely place a much greater emphasis on teaching AI ethics skills, offer flexible lifelong learning, and infuse AI into their offerings to be more competitive.

AI ethics skills will become a core concern – and for good reason. In the space of just a few years, generative AI has become available to anyone with a computer and an internet connection. For employers and their information technology (IT) departments, this raises the problem of “shadow AI,” or unsanctioned use of generative AI by employees, which



Justina Nixon-Saintil

AI-POWERED SOLUTIONS HAVE REACHED A TIPPING POINT FROM BEING A NICE-TO-HAVE TO A MUST-HAVE

Middle East Opportunity

The collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria is not an isolated event in the Middle East, but part of a vast realignment of forces in the region. The new changed scenario gives rise to the possibility of growth of democracy but it is also to be understood that no external force has the capability to alter this extremely complex and violent region. Some considered an opportunity for change did come in 2003 when Saddam Hussein was ousted from power in Iraq. But, it was a futile exercise. The US invaded Iraq on the pretext of unearthing weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It was incapable to help install a pluralist, if not democratic, regime in Baghdad that looked after the interests of the Iraqi people. Instead the destruction of the Saddam reign sowed seeds of long-lasting chaos.

Twenty-one years on, the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime and his inglorious escape, mainly under pressure from Islamists flaunting nationalist credentials, have once again brought the Middle East on the cusp of violent change. The situation is such that it may once again lead to devastating disorder, but all the same it offers an opportunity to review the region. The new beginning can be made from Syria which has been witnessing massacres comparable to the worst inhumanities known in history since the regime of Hafez al-Assad, father of Bashar, started in early 1970s.

On the other hand, the Israeli army's attacks in Gaza and Lebanon have triggered widespread criticism for their brutality and crime against humanity. However, these war crimes have considerably weakened the Palestinian militia and Hezbollah, which appear to have been greatly crippled as the axis linking it to Tehran via Syria and Iraq is now cut off. Herein lies a hope for the emergence of a political alternative in the Palestinian camp, the restoration of institutions in Lebanon and the formation of a new political balance in Damascus. Rosy as this picture may seem, every one, deep down, knows that the redness of the rose is due to it being dipped in blood.

There are signs of other changes taking shape too. The Shi'ite Iranian regime does not look as strong as it did months back and is now seeking common ground with its great Sunni and Wahabi rival Saudi Arabia. In November, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman referred to Iran as a “sister republic” and advised Israel to respect its territorial integrity. The ruler of Riyadh has also reverted to the kingdom's traditional position which emphasises normalisation of relations with Israel on condition that a Palestinian state is created. It is to be seen if this gets traction in the Arab world.

The cry that is resonating in the Middle East at the moment is the need for realignment, stabilisation and détente. The peoples of the region aspire to achieve these goals after decades of futile attempts but the world is aware that a keg of gunpowder seeking warmth from a fire would certainly be disastrous.

The main groups that have benefited most from the recent developments in the region are the Syrian Islamists, their Turkish sponsor and Israel. The three must walk the extra mile for durable peace and development of the region. The new forces ruling Syria need to respect the complex ethnic mosaic in the country, while Turkey should stop the persecution of its Kurdish enemies by respecting its territorial sovereignty. Likewise, Israel should realise it is time to end the carnage in Gaza, the escalation in the West Bank, the bombing campaign against the fallen regime's military sites in Syria, and by avoiding unnecessarily provocative gestures including attempts to take control of the Syrian Golan buffer zone it occupies.

However, any optimism in this regard must be tempered since the past actions of these three players do not inspire much confidence. Yet, Middle East watchers point to the three protagonists who need to be pragmatic so that a possible roadmap can be chalked out to create a new order for the establishment of some kind of order that has so long eluded the region and probably will continue to do so in the future too if nothing is done at junctures such as prevailing now.

WISDOM CORNER

Man is fond of counting his troubles, but he does not count his joys. If he counted them up as he ought to, he would see that every lot has enough happiness provided for it.
FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

You are the sum total of everything you've ever seen, heard, eaten, smelled, been told, forgot - it's all there. Everything influences each of us, and because of that I try to make sure that my experiences are positive.
MAYA ANGELOU

Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough.
OPRAH WINFREY

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1663:** Nzinga, a Mbundu queen, died in Matamba. Today she is considered the “mother of the nation” in Angola.
- 1790:** Discovery of the Aztec calendar stone. Also known as the Stone of the Five Eras, the sculpture was excavated in Mexico City.
- 1807:** With Napoleon's decree of Milan, all neutral countries and allies of France were forbidden to trade with Britain.
- 1892:** The first issue of Vogue was published; initially a weekly high-society journal, it became a hugely influential American fashion and lifestyle magazine.
- 1903:** Flight of the Wright brothers. On this day in 1903 near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first successful sustained flights in an airplane—Orville first, gliding 120 feet (36.6 metres) through the air in 12 seconds.

LOL INEXPERIENCED COP

A rookie police officer was out for his first ride in a cruiser with an experienced partner. A call came in telling them to disperse some people who were loitering. The officers drove to the street and observed a small crowd standing on a corner. The rookie rolled down his window and said, “Let's get off the corner people.”

A few glances, but no one moved, so he barked again, “Let's get off that corner... NOW!” Intimidated, the group of people began to leave, casting puzzled stares in his direction. Proud of his first official act, the young policeman turned to his partner and asked, “Well, how did I do?” “Pretty good,” chuckled the vet, “especially since this is a bus stop.”

SPECTRUM HEALTHCARE

Lessons from a flawed model

The killing earlier this month of Brian Thompson, the CEO of United Healthcare, a leading health insurance provider in the US, has led to an outpouring from the American public. There is sympathy for the shooter, even praise for the act, and an embracing of the message of the killing in three words marked out on the bullets that took Thompson's life: “deny”, “delay”, “defend.”

The three 'd's have become a shorthand, almost an anthem for critics who note that insurance companies are failing patients by denying or delaying claims and defending their actions with all their corporate might so that people in the midst of medical issues give up. This is part of the corporate strategy that drives profits of insurers, high salaries to employees and bonuses for CEOs like the late Thompson.

This is the rough edge of a healthcare system that is overly complex, largely privatised and intensely competitive with profits that make it the top two or three most profitable sectors in the US. Health and medical insurance and hospitals together had total profits of an estimated \$267 billion in 2024, jointly making it the

third most profitable industry in the US, according to global research firm IBISWorld. McKinsey in a report put out in Jan. 2024 estimated that “healthcare profit pools” would grow at a 7% CAGR, from \$583 billion in 2022 to \$819 billion in 2027.

This is a system that India and the world needs to be wary of. An overly profit orientation in a sector where care should be the currency points to all the things that should not be the way the health sector operates. It is instructive that the rage that is now pouring out was under the surface and seen in bits and parts for a long time.

Consider that two years ago, the slain CEO posted a message on LinkedIn that said: “Making health care more affordable ... (is) more important than ever right now. Reducing drug prices and improving price transparency are two ways we are working to lower costs for UnitedHealthcare members.”

The comments below that post were eye-popping. One wrote: “... I have stage four metastatic lung cancer. We've just left UHC because of all the denials for my meds. Every month there is a different reason for the denial. As of today, we are well over our max out-of-pocket

for the year with having spent well over \$20,000. Since we are in our 60s - we don't have time to recoup that.” Many others echoed the anger though the post also recorded several “likes”.

The frustrations in the US on healthcare carry important lessons for India because of worries that we may be tilting to the US model. This will be (if it is not already) disastrous in India, where the healthcare system is even more broken. Here, claimed world class care and high standards with the best doctors deliver rising costs that bring care for the rich and leave out the rest. As such, the Indian system carries many more burdens than that seen in the US. According to India's National Health Accounts Estimates 2021-22, the Out-of-Pocket Expenditure as a percentage of Total Health Expenditure is almost 40%.

To be sure, the American system still works quite well for many. Medications are prescribed and paid for, unlike in the Indian system. No hospital can turn away an emergency, irrespective of insurance or the capacity to pay. Hospitals do not demand an advance as is actually the norm at almost all hospitals in India.

The frustration of Indians is first at the denial of care in itself for those who cannot afford the high fees. For others, it is the inflation of doctor consultation charges, the rising room rents in hospitals and in many cases the growing disenchantment with the profession itself and the way patients are treated. Insurance costs have grown dramatically, and the elderly are routinely denied coverage in India, or coverage costs are prohibitive.

If an avowedly capitalistic order that obtains in the US can see a revolt the way it has this time, then at the very least India needs to be wary of going close to the US system. Consider Japan at the other end of the scale, where universal healthcare coverage arrived in 1960s. Almost all treatments are covered, most services are inexpensive with a systematic long-term care insurance system.

There are lessons we must reject and new ones we need to learn in India when it comes to critical areas like health.

The writer is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR. Views are personal.
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Jagdish Rattamani

THERE ARE LESSONS WE MUST REJECT AND NEW ONES WE NEED TO LEARN IN INDIA WHEN IT COMES TO CRITICAL AREAS LIKE HEALTH

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 their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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

Wizard of rhythm

Sir, The passing away of Ustad Zakir Hussain, the globally revered tabla virtuoso, is an irreparable loss to the field of music. Known for his amazing finger-work and rhythmic brilliance, Zakir Hussain brought the tabla to a global stage, collaborating with some of the world's finest musicians. His gargantuan contribution to music was recognised with Padma awards and the Sangeet Natak Akademi award. On the global stage, he was a four-time Grammy Award winner. His unparalleled skills earned him the reputation of a “fearsome technician” and a “whimsical inventor,” as The New York Times remarked in a 2009 review of his Carnegie Hall performance. Beyond his musical prowess, Zakir Hussain's life was a testament to the power of dedication, passion, and cultural exchange. His influence extended beyond the concert stage, as he mentored countless young musicians and left an indelible mark on the world of music education. His collaborations spanned various genres, from traditional Indian classical music to jazz, rock, and film scores, making him a true ambassador of global musical harmony. As fans, fellow musicians, and admirers around the world mourn his loss, Zakir Hussain's legacy remains a lasting symbol of the power of music to transcend borders and unite people across cultures.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Honking menace

Sir, The deafening noise of bikes and four wheelers is causing severe noise pollution. The high decibel sound with silencers removed is also posing a threat of shock hazard to the aged and becoming worrisome to young children and creating nuisance in the sensitive areas around educational institutes and hospitals. The RTO and police authorities should pay heed to these facts and view the issue seriously and may amend the law enabling it to cancel the license of those resorting to such callous acts. Honking should only be used to alert others of an imminent danger or to prevent accidents. Honking unnecessarily should be strictly prohibited and violators should be penalized.

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

Himachal plans underwater tunnel in Govind Sagar Lake

The underwater tunnel bridge will not only connect the city directly to the four-lane road but it will also become a centre of attraction for tourists

Bilaspur (HP), Dec 16: The Himachal Pradesh government is exploring a proposal for building an underwater tunnel in Gobind Sagar Lake to connect Bilaspur city to four-lane road between Kiratpur and Manali, said Technical Education Minister Rajesh Dharmani Monday.



Interacting with a group of reporters here, he said the tunnel will be built from Luhnu Maidan to the four-lane road. If the plan becomes fruitful, it will not only prove to be a lifesaver for Bilaspur city but will also be the first bridge in the country to be built inside a lake.

Govind Sagar Lake reservoir in Una and Bilaspur districts of Himachal Pradesh is about 56 km in length and 3 km in breadth.

After the construction of Kiratpur-Manali four-lane road, Bilaspur city has lost its connection with the main road. This has resulted in the slowing down of economic activities here. Construction of the bridge will also provide a new path to traders and industrialists.

The underwater tunnel bridge will not only connect the city directly to the four-lane road but it will also become a centre of attraction for tourists. If there are possibilities of bridge construction, experts and consultants from Germany will be hired for the ambitious project, he said.

"The bridge will be constructed using Germany's advanced immersion tunnel technology and tunnel boring machine. In immersion tunnel technology, parts of the tunnel will be built on land and installed under the lake."

"It will be made safe and durable by digging below the lake bed with a tunnel boring machine," he said.

A team of experts will be formed to assess the possibilities of the project. If the plan is found to be feasible, it will be proposed for budget under the Setu Bharatam scheme of the central government. Several hundred crore rupees are estimated to be spent on the project, the minister said.

Keeping in mind the environmental balance, advanced and sustainable German technology will be used in this project which will write the story of the revival of Bilaspur, Dharmani.

If this project comes to fruition, it will become an example not only for the state but also for the entire country, he added.

12TH ANNIVERSARY OF NIRBHAYA HORROR

AAP, BJP spar over women's safety

KEJRIWAL ACCUSES CENTRE OF FAILING TO ENSURE WOMEN'S SAFETY IN DELHI



Participants at AAP's 'Mahila Adalat' in New Delhi, Monday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: AAP supremo and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Monday accused the BJP-led Centre of failing in its responsibility to ensure women's safety and maintain law and order in the national capital.

Addressing a 'Mahila Adalat' event at Thyagaraj Stadium, Kejriwal claimed that unlike the BJP which does not treat women's safety as a priority, his government has fulfilled

all its promises. "Ten years ago, you gave me the responsibility to improve schools, hospitals, and water supply in Delhi, and I have done my work. But you gave the responsibility of security to BJP and Amit Shah, who has failed," Kejriwal said.

"Delhi's women are not a vote bank for me; I see them as my sisters and mothers. I have done everything within my power to ensure their safety. Before AAP came to power, there were no CCTV cameras

The 'Mahila Adalat', held on the 12th anniversary of the 2012 Delhi gang rape that led to stricter anti-rape laws in the country, saw hundreds of women raising slogans like 'Nirbhaya Amar Rahe' and 'Mahila Shakti Zindabad'

in the city. We installed CCTV cameras and appointed bus marshals to enhance people's security," Kejriwal added.

Responding to Kejriwal's allegations, the BJP took a swipe at AAP, saying the party should first act on its MP Swati Maliwal's complaint of alleged harassment by Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar.

The BJP also criticised AAP for inviting Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav for the 'Mahila Adalat', alleging that his father, the late Mulayam Singh Yadav,

once defended those who commit crimes against woman.

"Arvind Kejriwal, who established women's courts should have delivered justice to Swati Maliwal by expelling Bibhav Kumar. Also, inviting Akhilesh Yadav for the 'Nirbhaya Day' programme is an insult to her memory. Kejriwal seems to have forgotten that Akhilesh Yadav's father Mulayam Singh Yadav once defended boys who commit crimes against women, saying 'boys make mistakes'. Does Kejriwal have the courage to ask Akhilesh Yadav to apologise to the country's women for his father's comments," the BJP asked in a statement.

The 'Mahila Adalat', held on the 12th anniversary of the 2012 Delhi gang rape that led to stricter anti-rape laws in the country, saw hundreds of women raising slogans like "Nirbhaya Amar Rahe" and "Mahila Shakti Zindabad". Survivors of sexual assault shared their harrowing experiences at the event, with several breaking down while addressing the crowd.

A short video highlighting crimes against women modelled after the television programme "Aap Ki Adalat" was screened on the occasion, which accused Union Home Minister Amit Shah of inaction on women's safety.

Coming ahead of next year's Assembly elections in Delhi, the event was attended by INDIA bloc ally Akhilesh Yadav, Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, among others.

Anti-pollution measures return in Delhi

GRAP 4 RESTRICTIONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Centre's air quality panel for Delhi-NCR Monday imposed the strictest Stage 4 curbs under the winter air pollution control plan, including a ban on all construction activities, as the region's air quality deteriorated to 'severe' due to unfavourable weather conditions.

Stage 4 curbs under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) for winters also include a ban on the entry of polluting trucks carrying non-essential goods into Delhi and mandatory shifting of school classes, except those for X and XII, to hybrid mode.

Delhi's 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI), which was 379 at 4 pm, breached the 400 mark around 10 pm amid extremely calm wind conditions and the buildup of an inversion layer, which adversely affects the vertical mixing height - the height up to which pollutants can disperse.

The decision to impose Stage 4 curbs came just hours after the Commission for Air Qual-



ity Management (CAQM) implemented restrictive measures under GRAP Stage 3, following Delhi's AQI breaching the 350 mark in the afternoon.

According to the revised GRAP schedule, classes for students in grades VI-X and XI in Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddha Nagar must operate in hybrid mode (physical and online) under Stage 4.

Classes up to grade V are re-

quired to shift to hybrid mode under Stage 3. Parents and students have the option to choose online education wherever available.

Stage 4 also includes a ban on all construction and demolition activities, including public projects like highways, flyovers, power lines, and pipelines. Non-essential diesel trucks are prohibited from entering Delhi. Public, municipal, and pri-

vate offices must decide on allowing only 50 per cent of staff to work in offices, with the remaining staff working from home. States may consider additional measures like closing colleges, non-essential businesses and implementing odd-even vehicle restrictions.

Under Stage 3, imposed earlier in the day, the use of BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel cars (4-wheelers) is restricted in Delhi and nearby NCR districts. Persons with disabilities are exempt. Stage 3 also bans non-essential diesel-operated medium goods vehicles with BS-IV or older standards in Delhi.

The Delhi and NCR state governments have been asked to stagger timings for public and municipal offices under Stage 3. The Centre may consider similar measures for its offices in Delhi-NCR.

During winters, Delhi enforces restrictions under GRAP, which categorises air quality into four stages - Stage I (Poor, AQI 201-300), Stage II (Very Poor, AQI 301-400), Stage III (Severe, AQI 401-450), and Stage IV (Severe Plus, AQI above 450).

HP: MIN TEMP RISES IN HIGHER REACHES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Dec 16: The minimum temperature rose by three to five degrees Celsius in the higher reaches of Himachal Pradesh, even as intense cold wave conditions gripped the lower hills with the weather remaining dry Sunday.

State capital Shimla was the warmest during night, recording a minimum temperature of 12.2 degrees Celsius, 6.5 degrees above normal, while Tabo in Lahaul and Spiti district was the coldest at minus 10.6 degrees Celsius.

Shimla's adjoining tourist resorts Kufri and Narkanda recorded minimum temperature at 9.8 degrees Celsius and 6.4 degrees Celsius, respectively, while Una in the lower hills recorded a low of 0.2 degree Celsius, followed by Sundernagar at 0.6 degree Celsius.

The local Met office Sunday issued a yellow warning of cold wave at isolated places in the lower hills and plain areas till Thursday, besides dry weather in the state over the next seven days.

The cold wave conditions would prevail in Una, Hamirpur, Bilaspur and parts of Kangra district, the Met department said.

Old age homes prep to protect residents

MERCURY DROPS IN DELHI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: As cold wave conditions prevail in Delhi, the city's old age homes have started taking measures to ensure the safety and comfort of their residents.

A nutritious diet, daily sun exposure, thermal blankets and insulated flooring are among several steps the old age homes have taken to protect elderly people who are more susceptible to cold-related illnesses like hypothermia.

Sai Sahara Old Age Home founder member Rajeshwari Mishra said, "Individuals aged between 60 and 90, are more susceptible to cold-related illnesses such as hypothermia

and respiratory issues. It's essential to ensure that they are warm and breathing comfortably." Residents are being encouraged to spend time in the sun daily and boost their Vitamin D levels, he told PTI.

"We have stopped serving certain cold foods like curd and included chyawanprash and seasonal foods in their diet," he said.

Geeta Basin, a caretaker at Nirmal Chhaya Old Age Home, said, "Our old age home is situated on a farmhouse with 30 rooms, currently housing 18 elderly residents aged between 68 and 90. Being an open space, the home allows for long hours of sun exposure during the day."

Food festival brings flavours of Northern Himalayas to platter

'Culinary Tales from Northern Himalayas' showcases traditional recipes passed down through generations, originating from the high-altitude kitchens of Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Nepal

'Chicken Sadeko'. Currently underway at Hyatt Regency Gurgaon, "Culinary Tales from Northern Himalayas" showcases traditional recipes passed down through generations, originating from the high-altitude kitchens of Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Nepal.

Whether it's 'Nadru Monje' (crispy lotus stem fritters), 'Tamatara Chaman' (cottage cheese dish), or 'Aloo Palda' (potatoes in yogurt gravy), the rotating menu curated by Chef Kuldeep Rawat celebrates the rich and diverse culinary heritage of the northern Himalayan region.

It offers guests a unique opportunity to savor authentic dishes that are often overlooked in mainstream dining.

For non-vegetarian lovers, the specially handcrafted menu include lip-smacking appetisers like 'Pahadi Kaleji' (lamb liver cooked dry with minimal spices), 'Shapaley' (a Tibetan shal-



low fried bread stuffed with meat) and 'Satpuli Machhi Pakoda' (fish fritters).

"The Northern Himalayas are a treasure trove of unique, bold, and complex flavors that often go unnoticed. Through this fes-

tival, I am thrilled to bring the hidden recipes of the region to life. Each dish has its own narrative, shaped by the geography, culture, and traditions of the area."

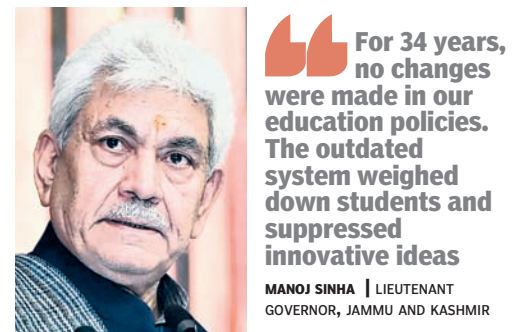
"This festival is an attempt

to weave a culinary tale of flavors that truly represents the essence of the cuisine, and I'm excited for guests to experience it firsthand," the chef said in a statement.

The main course, an eclectic mix of choicest vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes, boasts of 'Gadan Machha' (garhwal fish preparation in yellow mustard paste), 'Chainsoo' (black gram curry with spices), 'Bhey' (spicy Himachali lotus stem preparation), 'Yakhani Paneer' (cottage cheese in tangy yoghurt sauce) and 'Dogri Khatta Mutton' (tangy mutton curry cooked with dry mango powder), among others, with a choice of rice in options such as 'Zafrani Pulao' and Himachali rice and vegetable preparation.

Sinful desserts like 'Bal Mithai', 'Gajar Halwa', 'Kheer' and more are also on offer to give a befitting end to the sumptuous meal.

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, RANPUR. QUOTATION CALL NOTICE. Quotations in separated sealed covers are invited from the intending Transport Agency/Supplier/ Vehicle Owners for supplying 03 (three) nos. of Tractor with Trolley & two (2) nos. of LCV(Light Commercial Vehicle) on monthly hire basis to Ranpur NAC. The quotation along with all valid documents shall be received in the office of the Notified Area Council, Ranpur through Regd. Post/ Speed Post or by person from Dt.17.12.24 to Dt. 26.12.2024 by 1.00 P.M. The same will be opened on Dt.26.12.2024 at 3.00 P.M. in presence of the quotationers or their authorized representative, if any. The quotation received beyond the schedule date and time will not be considered at all.



For 34 years, no changes were made in our education policies. The outdated system weighed down students and suppressed innovative ideas

NEED TO EXPAND TRADE BETWEEN INDIA, ARMENIA: PRESIDENT MURMU

Recalling centuries-old cultural linkage between India and Armenia, President Droupadi Murmu said Monday that there is a need to expand bilateral trade between the two countries. During a meeting with a parliamentary delegation from Armenia, she noted the close cooperation between the two countries at global multilateral fora



of the day quote

Dallewal himself has written an open letter to the prime minister raising 13 demands, including the legal guarantee to MSP, but the government seems unwilling to listen to the farmers

Whenever Congress party loses (elections) it blames others rather than introspecting. Until they introspect, they will keep losing

Not only for India, but for the entire democratic world, this day marks the liberation of people from oppression

'JAI SHRI RAM' SLOGAN INSIDE MOSQUE

How is that an offence?: SC

Supreme Court seeks Karnataka govt's response on appeal against HC order quashing case against two accused of trespassing in Badriya Juma Masjid and shouting 'Jai Shri Ram'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Supreme Court Monday asked how raising the slogan of "Jai Shri Ram" a criminal offence. A bench of Justices Pankaj Mishra and Sandeep Mehta made the observation while hearing a plea challenging the Karnataka High Court's order quashing the proceedings against two persons for allegedly shouting "Jai Shri Ram" inside a mosque.

tioned the complainant how the persons, who allegedly came inside the mosque and shouted the slogan, were identified. The plea challenged a September 13 high court order, which quashed the criminal proceedings against two persons in the case. "How do you identify these respondents? You say they are all under the CCTV," the bench asked senior advocate Devadatt Kamat, who was appearing for the petitioner.

though the investigation in the case was incomplete. The bench said the high court observed the allegations did not touch the ingredients of Section 503 or Section 447 of the IPC. While Section 503 of the IPC deals with criminal intimidation, Section 447 pertains to punishment for criminal trespass. Referring to the complaint, Kamat said an FIR was not an encyclopedia of offences. When the bench asked, "Have you been able to identify the ac-

tual persons who entered the mosque?" Kamat said the state police would have to explain it. The bench asked the petitioner to serve a copy of the plea to the state and posted the matter in January, 2025. The high court in its order said, "It is understandable as to how if someone shouts 'Jai Shriram' it would outrage the religious feeling of any class."

The apex court also questioned the complainant how the persons, who allegedly came inside the mosque and shouted the slogan

Observing there was no allegation the incident alleged had caused public mischief or any rift, the HC said, "The complaint itself narrates that the complainant has not even seen who is the one who is alleged to have committed offence of criminal intimidation attracting ingredients of section 506 of the IPC." The HC order was passed on a plea filed by two persons, who were alleged to have entered a mosque and shouted religious slogan, seeking quashing of the FIR and proceedings against them in the case.

SNIPPETS

SC says 'cool, fashionable' drug culture dangerous

New Delhi: Observing drugs consumption in popular culture was propelling youngsters towards a dangerous lifestyle, one that incorrigibly applauded drugs use as "cool" and a "fashionable" display of camaraderie, the Supreme Court Monday said the approach was not to demonise but to rehabilitate them. A bench of Justice BV Nagarathna and Justice N Kotiswar Singh made the remark while pronouncing a judgment on the bail plea of a man accused in a case involving 500 kilogram of heroin smuggled from Pakistan to India. "We implore the youth to take charge of their decisional autonomy and firmly resist peer pressure and desist from emulation of certain personalities who may be indulging in drugs," the bench said. The arc and web of drug trade cannot be permitted to corrode the shine of the youth of India, it noted further. The apex court said the approach towards the victims of drug abuse must not be to demonise them but rehabilitation.

Demolition of Delhi Public Library: Land grabbers must be dealt with iron hand, says SC

New Delhi: "Land grabbers must be dealt with iron hand," the Supreme Court Monday said, as it promised to "go deep to find the truth" on how a century-old building housing a public library at Karol Bagh was demolished. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan was irked after being informed it was not the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) that demolished the building in 2018, but an official who had acted on an oral order. The top court was further displeased when it found no one from the Delhi Library Board was present to contest the case and no counsel was authorised to appear in the matter. "Land grabbers must be dealt with iron hand," the bench told senior advocate S Muralidhar, appearing for private firm Dimple Enterprise, which is the owner of the property and reportedly wanted to construct a commercial complex in place where once the building stood.

Probe against Amazon, Flipkart: SC says all pending cases should go to Karnataka HC

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Monday said the petitions of e-commerce giants Amazon and Flipkart challenging an order of the Competition Commission of India ordering a probe against them for alleged malpractices should be transferred to the Karnataka High Court. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Manmohan issued a notice on the plea filed by the CCI which sought the transfer of the petitions filed by the e-commerce platforms from the high courts to the top court or the Delhi high court. Prima facie, we are of the view that all cases, which are pending in various High Courts should be transferred to Karnataka High Court for hearing," the bench said and posted the matter January 6, 2025. The top court, however, asked the Karnataka High Court not to proceed with the hearing on the petitions filed by e-commerce giants.

SHORT TAKES

Paper leak: Kerala forms probe panel

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala General Education department Monday formed a six-member committee to investigate the leak of question papers for the Class 11 Christmas examinations. General Education Minister V Sivankutty told reporters that the committee, chaired by Director General of Education Shanavas S, has been tasked with conducting an internal inquiry due to the seriousness of the issue. The committee has been instructed to submit its report within one month, the minister

Coaching centre sealed after students faint

Jaipur, Dec 16: A coaching institute on Gopalpura bypass here was sealed by Jaipur Greater Municipal Corporation Monday, a day after some students fainted while studying. Rajasthan Human Rights Commission has recommended action against those guilty and provide free treatment and compensation to the victims. Former chief minister Ashok Gehlot has also demanded the state government to shift coaching institutes to the 'Coaching Hub' in Pratap Nagar. Agitated over the incident, students sat on a dharna and NSUI leaders also joined them.

Jarange to launch indefinite fast

Jalna (Maharashtra): Activist Manoj Jarange Monday declared he would launch a fresh round of indefinite fast to press for the Maratha community's demands, including reservation in jobs and education under the OBC category, and announce the date Tuesday. Speaking to the media at Jalna district's Antarwali Sarati village, the site of his previous half a dozen hunger strikes in central Maharashtra, he said Maratha community members were welcome to join his fast.

NIA arrests key ULFA-I operative

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency Monday arrested a key operative of the banned terrorist outfit ULFA (I) for planting improvised explosive devices in Guwahati, Assam during this year's Independence Day celebrations. NIA teams, with the active support of Assam Police, carried out searches at the house of Jahnur Baruah alias Arnab Axom in Dibrugarh in an intelligence-based operation in the early hours of this morning, an official statement said. Several incriminating materials, including digital devices, were seized during the searches and are currently under examination, it said.

BJP asks Sonia Gandhi to return Nehru letters



The Prime Ministers' Museum and Library in New Delhi has requested the return of personal letters written by Jawaharlal Nehru from Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, citing their historical significance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: The BJP Monday asked former Congress president Sonia Gandhi to return the correspondences of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru with a host of personalities to the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library, saying the historical documents belonged to the country and were not anyone's personal property. BJP MP and spokesperson Sambit Patra cited reports of the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library's (PMML) deliberations on the issue to note

that Nehru's correspondences with Edwina Mountbatten, wife of the last British viceroy to India, and eminent leaders Jayaprakash Narayan and Jagjivan Ram lay with the erstwhile Nehru Museum and Library Society, which returned them to Sonia Gandhi in 2008. The Nehru museum was expanded to include memorials to all prime ministers and renamed the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library after the BJP came to power at the Centre. Patra told reporters that 51 cartons of Nehru's correspondences were given to Sonia Gandhi after approval of the museum's then director. However, following a legal opinion, Rizwan Kadri -- one of the 29 members of the society tasked with running the PM-ML -- recently wrote to Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, seeking his help in restoring the papers to the museum's custody, he added. The BJP leader said Kadri did not receive any reply. Taking a swipe at the Gandhi family, Patra said these were not personal property but historical documents part of the "treasure" of India. As Nehru was a member of the family, it suffers from a sense of entitlement over his letters, he alleged. He asked, "What were the contents of the letter that the first family felt should not be made public?"



Security personnel baton-charge candidates who tried to disrupt the paper verification process of Combined Graduate Level (CGL) exam of Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission (JSSC), in Ranchi, Monday

'Three-pronged strategy adopted to root out Naxals'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jagdalpur (Chhattisgarh), Dec 16: A comprehensive three-pronged strategy is being adopted by the government to free all Naxal-affected areas in the country from the menace, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said Monday. Paying tributes here to all those who laid down their lives fighting Naxalism, Shah said as part of this strategy, first, those who are willing to renounce violence and ready to return to the mainstream are being welcomed. Secondly, he said,



efforts are being intensified to apprehend those who refuse to abandon the path of violence. "Lastly, strict action will be taken against individuals intent on harming others, ensuring they face the full force of justice," he added. The home

minister emphasised that this menace must be completely uprooted to prevent further loss of innocent lives. Underscoring the government's unwavering resolve to restore peace in Chhattisgarh and other Naxal-affected states, Shah said the achievements of the past year in combating Naxalism in Chhattisgarh are unprecedented. Never before has such a vast area been liberated from Naxal influence in a single year nor have such significant numbers of Naxalites surrendered, been neutralised or arrested, he said.

Tribal man dragged by car in Wayanad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Wayanad (Kerala), Dec 16: A tribal man was dragged for nearly half a kilometre along a road in this north Kerala district by an unidentified gang, after his thumb got caught in a car door, police said Monday. The incident happened near a check dam at Koodal Kadavu in Mananthavady here December 15 evening, and the visuals were aired by television channels today. According to police, Mathan, hailing from the Chemmadu settlement, suffered injuries in his hands, hips, and legs after being dragged along the road by the occupants of the car, who were suspected to be tourists who came here to see the check dam. "As per the information we received, some arguments cropped up between two groups of tourists who visited the area Sunday. Local people, including Mathan, tried to intervene in the issue, but finally ended up with him being subjected to this cruelty," a police officer said. The 49-year-old tribal man's thumb got caught in the car door, and those inside the vehicle dragged him along the road for nearly half a kilometre despite repeated cries to stop it, an eyewitness said. There were at least four men inside the car, and they managed to flee the area, he said, adding that Mathan was later shifted to a nearby hospital. Mananthavady police registered a case into the incident under various sections of the BNS, including Section 110 (attempt to commit culpable homicide).

ORIGIN OF TABLA

Born in anger or out of deliberate devotion to music

The two pieces of wood, metal and bound leather, which today are the primary percussion accompanying instruments of any Hindustani classical performance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: Legend has it that a competition was held in a Mughal court between two pakhawaj players. The losing maestro was so enraged that he smashed his pakhawaj, a two-sided percussion instrument, into two. And so was born the tabla. Such was the dramatic birth of the tabla, the two pieces of wood, metal and bound leather, which today are the primary percussion accompanying instruments of any Hindustani classical performance. For ages, the tabla largely played second fiddle to the vocalist or the main instrumentalist -- until the holy trinity of Pandit Samta Prasad, Pandit Kishan Maharaj and Ustad Alla Rakha Khan gave it prominence. However, it was left to Alla Rakha's son, Zakir Hussain, to put it on the global stage when he collab-

orated with Western performers such as John McLaughlin, Yo-Yo Ma and George Harrison of the Beatles. Much like the diverse sounds it produces, the stories behind the invention of the tabla are also numerous. The smashing of the pakhawaj by Sudhar Khan Daddhi in the court of Mohammed Shah Rangeela in the 18th century is just one legend. "The origin of the Tabla is one of the most controversial aspects of Indian classical music and nothing can be said with any degree of certainty," says musicologist Pandit Vijay Shanker Mishra in his book "Art and Science of Playing Tabla." "On regaining his calm, Sudhar Khan placed the two severed pieces of the Pakhawaj with their faces (drumheads) up, much like today's Tabla and began playing on them. As the Pakhawaj could still produce sounds in spite of being sliced



into two, the people exclaimed: 'Tab bhi bola' (It still speaks!) (which) turned into 'Tabbola' and finally, 'Tabla,' hold the proponents of this view," according to Mishra's book. Many also credit the invention of the tabla to a drummer named Amir Khusrau Khan in the early 18th century, who was

Over the centuries, several distinct gharanas in classical Indian tabla have developed, including Ajrara, Benares, Delhi, Farrukhabad, Lucknow, and Punjab

While these gharanas still dominate the tabla tradition today, the late 20th century has seen their boundaries start to blur as modern exponents seek to build upon the foundation laid by their predecessors

The origin of the Tabla is one of the most controversial aspects of Indian classical music and nothing can be said with any degree of certainty

PANDIT VIJAY SHANKER MISHRA | MUSICOLOGIST

tasked with creating a more refined and melodic percussion instrument to accompany the emerging music style known as 'Khyal.' The barrel-shaped pakhawaj drum was considered the ancestor of both the tabla and the mridangam, and has been depicted in countless paintings and prints. Although the tabla is a rela-

tively recent addition to Hindustani classical music, the instrument has gained immense popularity, and today it is impossible to imagine a concert without the tabla, whether as a solo instrument or an accompaniment. There is a more scholarly view of the origins of the name -- it is said to have been derived from the Arabic word "tabl", meaning "drum." The percussion instrument is made up of two drums, 'daayaan' or right, which produces bass sound, and 'baayaan' or left, which creates higher pitched treble.

national



However, I warn the slum-dwellers to be wary of them (BJP leaders) because there are many examples that the slums they visit are demolished, like it happened in Sundar Nagri where they had gone a few months ago

TIGER FOUND DEAD IN PENCH RESERVE

A tiger in the 2-3 year age group was found dead Monday morning in Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh's Seoni district, an official said. It may have died in a territorial fight, Pench Tiger Reserve's deputy director Rajneesh Singh said



of the day quote

#INDIA will resist the anti-federal & impractical 'One nation one election' as it will push the country into the perils of unitary form of governance, killing its diversity and democracy in the process

He (Manipady) is the one who had claimed that Rs150 crore was offered to him. There is a video recording. He said it at a press meet. Now, after many years, he is denying it. What should be done, tell me

Development, security, prosperity, respect for faith, and modernity that Uttar Pradesh is experiencing today, originates from this very legislature

POST OF THE DAY

INC legal cell needs to be rejuvenated Youth Congress needs to be rejuvenated Mahila Congress needs to be rejuvenated And many PC units including Odisha, WB, Rajasthan&Chhattisgarh also need to under 180° changes soon. 10% of the Modi's third tenure is already over. Congress should eye 2029 as early as possible.

Vocalist TM Krishna not to be recognised as MS Subbulakshmi award recipient: SC

New Delhi, Dec 16: The Supreme Court Monday said Carnatic vocalist TM Krishna should not be recognised as the recipient of the MS Subbulakshmi award as an interim measure. A bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and S V N Bhatti passed the order on a plea filed by Subbulakshmi's grandson V Srinivasan, who alleged Krishna made scandalous remarks against the late singer. "The court is mindful of the respect and honour that MS Subbulakshmi commands all across music lovers spreading across all spectrums. She is one of the most distinguished singers and although she passed away in December, 2004, her melodious voice continues to bring great joy to her fans," said the bench. The top court went on, "As an interim measure, as the award has already been awarded, we deem it apt to say that 4th defendant TM Krishna should not be recognised as a recipient of the MS Subbulakshmi award." Before SC, Srinivasan challenged an order of the Madras High Court that set aside an interim injunction restraining the city-based music academy from conferring the award on Krishna.



India, Sri Lanka to ramp up defence, energy, trade ties

Modi conveyed to Disanayaka India's consistent support to the island nation in its quest for economic recovery and stability

New Delhi, Dec 16: Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayaka Monday clearly conveyed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the island nation's soil will not be allowed for use against India's interests, an assurance that came amid concerns in New Delhi over China's attempts to increase its influence over Colombo. Disanayaka, on a three-day visit to India, held wide-ranging talks with Prime Minister Modi that saw both sides deciding to soon conclude a defence cooperation agreement and ramp up energy ties by establishing electricity grid connectivity and multi-product petroleum pipelines.



I have also given an assurance to the prime minister that we will not allow our land to be used in any way in a manner that is detrimental to the interests of India

"We have adopted a futuristic vision for our partnership. We have laid emphasis on investment-led growth and connectivity in our economic partnership," Modi said. "We have decided that physical, digital and energy connectivity shall be the key pillars of our partnership. We shall work towards establishing electricity-grid connectivity and multi-product petroleum

pipelines between both the nations," he added. In his remarks, the Sri Lankan leader said the Indian prime minister has given an assurance to always protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka. "I have also given an assurance to the prime minister that we will not allow our land to be used in any way in a manner that is detrimental to the interests of India," he said. "The cooperation with India will certainly flourish. And I want to reassure our continued support for India," he added. Underlining importance of connectivity, Modi said a decision was taken to initiate a ferry service between Rameshwaram and Talaimannar.

SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINIANS

Priyanka carries 'Palestine' bag to Parliament

Hitting out at the Wayanad MP over the bag issue, the BJP's Lok Sabha member Anurag Thakur wondered what message she wanted to send across

New Delhi, Dec 16: In a show of support for the people of Palestine, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Monday carried a bag to Parliament that had "Palestine" emblazoned on it. The Congress general secretary has been raising her voice against Israel's actions in Gaza and expressing solidarity with Palestinians.



Gandhi was seen carrying a handbag emblazoned with the word "Palestine" and Palestinian emblems, including a watermelon - seen as a symbol of Palestinian solidarity. Hitting out at the Wayanad MP over the bag issue, the BJP's Lok Sabha member Anurag Thakur wondered what message she wanted to send across. "She did not speak a word on atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh but wants to make a fashion statement with the Palestine bag," he claimed. Asked about BJP leaders raising the 'Palestine' bag issue, Priyanka Gandhi said, "Tell them that they should do something about the atrocities that are happening on minorities - Hindus and Christians - in Bangladesh. Talk to the Bangladesh government and stop these atrocities." Abed Elrazeg Abu Jazer, the Charge d'affaires of the Pales-

tine Embassy in New Delhi, last week called on Gandhi to congratulate the Congress leader on her recent Lok Sabha bypoll victory from Kerala's Wayanad. In June, Gandhi slammed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over what she had said were the Israel government's "genocidal actions" in Gaza, as she accused him and his government of "barbarism". The Congress general secretary's remarks had come after Netanyahu defended Israel's ongoing war in Gaza in a speech to the US Congress. Gandhi had said it was not longer enough to speak up for the civilians, mothers, fathers, doctors, nurses, aid workers, journalists, teachers, writers, poets, senior citizens and the thousands of innocent children who were being wiped out day after day by the "horrific genocide" taking place in Gaza.

Abhishek Banerjee dismisses Cong's EVM tampering claim

Banerjee's remarks come after Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah dismissed the Congress' strong objections to EVMs, saying the party raises questions about their reliability only when it loses



New Delhi, Dec 16: Those raising questions on Electronic Voting Machines should give a demonstration of any "discrepancies" to the Election Commission, Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Abhishek Banerjee said Monday. Banerjee's remarks come after Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, another leader of the INDIA bloc, dismissed the Congress' strong objections to EVMs, saying the party raises questions about their reliability only when it loses. Asked about leaders from

different INDIA bloc parties supporting Mamata Banerjee on the leadership issue, the TMC national general secretary told reporters that the alliance members will sit and discuss it. "This is my personal opinion that those who are raising questions on the EVMs should show a demo of its discrepancies to the EC. They should show any video (as evidence) to the EC," Banerjee said to questions on the EVM issue. The TMC leader said once there is proper monitoring during various stages of the polling process by booth workers and others, there is "nothing substantial" in these allegations.

"I have been conducting elections on-ground for a long time. If someone works well during EVM randomisation and the booth workers check EVMs during mock polls or review the form 17C, which is used to check ballot units or control units, during the counting of votes, I don't think there is anything substantial in these allegations [of EVM manipulation]," Banerjee said. "Even after that, if someone feels that the EVMs can be manipulated, their delegation should visit the EC and show a demo or evidence proving that there is some malware or technology to hack EVMs," he said. "If they are unable to do that, a movement or Andolan should be organised over the issue. Only making 2-3 statements regarding a matter does not mean anything," he said. National Conference leader Omar Abdullah, in an exclusive interview to PTI, dismissed the objections to EVMs, saying it cannot be that the Congress celebrates its win in polls held through the machines while questioning their reliability when it loses.



Indian Army's paratroopers perform during 'Military Tattoo' on the occasion of 'Vijay Diwas 2024', marking India's victory in the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war, at RCTC ground in Kolkata, Monday

3 damaged idols found inside re-opened Sambhal temple

THE SHRI KARTIK MAHADEV TEMPLE (BHASMA SHANKAR TEMPLE) WAS REOPENED DECEMBER 13 AFTER THE AUTHORITIES SAID THEY STUMBLED UPON THE COVERED STRUCTURE DURING AN ANTI-ENCROACHMENT DRIVE

Sambhal (UP), Dec 16: Three damaged idols were found inside the well of the Bhasma Shankar temple in Sambhal that was reopened last week after being shut for 46 years, officials said Monday. The Shri Kartik Mahadev temple (Bhasma Shankar temple) was reopened December 13 after the authorities said they stumbled upon the covered structure during an anti-encroachment drive. The temple housed an idol of Lord Hanuman and a Shivaling. It had remained locked since 1978. The temple also has a well nearby which the authorities had

planned to reopen. District Magistrate of Sambhal, Rajender Pensiya, told reporters that the ancient temple and the well were being excavated. "Around 10 to 12 feet of digging has been done. During this, today, first an idol of Parvati was found with its head broken. Then Ganesh and Lakshmi idols were found," he said. Asked if the idols were damaged and then put inside, Pensiya said, "All this is a matter of investigation." "Right now, these idols have come out. How did they get inside? What happened and what did not happen, will be known



after a detailed investigation," he added. To a question on encroachments around the temple, the district magistrate said some

people removed encroachments on their own while others were requested to remove them. Further due process will be followed and then these will

be removed through the nagar palika, he said. Asked if the temple would also be beautified, Pensiya said, "First the temple's 'praacheentaa' will be ensured." Sanjeev Sharma, who was present at the site during the excavation, said a damaged Lakshmi idol was found in the well along with a Parvati idol. Satendra Kumar Singh said the Parvati idol was found about 15-20 feet inside the well. Sub-Divisional Magistrate Vandana Mishra told PTI that information was received through the local SHO that idols had been found. The temple is situated in over a kilometre from the Shahi Jama Masjid where violence took place November 24 during a protest over a court-ordered survey of the mosque. Four people were killed and several, including police personnel, were injured in the violence. The district administration has written to the Archaeological Survey of India for carbon dating of the temple, including the well. Carbon dating is a method used to determine the age of archaeological artefacts from ancient sites. Worshipers have started visiting the temple and it is being guarded round the clock.

Drugs worth ₹1.85 cr seized; 2 booked Thane: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) personnel have seized spurious drugs valued at Rs 1.85 crore following raids at two locations in Maharashtra's Thane district, officials said Monday. The raids were carried out at a godown in Bhiwandi and another establishment in Mira Road area over the last few months, they said.

international



Syria faces an optimistic, positive, but rather uncertain future, and we have to make sure that this goes to the right direction. For us, it's not only the words, but we want to see the deeds

INDIA-CHINA TALKS The Special Representatives of India and China on border issues will meet in Beijing Wednesday to discuss the restoration of bilateral ties following the October 21 agreement to disengage troops in eastern Ladakh



of the day quote

Our investigation reveals how Serbian authorities have deployed surveillance technology and digital repression tactics as instruments of wider state control and repression directed against civil society



India, as a key partner and one of South Africa's most dynamic tourism markets, holds immense potential for fostering deeper economic, cultural, and people-to-people connections



We all get knocked down. My dad would say when you get knocked down, you just got to get up. The measure of a person or a party is how fast they get back up



ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Gaza death toll tops 45K

Gaza Health Ministry said 45,028 people have been killed and 106,962 have been wounded since the start of the war



The latest war has been by far the deadliest round of fighting between Israel and Hamas, with the death toll now amounting to roughly 2 per cent of Gaza's entire prewar population of about 2.3mn

Deir al-Balah, Dec 16: The death toll in the Gaza Strip from the 14-month war between Israel and Hamas militants has topped 45,000 people, Palestinian health officials said Monday, with 52 dead arriving at hospitals across the bombed-out strip over the past 24 hours.

The Gaza Health Ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count, but it has said that more than half of the fatalities are women and children. The Israeli military says it has killed more than 17,000 militants, without providing evidence. The Health Ministry said 45,028 people have been killed and 106,962 have been wounded since the start of the war. It has said the real toll is higher because thousands of bodies are still buried under rubble or in areas that medics cannot access. Among the dead reported in the overall toll were 10 people,

including a family of four, who were killed in an overnight Israeli strike in Gaza City, Palestinian medics said. The strike late Sunday hit a house in Gaza City's eastern Shijaiyah neighbourhood, according to the Health Ministry's emergency service. Rescuers recovered the bodies of 10 people from under the rubble, including those of two parents and their two children, it said.

Israel claims Hamas is responsible for the civilian death toll because it operates from within civilian areas in the densely populated Gaza Strip. Rights groups and Palestinians say Israel has failed to take sufficient precautions to avoid civilian deaths. The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people,

mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Israel responded by heavy bombardment and a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead. Most of the rest were released during a cease-fire last year.

A separate strike on a school Sunday in the southern city of Khan Younis killed at least 13 people, including six children and two women, according to Nasser Hospital where the bodies were taken. The hospital initially reported the strike had killed 16 people, but it later revised the death toll as the three other bodies had been from a separate strike that hit a house.

The Israeli military said it had "conducted a precise strike on Hamas terrorists who were operating inside a command and control centre embedded within a compound" that had served as a school in Khan Younis. It did not provide evidence.

The International Federation of Journalists said last week that 104 journalists and media workers have been killed so far in 2024, with more than half of them perishing during the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

The group said that since the October 7, 2023, start of the war, at least 138 had been killed, including 55 Palestinian media professionals in the calendar year.

Ukraine reports NK losses on Kursk front

At least 30 North Korean soldiers killed or wounded, claims Ukraine

Kyiv, Dec 16: Ukraine said Monday that North Korean units fighting for Russia sustained losses of at least 30 soldiers killed or wounded around several villages on the front in Russia's Kursk region over the weekend.

The Ukrainian military spy agency's statement came after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday that Russia was using North Korean troops in significant numbers for the first time to conduct assaults in Kursk, a Russian region where Ukraine launched a cross-border incursion in August.

The statement is the first time Kyiv has claimed North Korean losses on this scale and in some detail. It said the casualties occurred around the villages of Plekhovo, Vorozhba and Martynovka in the Kursk region. It provided no evidence. It was not possible to independently verify the figures.

The Kremlin declined to comment on the Ukrainian assertion, referring the question to the Russian Defence Ministry which has made no comment on the subject.

Russia has neither confirmed nor denied the presence of North Koreans on its side.



Pyongyang initially dismissed reports about the troop deployment as "fake news", but a North Korean official has said any such deployment would be lawful.

"Due to the losses, the assault groups are being replenished with fresh personnel, in particular from the 94th separate brigade of the DPRK army, to continue active combat operations in Kursk region," the Ukrainian agency wrote.

Kyiv first said North Korean forces turned up in Russia's Kursk region in October and later reported unspecified clashes and casualties. It estimates there are 11,000 North Koreans in total, adding to a force of tens of thousands of Russians.

Ukraine, nearly a fifth of which is controlled by Moscow's forces, has carved out an enclave in the Kursk region which its troops have been battling to hold as a potential bargaining chip for any potential peace negotiations.

SNIPPETS

Carbon monoxide poisoning: 11 Indians found dead in Georgia restaurant

Tbilisi: Eleven Indian nationals were found dead at a restaurant in Georgia's mountain resort of Gudauri, according to the Indian mission here. Georgia's Ministry of Internal Affairs said in a statement that no signs of injuries or signs of violence were detected in an initial inspection. All victims died from carbon monoxide poisoning, local media reported, citing police. The Indian mission in Tbilisi said that all 11 victims were Indian nationals. It added that the bodies of all victims, employees in the same Indian restaurant, were found in bedrooms on the second floor of the facility. "Mission has just learned about the death of 11 Indian nationals in Gudauri, Georgia. Deepest condolences to the bereaved families. Mission is in touch with the local authorities to get details of the Indian nationals who lost their lives. All possible assistance will be given," the Indian mission here said in a statement. The police started an investigation under Article 116 of the Criminal Code of Georgia, which implies negligent manslaughter. According to the preliminary investigation, a power generator was placed in an indoor area, a closed space near the bedrooms, which was turned on, probably after the power supply was turned off Friday night. A forensic medical examination has also been appointed to determine the "exact cause of death". Investigative actions are "actively" being carried out, with forensic-criminalistics working on the spot, and interviews of persons related to the case are being conducted.



Germany's Scholz loses confidence vote

Scholz's three-party coalition fell apart last month after the pro-market Free Democrats quit in a row over debt, leaving his Social Democrats and the Greens without a parliamentary majority just when Germany faces a deepening economic crisis

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Berlin, Dec 16: Chancellor Olaf Scholz lost a confidence vote in the German parliament Monday, putting the European Union's most populous member and biggest economy on course to hold an early election in late February.

Scholz won the support of 207 lawmakers in the 733-seat lower house, or Bundestag, while 394 voted against him and 116 ab-

stained. That left him far short of the majority of 367 needed to win.

Scholz leads a minority government after his unpopular and notoriously rancorous three-party coalition collapsed November 6 when he fired his finance minister in a dispute over how to revitalize Germany's stagnant economy. Leaders of several major parties then agreed that a parliamentary election should be held Febru-



ary 23, seven months earlier than originally planned.

The confidence vote was needed because post-World War II Germany's constitution

doesn't allow the Bundestag to dissolve itself. Now President Frank-Walter Steinmeier has to decide whether to dissolve parliament and call an election.

He has 21 days to make that decision - and, because of the planned timing of the election, is expected to do so after Christmas.

Scholz has outlined a list of urgent measures that could pass with opposition support before the election, including 11 billion euros (\$11.55 billion) of tax cuts and an increase in child benefits already agreed on by former coalition partners.

Measures to tackle fiscal drag - the tendency of inflation to shift taxpayers into higher tax brackets - and high energy prices look less certain.

12-year-old girl charged with killing of Indian-origin octogenarian in UK

London: A 12-year-old girl Monday became the second person to be charged in connection with the killing of 80-year-old Bhim Sen Kohli, who died following an assault while out walking his dog in a park near Leicester, eastern England, in September. Leicestershire Police said the girl, who cannot be named for legal reasons due to being a minor, appeared at Leicester Youth Court sitting at Leicester Magistrates' Court charged with manslaughter. A 15-year-old boy, then aged 14, arrested following the fatal assault and charged with Kohli's murder remains in custody. "A 12-year-old girl has been charged following the death of Bhim Kohli in September. The girl, who cannot be named for legal reasons, has been charged with manslaughter," the police said. Five children aged 12-14 years were arrested following the death of Kohli in hospital September 2. Kohli's family had released a statement via the police at the time to say they were heartbroken and struggling to cope with the loss of a loving and caring person. A post-mortem examination carried out after his death in hospital following the attack at Franklin Park in Braunstone Town confirmed the cause of death as a neck injury, while further tests were to be carried out.



'VIJAY DIWAS'

Yunus celebrates end of Hasina's regime

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 16: Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus led Bangladesh Monday in marking the 54th Victory Day, his speech making no mention of founding leader Mujibur Rahman while calling deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's administration the "world's worst autocratic government".

Victory Day or 'Vijay Diwas' commemorates the Pakistan military's surrender to Indian forces and the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. 'Bangabandhu' Mujibur Rahman is seen as the independence movement's iconic figure. His daughter Sheikh Hasina



fled to India August 5, after massive student-led protests against her government. Nobel laureate Yunus then took over as head of an interim government.

In his televised address to the nation, Yunus indicated that elections might be held by early 2026. "Broadly speaking, the elec-

I recall the millions of martyrs including numerous children and juveniles, youths' and the elderly people's sacrifices that made possible the achievement of our independence

MUHAMMAD YUNUS | CHIEF ADVISER, BANGLADESH

Japan's largest bank apologises over theft of millions of dollars

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tokyo, Dec 16: Japan's biggest bank apologised Monday for the alleged theft by an employee of more than 1 billion yen (\$6.6 million) from customers' safe deposit boxes.

The bank, formally known as Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, Inc., said Monday that it was investigating and that verified thefts from about 20 of the 60 clients thought to have been affected amounted to 300 million yen (nearly \$2 million). Compensation was being worked out, it said.

The thefts occurred at two Tokyo branches of the bank, from April 2020 until the end of October this year, when the problem was discovered.

MUFJ's president and CEO Junichi Hanzawa told reporters the female employee responsible for managing the safe deposit boxes and their keys is suspected of taking advantage of that position to steal cash and other valuables.

"The case has undermined the customers' trust and confidence and shaken the very foundation of our banking business," Hanzawa said. He apologised for causing concern and trouble to MUFJ clients.

MUFJ said the employee admitted taking the money and using it for investments and her personal purposes. She was fired and was cooperating with the bank's internal probe and a police investigation but has not yet been arrested.

FIRST TIME IN 500 YEARS

UK government approves \$4.6bn takeover of Royal Mail by Daniel Kretinsky's EP Group

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Dec 16: Britain's government gave the go-ahead Monday for the sale of Royal Mail's parent company to a Czech billionaire, paving the way for the postal service to pass into foreign ownership for the first time in its 500-year history. Authorities confirmed Mon-

ROYAL MAIL SOLD TO CZECH BILLIONAIRE



Royal Mail, one of the UK's oldest institutions, began in the 1500s as a service exclusively for the monarch and the royal court. It became a public postal service in the 1600s

The service will remain headquartered in the UK and as part of the deal, Britain's government will retain a so-

called "golden share" in the service, meaning it will need to approve any key changes to Royal Mail's ownership, headquarters location and tax residency.

The takeover is expected to be completed early in 2025.

Royal Mail, one of the UK's oldest institutions, began in the 1500s as a service exclusively for the monarch and the royal court. It became a public postal service in the 1600s.

The company, which was privatised in 2013, has struggled in recent years to adapt as the number of people using the postal service continues to decline steeply.

day that the 3.6 billion-pound (\$4.6 billion) takeover of Royal Mail's owner, International Distribution Services, by bil-

lionaire Daniel Kretinsky's EP Group, can go ahead.

Kretinsky and IDS agreed to the deal in May but had been

waiting for official approval under national security laws because of the importance of the postal service in the UK.

Business



It will be impossible to live in India...therefore, the circular economy offers a really compelling solution to the dilemma that India is facing due to rapid urbanisation and industrialisation by keeping resources in use for as long as possible, extracting maximum value from them and regenerating natural systems

AMITABH KANT | G20 SHERPA

MORTGAGE FINANCE AUM TO GROW 16-17%

The assets under management (AUM) of mortgage finance loans in the country is expected to grow at a healthy 16-17 per cent this fiscal and the next (FY25 and FY26), a report said Monday. Trends in the sub-segments like home loans, loans against property (LAP), and wholesale loans will vary. Over the current and next fiscals, home loans should grow at a reasonable pace of 13-14 per cent, according to the Crisil Ratings report.



of the day quote

Consumer behaviour is evolving rapidly, with quick commerce expanding beyond groceries to include electronics, apparel, and more, demanding modern warehousing solutions. Building India's tallest Urban Distribution Centre has been a key milestone for us

ANSHUL SINGHAL | MD AT WELSPUN ONE

While the government generally refrains from regulating airfares to maintain market competitiveness, however, it remains vigilant, and the government intervenes to shift capacity from one sector to another to prevent exorbitant pricing to ensure passenger comfort and welfare

MURLIDHAR MOHOL | MINISTER OF STATE FOR CIVIL AVIATION

We have to set our aspirations high because 800 million Indians get free ration. That means 800 million Indians are in poverty. If we are not in a position to work hard, then who will work hard?

NARAYANA MURTHY | INFOSYS CO-FOUNDER

Trade deficit widens to record \$37.84bn

India's exports in November contracted by 4.85 per cent year-on-year to \$32.11 billion, while imports rose by 27 per cent year-on-year to a record \$69.95 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, Dec 16: After recording double-digit growth in October, India's exports in November contracted by 4.85 per cent year-on-year to USD 32.11 billion, while the trade deficit widened to an all-time high of USD 37.84 billion due to record surge in gold imports.

According to the commerce ministry data, imports rose by 27 per cent year-on-year to a record USD 69.95 billion in November due to high inbound shipments of vegetable oil, fertiliser, and silver.

Gold imports during the month under review soared to an all-time high of USD 14.8 billion as against USD 3.5 billion in November 2023. Cumulatively, during April-November this fiscal, exports increased by 2.17 per cent to USD 284.31 billion and imports by 8.35 per cent to USD 486.73 billion.

Trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports, during April-November widened to USD 202.42 billion from USD 170.98 billion during April-November 2023.

Briefing on the data, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that fluctuations in oil prices are impacting the

exports.

Petroleum product shipments have declined by about 50 per cent to USD 3.71 billion last month. During the first eight months of this fiscal also, these exports contracted by 19 per cent year-on-year to USD 44.6 billion.

However, the secretary said that non-oil exports are still recording healthy growth, and this along with services sector would help the country cross USD 800 billion of total exports by end of this fiscal.

On high trade deficit and imports, the secretary said one should not be concerned about this as the country is growing.

"Therefore, our demand for imports will be higher. As long as our exports and foreign direct investments

are growing, it will finance our imports," he said.

He also said that the ministry is focusing on 20 countries and six services and manufacturing sectors including IT/ITeS to further boost the shipments.

In these 20 nations, there are huge potential to increase exports and to tap into that, the ministry is in touch with the Indian missions abroad.

The ministry is calling a meeting with these missions in January next year and "we will be devising a strategy on how to improve exports in the 20 countries," Barthwal said.

As per estimates, services export in November 2024 increased to USD 35.67 billion as compared to USD 28.11 billion in November 2023.

These exports reached an

all-time high of USD 34.31 billion in October, registering an increase of 22.3 per cent year-on-year.

Crude oil imports last month rose by 7.9 per cent to USD 16.11 billion.

At export front, key sectors that registered negative growth during the month under review included oil meals, iron ore, coal, gems and jewellery, chemicals and handicrafts.

However, sectors that recorded positive growth are textiles, engineering goods, electronics, pharma and spices.

Raw cotton raw waste, used in the textiles industry, saw a surge in imports from USD 30.61 million in November 2023 to USD 170.73 million last month.

Rupee falls 11 paise to fresh all-time low

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 16: The rupee depreciated by 11 paise to close at an all-time low level of 84.91 against the US dollar Monday, dragged down by a negative trend in domestic equities.

Forex traders said the Indian rupee declined on weak domestic markets and rising US bond yields. However, a soft American currency cushioned the downside.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.83 and touched the lowest-ever level of 84.93 against the greenback during intraday. The unit finally ended the session 11 paise down at 84.91 against the dollar.

Friday, the rupee rebounded from its record low level and settled with a gain of 8 paise at 84.80 against the US dollar.

The unit's previous all-time low level was recorded on December 12 when it closed at 84.88 against dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on rising odds of a rate cut by the Federal Open Market Committee (FO-

MC) and weak tone in the domestic markets. Elevated crude oil prices may also weigh on the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

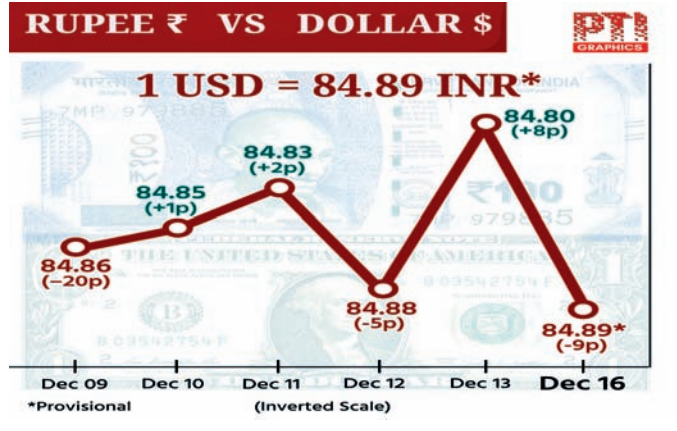
However, FII inflows and cooling off of inflation may support the rupee at lower levels.

On the domestic macroeconomic front, wholesale price-based inflation declined to a 3-month low of 1.89 per cent in November on cheaper food items.

Retail inflation declined in November to 5.48 per cent and came within the Reserve Bank's comfort zone mainly due to easing food prices, creating headroom for a rate cut at the central bank's rate-setting panel meeting under new Governor Sanjay Malhotra in February.

Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said the rupee traded weaker as the dollar strengthened.

"The rupee's trading range is expected to remain between 84.75 and 85.00 amidst these developments," he said.



SHORT TAKES

Cost overrun of ₹5.18L-cr

New Delhi: As many as 438 infrastructure projects with a total cost of ₹150 crore or above have shown a 62 per cent cost overrun amounting to ₹5.18 lakh crore, Parliament was informed Monday. According to a written reply to the Rajya Sabha by Minister of State for Statistics & Programme Implementation Rao Inderjit Singh, the original total cost of these 438 projects increased to ₹13.56 lakh crore from ₹8.38 lakh crore. As on November 1, 2024, a total of 438 of 1,747 projects on the monitor of the ministry reported cost overrun of ₹5.18 lakh crore, registering an increase of 61.82 per cent, according to the data shared by the minister showed.

Google's new VP for India

New Delhi: Tech giant Google Monday announced the appointment of Preeti Lobana as the new country manager and vice president for India. She succeeds Sanjay Gupta, who recently transitioned to an elevated role as President of the Asia Pacific region at Google. As the new Country Manager and Vice President for India, Lobana will play a key role in shaping Google's strategy to bring the transformative power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to all customers, fostering innovation, a Google release said. "A seasoned Googler with eight years of experience as Vice President of customer-centric solutions, Preeti will now spearhead Google India's sales and operations, driving the company's commitment to India's burgeoning digital economy," according to the release.

NHPC, BEML form pact

New Delhi: NHPC Monday announced a partnership with BEML to jointly explore opportunities for development of desilting and dredging solutions for hydro power plants. Besides, the solutions would help mitigate urban waterlogging during monsoons by swiftly clearing canals and culverts, support dredging and desilting operations in inland waterways, coastal areas, ponds, and lakes, NHPC said in a statement.

LIC's unclaimed maturity amounts at ₹881cr in FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) has unclaimed maturity amounts of ₹880.93 crore in 2023-24, Parliament was informed Monday.

As many as 3,72,282 policyholders did not claim maturity benefits during FY2024, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

During the previous year, he said, the amount worth ₹815.04 crore belonging to 3,73,329 policyholders remained unclaimed.

As many as 10 death claims worth ₹14 lakh remained unclaimed during 2023-24, he said.

In order to reduce the Unclaimed and Outstanding Claims, LIC has undertaken several measures, including print media and digital media advertisement apart from radio jingles for policyholders to claim their due amounts.

Outstanding amounts lying in unclaimed accounts are settled in favour of respective policyholders or claimants upon receipt of claim request, he said.

Reminder letters are sent through ordinary/speed post as well as through email where

available and also SMS are sent where mobile numbers are available, he said.

The claim settlement process is simplified and only valid NEFT is required to settle the claim, he said, adding that continuous follow-up is made with the policyholders through agents and development officers to comply with the requirement and claim the amounts.

In reply to another question, Chaudhary said the Foreign Exchange Reserves (FER) decreased by 2.63 per cent for the week ended November 15, 2024, against the previous week. However, in percentage terms, the highest decline till date in the last 20 years was observed in the week ended October 24, 2008, with FER declining by 5.65 per cent over the previous week, he said. The value of the Indian Rupee (INR) is market-determined, with no target or specific level or band, he said.

Apart from capital flows (which include equity flows as well), the factors that influence the exchange rate of INR include movement in the dollar index, level of interest rates, movement in crude prices, current account deficit, etc, he said.

Markets decline amid weak global trends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 16: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed lower Monday as investors turned cautious ahead of the US Fed interest rate decision amid weak global cues.

Besides, selling pressure in metal and IT counters amid a weak rupee and sluggish Chinese economic data hit investors' sentiment, traders said.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex declined 384.55 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 81,748.57. During the day, it dropped 581.84 points or 0.70 per cent to 81,551.28.

The NSE Nifty lost by 100.05 points or 0.40 per cent to 24,668.25.

"Domestic equities took cues from Asian and European indices and ended negative, as investors await the outcome of the US FOMC meeting on rate decision later this week. Although a rate cut is on the cards, there is a lack of confidence amongst the investors due to the sluggish Chinese economy and concerns ahead of Trump's decision on import tariffs on key economies," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.



There is heightened action in the primary markets, with five IPO listings and seven new IPOs opening for subscription in this week, he added.

From the 30-share Sensex blue-chip pack, Titan, Adani Ports, UltraTech Cement, Tata Consultancy Services, NTPC, Bharti Airtel, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever and JSW Steel were the biggest laggards.

The BSE midcap gauge jumped 0.73 per cent, and small-cap index climbed 0.47 per cent. "The national market traded in a range-bound manner while

the realty sector outperformed in expectation of growing demand and a potential rate cut cycle in 2025. Rising US 10-year bond yields and a strengthening dollar led investors to remain watchful of the upcoming US Fed policy and its commentary for 2025 rates," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Among sectoral indices, metal dropped by 0.95 per cent, teck fell by 0.82 per cent, oil & gas (0.75 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.74 per cent) and utilities (0.63 per cent).

Realty surged 3.17 per cent,

consumer discretionary (0.69 per cent), consumer durables (0.50 per cent), capital goods (0.38 per cent) and healthcare (0.22 per cent) were the gainers.

"...the Nifty Metal index dropped...pressured by weak global prices and concerns over US-China trade dynamics. Weaker-than-expected retail sales data from China, a key consumer of metals, added to fears of slowing demand. Nifty IT snapped its five-day winning streak, shedding 0.9 per cent on account of profit booking. Nifty Realty gained more than 3 per cent, buoyed by new property launches and optimism surrounding strong housing demand in 2025," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower.

European markets were quoting in the red. Wall Street ended mostly lower Friday.

Monday, the rupee depreciated by 9 paise to close at an all-time low level of 84.89 (provisional) against the US dollar.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.75 per cent to USD 73.91 a barrel.

WPI inflation dips; experts predict rate-cut in February

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 16: Wholesale price based inflation declined to a 3-month low of 1.89 per cent in November on cheaper food items, and experts predicted a 0.25 per cent interest rate cut by the RBI in the policy review in February.

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) based inflation was 2.36 per cent in October 2024. It was 0.39 per cent in November, last year. In August, 2024, it was 1.25 per cent.

As per the data, inflation in food items eased to 8.63 per cent in November, as against 13.54 per cent in October. The decline was led by a dip in vegetable inflation which stood at 28.57 per cent, as against 63.04 per cent in October.

Inflation in potato, however,

continued to be high at 82.79 per cent, while in onion it fell sharply to 2.85 per cent in November.

The fuel and power category witnessed a deflation of 5.83 per cent in November, against a deflation of 5.79 per cent in October. In manufactured items, inflation was 2 per cent in November, against 1.50 per cent in October.

In a research note, Barclays said wholesale price inflation softened in November, on lower primary food inflation, which more than offset higher inflation seen in manufactured products.

"December to date, global prices are up 0.7 per cent and are likely to push December WPI inflation higher," Barclays said.

As per the consumer price



index data released last week, retail inflation moderated to 5.5 per cent in November, compared with 6.2 per cent in October.

Barclays said this is within the monetary policy committee's (MPC) tolerance band of

2-6 per cent indicating that CPI inflation will be drifting closer to the 4 per cent target by March 2025.

"We expect the MPC to cut the policy repo rate by 25bps in its February meeting. We are mindful of the almost new-look-

ing MPC that will be in charge of this decision," Barclays said.

The government appointed a new RBI Governor earlier this month. Former Deputy Secretary Sanjay Malhotra took over as the 26th RBI Governor December 11 replacing Shaktikanta Das. In October, the government had reconstituted the 6-member MPC.

ICRA Ltd Senior Economist Rahul Agrawal said the moderation in WPI inflation was primarily led by primary food articles, which eased to a three-month low of 8.6 per cent from 13.5 per cent in the previous month, exerting downward pressure on the headline print to the tune of 91 bps between these months.

ICRA expects the headline WPI inflation to rise to 2.5-3 per cent in December 2024 (+0.9%

in December 2023) despite a favourable base.

A majority of food items, for which data is released by the Department of Consumer Affairs, have witnessed an uptick in their YoY inflation prints in December 2024 (up to Dec 15, 2024) vis-à-vis November 2024.

Additionally, the YoY deflation in global commodity and crude oil prices has also narrowed between these months, while the USD/INR pair has depreciated mildly, which would exert some upward pressure on the landed cost of imports.

Looking beyond the ongoing month, the arrival of kharif crops in the market, and the robust outlook for the rabi crop amid healthy sowing trends and elevated reservoir levels, augur well for the food inflation outlook, Agrawal said.

India in trouble at 51/4 on rain-marred day

Batters botch up again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brisbane, Dec 16: The Indian batters' inability to grind it out against a relentless Australian pace attack in testing conditions left the team precariously placed at 51 for four at the end of a rain-marred day three of the third Test here Monday.

On a stop-start day, India bowled out Australia for 445 in their first innings, the hosts adding 40 runs to their overnight total, as the peerless Jasprit Bumrah continued to do the heavy lifting to finish with excellent figures of 6/76.

Alex Carey chipped in with an entertaining 70 off 88 balls after contrasting hundreds by Steve Smith and Travis Head on the second day laid the foundation for a total which looked more than enough just 14 overs into the Indian first innings.

With the exception of the gutsy KL Rahul (33 batting), who was willing to hang in there, none of the Indian top-order batters showed the stomach to fight.

Playing the red Kookaburra has become tougher since they changed their ball in 2020 by adding extra lacquer on a reinforced seam, making it firmer and ensuring more movement off the pitch.

Under the circumstances, the Indians needed to be patient and play out the first 25-30 overs when bowlers of the calibre of Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood were in operation.

But the visiting top-order batters did not do what was required of them. The likes of Virat Kohli once again fell to deliveries in the channel just outside the off-stump.

There is no doubt that the conditions were challenging but the Indian batters could have taken a leaf out of Smith's book as he initially negotiated testing spells of fast bowling from Akash Deep and Bumrah on way to a drought-breaking hundred.

Starc, Hazlewood strike early After Australia racked in



nearly 450 runs, left-arm pacer Starc struck twice and Josh Hazlewood once as the two teams took an early lunch with the visitors reeling at 22 for three.

Pat Cummins got the big wicket of Rishabh Pant in the second session to make matters worse for the Indians.

Returning to the middle after the lunch break, Rahul and Pant faced some hostile fast bowling from the duo of Starc and Hazlewood before heavy showers interrupted the proceedings, one of the many on the day.

Cummins kept three slips and a gully for Pant, as opposed to the four men in the slip cordon, and a gully for Rahul, when Hazlewood was operating.

Starc had three slips, and two gullies when he had the red cherry in his hand.

The only fielder in front of the wicket during that phase of play in the second session was the man stationed at mid-off, reflecting the Australian bowlers' dominance.

Starc removed Yashasvi Jaiswal in the second ball of



the India innings and then dismissed Shubman Gill before Hazlewood accounted for Kohli as the visitors once again stared down the barrel after their failures in Adelaide.

Jaiswal was out caught by Mitchell Marsh at short mid-wicket while he tried to clip a Starc half-volley off his pads.

Gill was sent back when Marsh pulled off a brilliant catch in the slip cordon off the bowling of Starc after the India number three played away from the body.

Kohli was dismissed in what has now become a familiar scene as he once again chased a length delivery outside off before nicking it to Alex Carey.

Starc too had a hand in the wicket of Kohli. After KL Rahul pulled a short ball from Hazlewood to long leg, Starc dived to save what seemed like a certain boundary, bringing the former Indian captain back on strike.

This was after Hazlewood delivered a full-length ball outside off-stump to Kohli, who, instead of leaving the ball, attempted a drive, resulting in an outside edge.

This is the fourth time Kohli has been dismissed in such a fashion. Former India player Sanjay Manjrekar has already advised him to explore an alternate route to tackle his weaknesses against deliveries on the fourth and fifth stump.

It's a team in transition: Bumrah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brisbane, Dec 16: Jasprit Bumrah Monday defended the struggling Indian team in Australia and played down talk of additional pressure on him, saying it's a side in transition and given his experience, it's his "job" to shoulder extra responsibility.

Having taken a seemingly erroneous call of bowling first in the third Test at the Gabba here, India conceded a huge first-innings total of 445 despite Bumrah returning 6/76.

In response, the visitors were 51/4 on a rain-hit third day with questions being raised about batters' technique and the quality of bowling, save for Bumrah.

"We don't, as a team, point fingers at each other and we don't want to get into that mindset where we are pointing fingers at each other that 'you should do this, you should do that'," Bumrah told media after stumps when asked for his assessment of India's batting.

"We, as a team, are going through a transition, new players are coming here and it's not the easiest place to play cricket. Over here, it's a different atmosphere with this wicket being a different challenge so yeah, we are not looking at that."

Bumrah, who leads the bowling chart in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with 18 wickets so far, defended the Indian attack amid chatter that he is not getting adequate support from fellow bowlers.

"As a bowling unit, as I said, we are in transition so it's my job to help the others. I have played a little more than them so I am trying to help them," said the owner of 191 Test wickets in just 43 Tests.

"Everyone will learn through it, will get better and eventually will find different ways so this is the journey that you'll have to go through," he added.

Bumrah rejected suggestions that India's poor first innings scores were putting more pressure on the bowlers and on him.

"We have 11 players, it's not like that. I don't look at it that I have to do extra (work). As I said, we are a new team, a lot of new players have come into



the side. We have to be considerate and give them that cushion that they will learn from experience," he said.

"Nobody is born with all the experiences, nobody is born with all the skills. You keep learning, you keep finding new ways (and) you keep learning about your own game," he continued.

The Indian vice-captain said he has enjoyed the challenge of bowling on different pitches in Australia.

“We don’t, as a team, point fingers at each other and we don’t want to get into that mindset where we are pointing fingers at each other that ‘you should do this, you should do that’”
JASPRIT BUMRAH | INDIAN PACER

Commentator apologises for Bumrah 'primate' remark

Former England player and commentator Isa Guha, who referred to Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah as a "primate" during the third Test between India and Australia here, apologised for her racist remark Monday. She said she was "deeply sorry" for choosing a wrong word to describe the India pacer's brilliant display with the ball. Guha made the comment in response to Brett Lee's praise of the Indian bowler after Bumrah dismissed both Australian openers on day two of the Test Sunday. "Well, he's the MVP, isn't he? Most valuable primate, Jasprit Bumrah," Guha had said while commentating for Fox Cricket. "He is the one that's going to do all the talking for India, and why so much focus was on him in the buildup to this Test match, and whether he would be fit." The usage of the word "primate" by Guha caused a social media storm, as fans slammed her and forced the 39-year-old to issue an apology. "Yesterday in commentary I used a word that can be interpreted in a number of different ways. I'd like to apologise for any offence caused," Guha said on air at the start of day three. "I set myself really high standards when it comes to empathy and respect of others. If you listen to the full transcript I only meant the highest praise for one of India's greatest players. And someone that I admire greatly."

SHORT TAKES

Gillespie slams PCB

Sydney: Former Australia pacer Jason Gillespie Monday slammed the PCB, revealing that he stepped down as Pakistan's Test head coach after being "completely and utterly blindsided" by the country's cricket board. Gillespie, whose contract was set to expire in 2026, resigned last week and he expressed his frustration over the lack of communication, which led him to feel that the Pakistan Cricket Board no longer wanted him in the role. "There were certainly challenges. I went into the job eyes wide open, I want to make that really clear. I knew that, you know, Pakistan had cycled through a number of coaches in a pretty short space of time. The straw that broke the camel's back, I suppose, was, as a head coach, you like to have clear communication with your employer," Gillespie told ABC Sport.

NZ set mammoth aim

Hamilton: Kane Williamson made 156 as New Zealand amassed a lead of 657 runs before both England openers were dismissed to leave the hosts in a commanding position at the end of the third day of the third cricket test Monday. To compound an already dismal day for the tourists, England captain Ben Stokes limped from the field with a recurrence of a hamstring injury. Williamson's 33rd test century was his seventh at Seddon Park and his fifth in consecutive tests on a home ground on which he averages more than 100. New Zealand finally was dismissed for 453 after leading by 204 on the first innings and in five overs before stumps England slumped to 18-2.

Team Asia triumph

Oso: India's table tennis star Manika Batra was part of a star-studded Team Asia that beat Team World in the inaugural Waldner Cup here. Team Asia comprised table tennis legend Ma Long of China, Olympic gold medalist Chen Meng, Shin Yubin of South Korea and Kirill Gerassimenko of Kazakhstan, besides Manika. Team Asia defeated Team World 14-0 Sunday. Team World had the likes of Truls Moregardh, Dimitrij Ovtcharov, Hugo Calderano, Adriana Diaz and Bernadette Szocs.

Facile victory for Odisha eves

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 16: A fine half century by skipper Sushree Dibyardarshini (56, 86b, 4x4) and an all-round show by D Janaki Reddy (42 runs and three wickets) helped Odisha defeat Hyderabad by 56 runs in a match of the Senior Women's ODI Trophy at the Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad, Monday.

After being put in by the opposition, Odisha scored 199 for the loss of eight wickets in 50 overs riding on the knocks played by Sushree and Janaki Reddy. A number of other batters also got starts but failed to consolidate those into big scores for which Odisha failed to get past the 200-run mark. In his 56-ball knock, Janaki batted with great maturity to boost the Odisha total. Gouhar Sultana (2/39) was the most successful bowler for Hyderabad.

Hyderabad were never in the chase as they lost wickets at regular intervals and were bowled out for 143 in 43.2 overs. The only batter to defy



D JANAKI REDDY

the Odisha bowlers to some extent was Kunchala Nitesha (32 n o, 59b, 4x4). However, she lacked support and ran out of partners when the Hyderabad team were dismissed before the completion of the full quota of 50 overs. Janaki Reddy (3/18) shone with the ball while she was well-supported by Jyoti K Prasad (2/27).

Man United's comeback win

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, Dec 16: Amad Diallo struck a 90th-minute winner as Manchester United staged a stunning late comeback to beat Manchester City 2-1 in the Premier League.

Four-time defending champion City led the Manchester derby 1-0 going into the 88th minute at the Etihad Stadium. But the game was turned round in dramatic fashion as Bruno Fernandes leveled from the penalty spot and Diallo sealed victory for United — prompting head coach Ruben Amorim to declare "something magic happened."

"It was a very tough match but we believe until the end. We managed to score. We needed that win. It was important for us and for our fans," Amorim said.

City fans jeered at the final whistle as their once dominant team's woeful run of form extended to one win and eight losses in 11 games.



"I'm the boss, I'm the manager and I'm not good enough. It's as simple as that," Guardiola said.

It was a first derby victory for new United head coach Ruben Amorim, who led Sporting Lisbon to a 4-1 win against City in one of his last games in charge of the Portuguese club in November.

But for a long time it looked like being a third-straight league loss for United after Josko Gvardiol's headed goal

in the 36th.

Fernandes was guilty of missing the target when through on goal in the second half and United struggled to create chances against a City team that rarely looked like adding to its lead.

But in a dramatic end to the match, Diallo raced after an underhit backpass from Matheus Nunes. Nunes then brought down the United forward in the box and referee Anthony Taylor pointed to the penalty spot.

IN A FIRST

Women's Euro 2025 players to receive share of prize money

REUTERS

Lausanne, Dec 16: Players participating in the Women's Euro 2025 will receive a percentage of the prize money for the first time, European football's governing body UEFA announced Monday.

The UEFA Executive Committee approved a prize pot of 41 million euros for the tournament in Switzerland, representing a 156% increase from the 2022 event, with participating national associations distributing a guaranteed percentage of the rewards -- between 30 and 40% -- to players.

Compensation payments to European clubs who release players for the tournament will increase to six million euros, it was also announced at Monday's meeting in Lausanne.

Rapturous homecoming for world chess champion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Dec 16: New-ly-crowned world chess champion D Gukesh returned home to an enthusiastic reception as hundreds of eager fans, and officials from the Tamil Nadu government and the national federation lined up to receive him at the airport here Monday.

The 18-year-old defeated China's Ding Liren 7.5-6.5 in Singapore last week to become the youngest ever world champion, overhauling the long-standing mark set by Russian icon Garry Kasparov as a 22-year-old back in 1985.

Upon his arrival, Gukesh thanked everyone for supporting him.

"It's amazing. Your support gave me a lot of energy. It's a great feeling to win the world championship," said Gukesh as media and fans jostled to get a

closer view of the youngster.

Once he touched base at the Kamaraj airport, the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu and his school Velammal Vidyalaya staff greeted him with a bouquet before draping a shawl around him at the airport lounge.

Gukesh started his chess journey at the Velammal school.

After greeting the waiting fans, Gukesh left for his home in a car decorated with flowers, and his photo.

He is scheduled to speak to the media later in the day at the Velammal School in Mogappair, before settling at home to celebrate with his parents, relatives and friends. His father -- ENT surgeon Dr Rajinikanth -- was with him during the entire competition, while his mother -- microbiologist Padmavathi -- joined him in Singapore after



the final round.

On Tuesday, he will be given a grand reception at the Kalaivanar Arangam at Wallahajah Road and he will be taken to the iconic auditorium in a special-ly-arranged parade.

Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin is expected to be present during

the function to present Gukesh with a cheque of Rs five crore.

Gukesh is only the second Indian after the great Viswanathan Anand to claim the world title. Anand played

Carlsen, Gukesh showdown to headline Norway Chess

The youngest-ever world champion, Gukesh Dommaraju will take on Magnus Carlsen, the world's highest-rated player, in a highly-anticipated contest at next year's Norway Chess. Magnus Carlsen, the world's highest-rated player, will take on youngest ever world champion Gukesh Dommaraju in a highly-anticipated contest at Norway Chess 2025. The tournament will take place in Stavanger from May 26 to June 6, 2025. Gukesh, 18, has achieved remarkable success this year, winning the Tata Steel Masters, leading India to gold at the Chess Olympiad, dominating the Candidates Tournament, and finally claiming the ultimate prize in classical chess: the World Championship title in Singapore last week. "I'm excited to face the strongest players in the world again in Norway and also the Armageddons will be fun," Gukesh said in a media release.

a pivotal role in shaping the teenager at his academy here. Gukesh has enjoyed a stellar year, starting with his win in the Candidates Tournament

in Toronto that made him the youngest challenger to the world crown.

He later spearheaded India's first-ever gold-winning campaign in the Chess Olympiad in Budapest. The world champions win also fetched Gukesh a whopping cash prize of \$1.3 million (approx Rs 11.03 crore).

It means a lot to bring back trophy to India. Thank you for this reception. I hope we will have a great time in the next few days celebrating together
D GUKESH