



**DARKER SIDE OF SHOWBIZ**  
Actor Anjali Kapoor says she preferred to be a singer rather than an actor after facing the casting couch

LEISURE P2



**SECOND EXECUTION IN IRAN**  
Iran executes a second prisoner convicted over crimes committed during the nationwide agitations

INTERNATIONAL P10



**CROATIA FACE ARGENTINA**  
Croatia look to end Lionel Messi's dream of winning FIFA World Cup for Argentina when they meet in the semifinal

SPORTS P12



**SPLASHDOWN:** US Navy divers attach winch cables to NASA's Orion Capsule after it splashed down in the Pacific Ocean following a successful uncrewed Artemis I Moon Mission

**LAWYERS' AGITATION**  
**SC pulls up DGP over failure to handle stir**

■ A violent scuffle broke out between cops and protesting lawyers and the court premises were vandalised, turning Kacheri Chhak in Sambalpur into a battlefield



**POST NEWS NETWORK**  
New Delhi, Dec 12: The Supreme Court Monday rapped Odisha Police for its failure in controlling the violent agitation at Sambalpur court where the advocates, protesting for establishment of High Court bench in western Odisha, ransacked the courtroom complex and misbehaved with judicial officers.  
A two-judge bench of Justices SK Kaul and Abhay S Oka asked the Odisha DGP and IG of Sambalpur range to appear before it through video conferencing Wednesday and apprise it about the action taken against the protesting advocates.  
The bench also sought a report from Odisha government apprising it as to what steps it is going to take to ensure there is no disruption of court proceedings in the state where members of bar associations in some districts are agitating. Expressing displeasure, the apex court observed that it would issue orders for deployment of paramilitary forces in

**BCI SUSPENDS 29 LICENSES**  
The Bar Council of India (BCI) Monday suspended the license of 29 advocates, who had allegedly indulged in vandalism at Sambalpur court November 30, for 18 months. A video was placed before the BCI which, it said, clearly discloses that almost all the lawyers practicing in Sambalpur had indulged in shouting slogans and damaging the computer sets and other properties inside and outside the court rooms. The BCI said the video was not only exceedingly disturbing, but also a matter of utter shame to the face of the institution and the Council cannot tolerate such hooliganism and will never allow such advocates to continue in the noble profession.  
the state to ensure functioning of court if the police are unable to maintain law and order. The apex court was shown photos and videos of the violent protests by advocates in Sambalpur. **Continued on P4**

**SHORT TAKES**

**2-time MP Mohan Jena passes away**

**Bhubaneswar:** Senior politician and former parliamentarian Mohan Jena breathed his last Monday afternoon at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar following prolonged illness, family sources said. He was 65. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed deep grief over the demise of Jena and conveyed his sympathies to the bereaved family. The senior leader was elected to Lok Sabha twice from Jajpur on a BJD ticket in 2004 and 2009.

**MLA Barsha takes oath in Assembly**

**Bhubaneswar:** Barsha Singh Bariha, who was elected in the recent by-poll to Padampur, Monday took oath as a legislator of the Assembly. Speaker Bikram Keshari Arukha administered the oath of office to Bariha at his official chamber in the state Assembly here. Bariha had contested the Padampur by-election on the ruling Biju Janata Dal ticket and won the seat with a margin of over 42,000 votes.

**Face-off at LAC**

Indian, Chinese troops clash along LAC in Tawang sector, minor injuries to a few personnel on both sides

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Indian and Chinese troops clashed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh December 9 and the face-off resulted in "minor injuries to a few personnel from both sides", the Indian Army said Monday.  
The clash near Yangtse along the LAC in the sensitive sector took place last Friday amid the over 30-month border standoff between the two sides in eastern Ladakh. "On December 9, PLA troops contacted the LAC in Tawang Sector which was contested by own (Indian) troops in a firm and resolute manner. This face-off led to minor injuries to few personnel from both sides," the Army said in a statement.  
"Both sides immediately disengaged from the area. As a follow up of the incident, own (Indian) commander in the area held a flag meeting with his counterpart to discuss the issue in accordance with structured mechanisms to restore peace and tranquillity," it said.



■ It is the first major clash between the Indian and Chinese armies since August 2020 near Rinchen La in eastern Ladakh  
■ Indian and Chinese troops were engaged in a brief face-off near Yangtse in October last year  
■ The ties between India and China nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020  
However, a source indicated that there were more than 200 Chinese soldiers involved and they were carrying spiked clubs and sticks, and injuries on the Chinese side could be higher. But there was no official word on the same.  
The Army said there are areas of "differing perception" along the LAC in the Tawang sector. "In certain areas along the LAC in the Tawang Sector in Arunachal Pradesh there are areas of differing perception, wherein both sides patrol the area up to their claim lines. This has been the trend since 2006," the Army said. **Continued on P4**

**Bodies of 4 missing persons fished out of well in Ch'garh**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** The bodies of four persons from Nabarangpur district, who were missing in Chhattisgarh since December 10, were found at a well alongside Kanker-Kondagaon highway in Chhattisgarh Monday, police said.  
The bodies of all four persons were found in the car in which they were travelling. The ill-fated car along with the dead bodies was recovered from the open well by local police, said Umerkote Inspector in-charge Deepak Kumar Jena.  
The deceased have been identified as Sapan Sarkar, his wife Rita, brother-in-law Biswajit and his neighbour Hajari Dhali. All were residents of Umerkote in Nabarangpur district.  
"A complaint was filed by their relatives that the four persons left Kanker at around 10.30pm on December 10 night, but they did not reach their destination. During investigation, we found marks of a vehicle towards the well. Now, we have recovered the dead bodies and car from the well," said Sarat Dube, Inspector in-charge, Kanker.



Though it was suspected that the deceased had met with an accident, the exact reason behind the death is yet to be ascertained, the police said.  
As per reports, the four persons had gone to Kanker in a car to attend a wedding ceremony last Saturday. On their way home, they had decided to stay at Biswajit's native place at Kondagaon in Chhattisgarh. However, they did not reach the destination till the next morning and all of their mobile phones remained switched-off.  
Following this, the family members lodged separate complaints at Umerkote police station in Odisha and Kanker police station in Chhattisgarh. The police traced their car from the roadside open well and recovered the car in which the bodies were found.

**Cong leader's 'be ready to kill Modi' remark sparks row**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhopal, Dec 12:** A senior Congress leader in Madhya Pradesh has made a controversial remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking people to "be prepared to kill Modi to save the Constitution and the future of minorities and Dalits."  
A First Information Report (FIR) was registered Monday afternoon at Pawai police station in Panna district against the Congress leader and former state minister, Raja Pateria, for making the remarks against the prime minister.  
In a video that surfaced on social media in the morning, Pateria can be heard telling Congress workers, "...be ready to kill Modi. Kill in the sense of defeating him."  
".....Modi will end the elections. Modi will divide on the basis of religion, caste and language. The future of Dalits, tribals and minorities is in danger. If you want to save the Constitution, then be ready to kill Modi. Kill in the sense of defeating him." Pateria told a meeting of Congress workers at Pawai town in Panna district.  
State Home Minister Narottam Mishra, who had ordered the registration of the FIR, said the police found Pateria spread hatred and enmity among Dalits, minorities, and tribal communities based on religion, caste, and language, at the meeting.  
The FIR was registered against Pateria under sections 451 (House-trespass in order to commit an offence punishable with imprisonment), 504 (Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace), 505 (statements conducing public mischief), and 506 (Punishment for criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code.

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**



As soon as there are schools and jobs for all, you can buy a car and drive on that expressway

**Army's anti-drone kite may help revive Falconry**

Shahid Khan, India's only registered Falconer, has always felt that such efforts will help bring back the elegant raptors to the Indian skies

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, Dec 12:** After the Indian Army displayed its latest 'weapon' at Auli in Uttarakhand during Exercise 'Yudh Abhyas' with the US Army, there was at least one person in the country following the media coverage and video footage keenly.  
This 'weapon' displayed by the Indian Army is a living being named 'Arjun'. He is a 'Black Kite' - a medium-sized raptor found across Asia. He has been trained to attack and bring down quadcopter drones flying in from across the border with narcotics or weapons caches.  
Arjun has already mastered the technique over the last two years but will continue to receive training along with his feathered friends. Their other jobs will be surveil-

lance and recording all movements along the borders and beyond. They have been fitted with cameras for this. The man keeping watch on this development keenly was Shahid Khan, India's only registered Falconer who has been allowed to keep Falcons and display the lost sport of Falconry.  
The sport of Falconry in India dates back to 600 BCE, historians say. It was practiced by royals in the state of Rajasthan. Khan is from Rajasthan and has been fighting a lone battle to protect Falcons that may also be trained to bring down flying objects, whether birds or drones.  
After the population of Falcons fell drastically and the species was declared endangered, the Indian government banned the sport of Falconry in India. Khan, however,

had another take on this subject. He always maintained that Falconry had nothing to do with the decline in the population of Falcons in the country. It had to do with the indiscriminate use of pesticides and insecticides that also took a toll on other bird species. He insisted that captive breeding of Falcons by experts was the only way to revive the population of these magnificent birds.  
In 1999, the Government of India made an exception. It granted permission to Khan to own Falcons and display Falconry. Khan may never have propagated the idea of using birds of prey for military use but he was keen about using them to ward off bird strikes near the major airports. He has always felt that such efforts



will help bring back the elegant raptors to the Indian skies.  
Arjun may not be a Falcon but his role as a 'soldier' may help in amending laws regarding the sport using raptors. A Black Kite is nearly the same size as an Indian Falcon. The Army's Remount and Veterinary Corps that trained Arjun to become a 'drone destroyer' may also use Falcons in days to

come. Not only birds, but also men will have to be trained as handlers.  
Many of those interested in Falconry feel that this move by the Indian Army may encourage the government to lift the ban on the sport. Many more people could then come forward in the captive breeding of Falcons and other raptors, giving them a fresh lease of life out in the wild.

**WEATHER**

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 32.2°C	31.2°C
	MIN 17.7°C	17.0°C
Humidity	60%	82%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Clear sky mainly

**MARKET WATCH**

INDEX	VALUE	VAR.
SENSEX	62130.57	↓ 51.10
NIFTY	18497.15	↑ 0.55
DOLLAR	82.32	↓ ₹0.05
EURO	87.20	↑ ₹0.43
GOLD	₹54,136	↓ ₹159
SILVER	₹68,013	↓ ₹25

# leisure



## KIT HARRINGTON TEASES JON SNOW SPINOFF SERIES

Hollywood star Kit Harington recently made an appearance at the *Game of Thrones* convention in LA when he was asked about Jon Snow sequel series. He revealed about how Jon Snow ended in the series and what could be happening to him after his character killed Daenerys, reports *Deadline*.

## SUSAN SARANDON COMES OUT AS BISEXUAL ON LATE NIGHT SHOW

Hollywood superstar Susan Sarandon casually confirmed her sexuality during her appearance on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* this week. The actress and gay icon revealed her bisexuality when making a joke about cats and dogs in the show, reports *mirror.co.uk*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
You are in a position to affect other peoples' lives. Since you are very compassionate and caring, people will look up to you whether as a peer or a superior. Make good use of this excess energy to solve prickly issues. Ganesh encourages large-scale projects.

**TAURUS**  
Be prepared for taking instant decisions and acting promptly on them. Today you are likely to meet several such situations Ganesh is pleased to see that you have the acumen and experience to deal with such contingencies. You will have no trouble finding the right solutions and seeing things through.

**GEMINI**  
You will be faced with a slew of demands from various people today, and you will find it difficult to meet all of them. However, you will be able to meet the requirements that need to be met to salvage the day. People will praise your intelligence and creativity, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
Minor ailments like cough and cold may bother you, warns Ganesh. So avoid cold or sweet items. People admire your helpful nature. Take special care of your health, says Ganesh.

**LEO**  
You need to curb down on your expenses. You need to moderate the risks you take on in the share market. It is a good day for financial gains though. You need to understand the value of compromise, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Family affairs will predominate today. They will even control your thoughts to the exclusion of everything else. Things will look up on the business front. You may spend time relaxing in the evening. Ganesh says a trip to a place of worship is on the cards.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says that there are chances that today you might start some long-pending renovation project for your house. You may decorate your home with new paintings and items. There may be guests over in the evening that will make you very happy. You may also go out for dinner with your family and friends or, more probably, with your sweetheart.

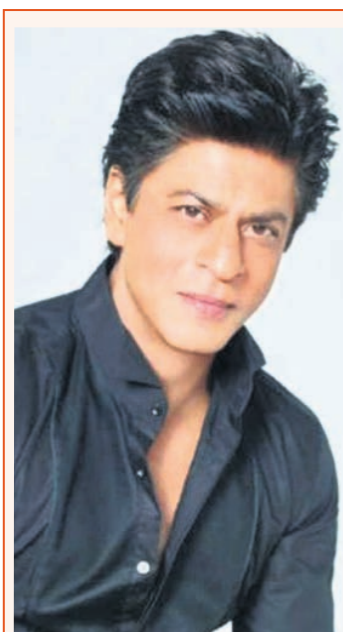
**SCORPIO**  
You are all set to paint the town red as you feel romance and love creeping into your life slowly. You may bump into 'someone special' today and see love blooming for you. There are also chances of marriage proposals and meeting prospective candidates, says Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Tough times do not last, but tough people do, remember this fact and move ahead in life. Try to make the complicated life simpler by your optimistic approach. Speak up when it is required and don't get bogged down by unnecessary pressure.

**CAPRICORN**  
Today, you will remain unruffled by the commotion around you, says Ganesh. However, the emotions locked up inside you will probably cloud your power of reasoning and may leave you feeling a little lost. But this will only be a passing phase, and you will come out of the bewilderment in no time. You will promptly get back to pursuing your goals and your reputation with seniors will play a crucial role in bagging you tangible rewards.

**AQUARIUS**  
Today is the day to turn dreams into reality and how! With your talent, wit, and intelligence you will make a great impression on everyone's mind, feels Ganesh. Icing on the cake will be the cash inflow. You know your cards and you play them well to your advantage.

**PISCES**  
You will communicate with your friends or relatives living abroad today. There is a chance that these communications could translate directly into substantial gain for you. You will find yourself in the mood for socializing.



## Shriya glams up to play sex worker

**Mumbai:** Actress Shriya Pilgaonkar, who had two OTT releases this year, *Guilty Minds* and *The Broken News*, is gearing up for another, *Taaza Khabar* in which she will be essaying the role of a sex worker called Madhu. Talking about her character, Shriya said, "I am thrilled to be a part of *Taaza Khabar* where I got to showcase a completely different look that I haven't donned before and also in terms of building a character, this was a new experience for me, which was so much fun."

She mentioned that the new show will present a different side of her as an actress. She added, "Since I have recently been seen as a lawyer in *Guilty Minds* and a news reporter in *The Broken News*, I'm excited to be seen as a sex worker in this comedy-drama genre with Bhuvan Bam. It was fun to experiment with my look and performance. My character Madhu, is sassy and has a whole lot of spunk. Can't wait to share her with you!"

Besides *Taaza Khabar*, Shriya is also currently shooting for her two upcoming films, details of which are under wraps.

## SRK pays obeisance at Vaishno Devi shrine in J&K

**Mumbai:** Top star Shah Rukh Khan offered prayers at the revered shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi atop Trikuta hills in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir, an official said Monday. Khan, dressed in complete black with hooded jacket, reached the shrine late Sunday night to pay his obeisance, he added.

"The superstar was at the shrine around 11.30 pm and offered his prayers before returning back," the official further said.

A brief video, purportedly showing the 57-year-old actor moving towards the Bhawan along with his personal staff and some policemen, is making rounds on the social media.

Earlier this month, Khan was photographed performing Umrah in Mecca after the schedule wrap of his film *Dunki* in Saudi Arabia.

The actor will next be seen in *Pathaan* alongside Deepika Padukone and John Abraham. The Siddharth Anand-directed movie is scheduled to be released January 25. IANS



## Anjali turns singer after facing casting couch

**Mumbai:** *Beintehaa* actress Anjali Kapoor shares her experience of facing the casting couch and why she preferred to be a singer rather than an actor. She says: "I have experienced casting couch and it was also one of the reasons for stepping back and moving towards singing because I don't want to face such things. Also, in today's time it has become a normal

thing even if you disagree, someone else would be ready to do it for work. If you have any shortcomings in terms of acting, criteria for looks therefore getting rejected, it's fine. But if you are facing rejections for being against casting couch then it's totally unfair."

The actress, who was seen in the web series *An Incomplete Mission*, *Farm House*, has also

done music videos.

Apart from singing Anjali is keen on doing reality shows: "I would love to be a part of reality shows because in fiction dramas you're portraying some character but in reality series you depict your own character. I feel it's a great opportunity to show your real side. I would definitely prefer it."

Ten theatre personalities, five each from junior and senior categories, were felicitated for their contribution to the theatre.

## 4-day Smaraki nat'l theatre fest concludes



A scene from Bengali play *Ekakittwer Dinolipi*

**Bhubaneswar:** Natarashmi Prafulla Rath Smaraki National Theatre Festival-2022, a four-day drama event, organised by Smaraki Natya Sanstha of Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi district came to an end at Town Hall in the town, Monday.

Tiljala Kalpan Natyogosthi, a theatre troupe of Kolkata, presented the Bengali play *Ekakittwer Dinolipi* on the fourth and final day of the festival. Written by Debesh Thakur, the drama was directed by Kalpana Barua. The play was a collage of small incidents involving the female characters of Hindu epic *Mahabharata* and their influence on the life of Lord Krishna. Needless to say, the play held the viewers in thralls till the climax.

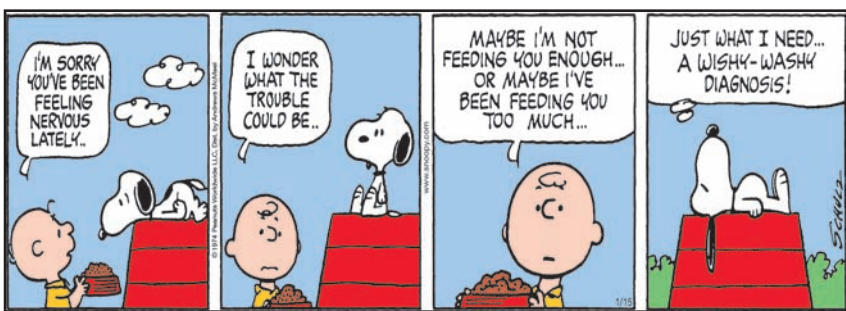
Zilla Parishad president Pushpendra Singhdeo attended the event as chief guest. Culture director Ranjan Kumar Das, Kalahandi SP Abilash G, PD-DRDA

Sachin Power, Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi(OSNA) secretary Prabodh Rath addressed the viewers.

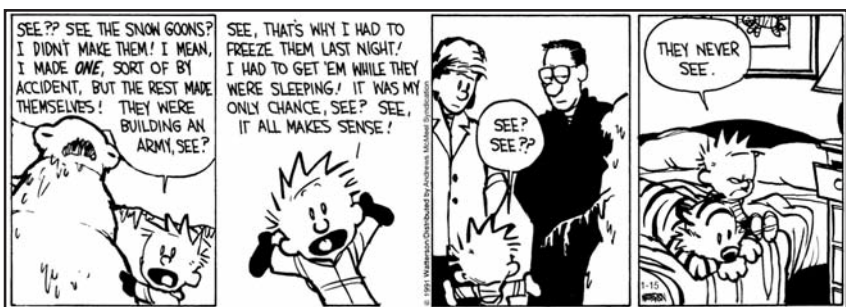
Earlier, on the first day of the event Kolkata's Rangashram staged play *Atmadaha*. Written by Tarit Mitra, the play was directed by Sandeep Bhattacharya. Naria MLA Bhupindar Singh, municipality chairperson Sanjukta Behera, OSNA secretary Prabodh Rath were among the guests who graced the occasion.

Similarly, Bhopal's Kite Acting Studio presented Hindi play *Rang Rasia* on the day-2 of the festival which was written and directed by Saheb Nitish. Kalahandi University Vice-Chancellor Sanjay Satpathy, OSNA awardee Prabhass Chandra Mishra, theatre artistes Ashok Kumar Patra were the guests at the event. Samagam Rangmandal of Jabalpur staged famous play *Agarbati*, written by Ashis Pathak and directed by Swati Dube, on the third day of the festival. Junagarh MLA Dibyashankar Mishra, former minister Rasbihari Behera and educationist Ajay Mishra spoke to the drama lovers on the occasion.

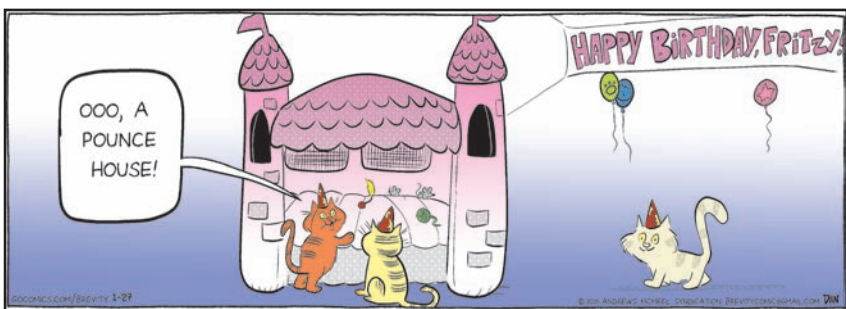
### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

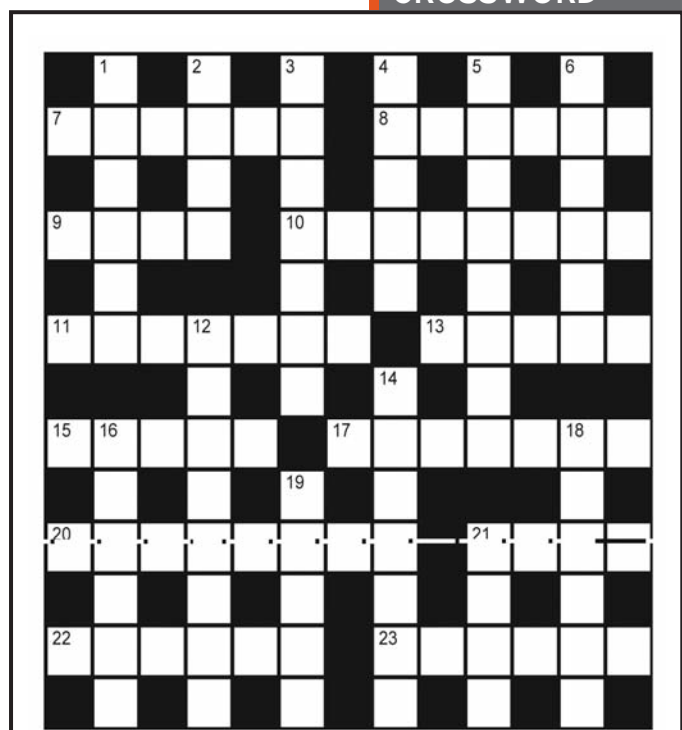


### BREVITY



### FUN post

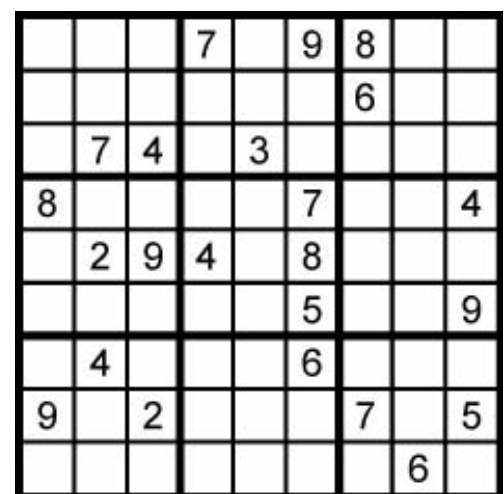
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Heavy rain
  - 8 Stereo knob
  - 9 Formally surrender
  - 10 Large indefinite number
  - 11 Forerunner of chemistry
  - 13 Fling
  - 15 Autocrats of old
  - 17 Separate abruptly
  - 20 Orator at a wake
  - 21 Toss
  - 22 Dog house
  - 23 Forest fire fighter
  - 4 Emboss
  - 5 Run-down by hard use
  - 6 The power to entice
  - 12 Fishgigs
  - 14 Hot dog condiment
  - 16 Cup holder
  - 18 Destroyed
  - 19 Streamlets
  - 21 Canine tooth
- Down**
- 1 Morning dish
  - 2 Type of bug
  - 3 Nom de plume (3,4)

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

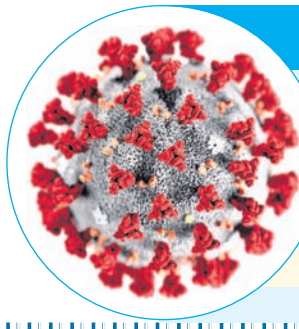


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



**PAYING GRATITUDE**  
Members of kendu leaf pluckers' and binders' associations pay gratitude to CM Naveen Patnaik in Bhubaneswar, Monday, for the recently-announced special package for around 8 lakh people associated with the trade



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	65,39,23,715	62,93,09,636	66,59,090
India	4,46,74,981	4,41,40,417	5,30,658
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

## Man robbed of ₹42K in Mo Bus

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Miscreants robbed a commuter of ₹42,000 in a moving Mo Bus near Hotel Crown in Nayapalli area here Monday. Police have launched a probe into the matter after registering a case (765/22) on the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim, Biranchi Narayan Sethi of Nayagarh district. Sethi is staying in a rented accommodation at VSS Nagar here. Monday morning, Sethi along with his wife, had gone to a finance company's office in Khandagiri area to release the gold he had mortgaged for a loan by paying ₹42,000. However, the company officials asked him to come another day. While returning home by a Mo Bus, Sethi found the money kept in his pocket missing near Nayapalli. A disturbed Sethi later went first to Khandagiri and then to Saheed Nagar police stations to file a complaint, but to no avail. He finally lodged a complaint at Nayapalli police station.

## Pathak case: OSL dir appears before ED

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Charchit Mishra, the director of Orissa Stevedores Limited (OSL) and son of industrialist Mahimananda Mishra, Monday appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the sale of a BMW car to ex-Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer Abhay Pathak. The ED has been probing the illegal money transactions of the dismissed IFS officer, who was charged with amassing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. Mishra, who reportedly owns a luxurious vehicle showroom, along with his lawyer reached the ED's Nayapalli office Monday afternoon. He submitted all the documents related to the deal before the ED. Sources claimed that the ED sleuths grilled him for more than two hours over the issue to elicit details about the deal struck for the luxury vehicle.

## Camp office to monitor station renovation opens

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** A camp office to monitor the redevelopment work of the Bhubaneswar railway station was made operational, Monday. The railway station is being transformed into a world-class railway facility. ECoR GM Roop Narayan Sunkar, who is reviewing the project work, advised the officials to ensure passenger-friendly amenities at the station. Sunkar stressed upon precise planning and supervision of works with proper coordination. The focus is on development of new building, air concourse, renovation of platforms, platform shelters, circulating areas, platform lightings and food court zone.

## Mayor thanks BMC workers for nat'l award

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das Monday thanked Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) workers for their teamwork that helped the civic body bag the India Sanitation Coalition (ISC)-FICCI Award for Best Faecal Sludge and Septage Management Model at the India Sanitation Conclave-2022 held in New Delhi recently. Addressing the corporators and senior officers at a meeting here on Mukhyamantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyan (MUKTA), Das shared her experience of receiving the ISC-FICCI FSSM Model Award and said that this is for the first time in the country that people are praising Bhubaneswar for winning the prize. She attributed the achievement to the dedication, teamwork and unity of the workers. "In coming days, BMC will work efficiently for the people and will make Bhubaneswar a healthier and cleaner City. The City's devel-



**VOICING GRIEVANCES:** MDM cooks and helpers staged a demonstration at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Monday, to press for fulfilment of their eight-point charter of demands

## HOCKEY MEN'S WORLD CUP AHEAD

# Enhance flight services to Jharsuguda, airlines urged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** The Ministry of Civil Aviation Monday said it has requested all the scheduled domestic airlines to favourably consider enhancing connectivity to the airport in Jharsuguda in view of the upcoming FIH Hockey Men's World Cup in Odisha. Jharsuguda airport is owned by Airports Authority of India (AAI), and falls under the served category. The airport is presently connected to cities of Bhubaneswar, Kolkata and Delhi. "The Ministry of Civil Aviation has requested all the scheduled domestic airlines to favourably consider enhancing connectivity to VSS Airport, Jharsuguda in view of the upcoming FIH Hockey Men's World Cup, 2023," Minister of State for Civil Aviation VK Singh said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha. The tournament will start January 13 and will continue till January 29. The matches will be played in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela. Currently, AAI owns and manages two airports namely Bhubaneswar and Jharsuguda.

## Pact inked for Rourkela airport operationalisation

**New Delhi:** The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) and Airports Authority of India (AAI) Monday signed an agreement for operationalisation of Rourkela airport, said Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia. Responding to a question of BJD MP Mamata Mohanta in Rajya Sabha about the progress on Rourkela airport in view of the upcoming international hockey tournament, Scindia said that SAIL and AAI have inked a pact for providing communication, navigation and surveillance (CNS) systems at Rourkela airport earlier in the day. The pact was vital to make the airport opera-

tional, Scindia said, adding that commercial flights can commence at the airport after the inspection by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. Earlier, another pact was signed between the SAIL and AAI for the development of the airport. The AAI has invested ₹28 crore for the development of ATR in the airport, the Minister said. In a supplementary question related to Amarda airstrip, the minister said that the state government has to pay ₹26 crore to the Ministry of Defence. He said the state government has to develop this airport. In a written reply, Scindia said the ministry launched Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) in November 2016 to enhance regional air connectivity from underserved and underserved airports and making air travel affordable to the masses.

In a separate written reply, Singh said that a team of auditors from the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) conducted an audit of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) from November 9 to 16. "During the closing briefing, the ICAO team informed DGCA that the effective implementation of India has increased to 85.49 per cent from the previous 69.95 per cent. The draft report of the audit will be provided by ICAO within 90 days after the last day of on-site activity (16.11.2022)," he said.



**ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT**

## ₹528cr GST compensation to Odisha pending: Centre

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Monday informed the Lok Sabha that ₹528.95 crore is pending towards Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation to Odisha as of June 2022. Responding to a question asked by BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab, the Finance minister said that the Centre is committed to release GST compensation and doing it continuously.



"If I were to put it in some kind of order—how much is pending—if I were to go by month, the last month was June, when compensation had to be given. Of the June amount, nearly half has already been paid. Therefore, for the other half, we are waiting for adequate collection to happen because it has to be given from the compensation cess, which goes into a public account from where it is given. Half of the compensation that needs to be paid was released in June," Sitharaman said. Earlier, Mahtab had asked the minister whether the Centre intends to release ₹3,251.53 crore pending GST compensation to Odisha. The BJD MP had said an amount of ₹3,251.53 crore for the years 2021-22 and 2022-23 is yet to be released in favour of Odisha towards

## 4 new ESI hosps in state on cards

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Centre has approved establishment of four new ESI hospitals in Odisha, Union Minister of State (MoS) for Labour and Employment Rameswar Teli said in Parliament, Monday.

In a written reply to a question of Kendrapara MP Anubhav Mohanty, Teli said in-principle approval has been given to set up four new ESI hospitals at Jagannathprasad in Bhubaneswar, Duburi in Jajpur, Paradip in Jagatsinghpur and Jharsuguda. While the proposed ESI hospital in Bhubaneswar will have 150-beds, the upcoming facilities at Duburi and Jharsuguda will have 100 beds each. A 30-bed ESI hospital will come up at Paradip, he said. The Union Minister also informed that the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) has also given approval for upgradation—from 50 to 100 beds—of the existing ESI Scheme (ESIS) hospital at Bhubaneswar. At present, two ESIC hospitals, six ESIS hospitals and 41 ESI dispensaries are functioning in the state. Presently, the wage limit for an employee in ESI covered factories and establishments is ₹21,000 per month. The eligible ESI beneficiaries are provided with facilities under the scheme as per simplified procedure enshrined under the ESI (General) Regulations, 1950.

GST compensation for the loss of revenue on account of the implementation of GST.

## Cops quiz Lakra over Tappo death

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Following Orissa High Court's reprimand, the Commissionerate Police swung into action and questioned international hockey player Birendra Lakra at Infocity police station Monday evening in connection with the alleged murder of his friend Anand Kumar Tappo. The High Court has severely criticised the IIC of Infocity police station for refusing to file an FIR over the allegations of the Tappo's relatives. The IIC has also been banned from performing any field duty for the next one year. "As he (Lakra) and Tappo were staying in the same room, he has been noticed to appear for investigation. We have been questioning Lakra to know what he was doing on the fateful day. Notices have been issued to as many as 25 persons in connection with the suspicious death. Four persons including Tappo had come to Bhubaneswar from Kolabira in Jharsuguda February 27 night. We had received the post-mortem report which indicated Tappo's death by hanging. The viscera has also been collected and sent to SFSL. The AIIMS Bhubaneswar where the autopsy was carried out will also give its final report in this regard," additional DCP Prakash Chandra Pal told media persons. Notably, Tappo's body was found hanging from the ceiling of his room at an apartment in Infocity area February 28.

## STF destroys 1kg brown sugar, 1.9kg cannabis



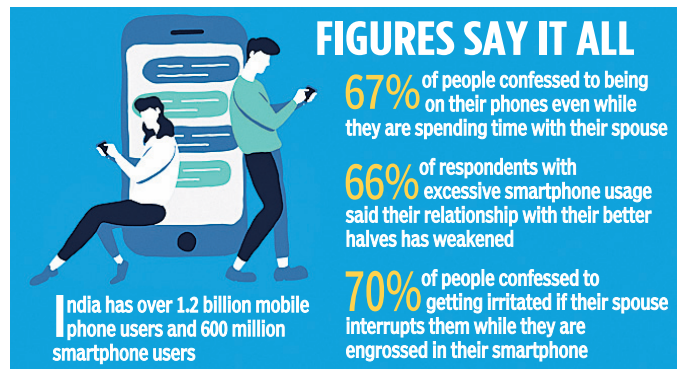
POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** The Special Task Force (STF) of the state Crime Branch Monday destroyed around a kilogram of brown sugar and 1,992 kg ganja recovered from peddlers at a designated incinerator, an official said. The recovered contraband were first authenticated/certificated by the court concerned and handed over to the drug disposal committee for discarding, it was learnt. "STF sources said on the decision of the High-Level Drug Disposal Committee, led by STF DIG JN Pankaj, in presence of scientific officers of State Forensic Science Laboratory and member of State Pollution Control Board destructed the contraband at a designated incinerator at Sani Khurd Pvt Ltd, Tantiapada in Khurda district following due procedures," said an official. The STF has so far destroyed 22,569 kg brown sugar in 17 cases and 38.9 quintal ganja in six cases including that of Monday's. Similarly, Odisha Police has also destroyed more than 535 quintal ganja in 227 cases and over 27 kg brown sugar in 35 cases.

## Over 8 in 10 married Indians feel smartphones hurting relationships

Smartphones are killing natural conversations between couples and a new study Monday said more than eight in 10 married Indians feel excessive use of mobiles is deeply hurting their relationships.

Interestingly, 67 per cent of people confessed to being on their phones even while they are spending time with their spouse. With excessive smartphone usage, 66 per cent of respondents said their relationship with their better halves has weakened, according to the study. Overindulgence in smartphones leads to psychological changes as 70 per cent of people confessed to getting irritated if their spouse interrupts them while they are engrossed in their smartphone, according to the study by Vivo in association with Cybermedia Research (CMR). "The significance of a smart-



phone in today's life is undisputed. However, excessive usage remains an area that the users need to be cautious of," said Yogendra Sriramula, Head Brand Strategy, Vivo India. India has over 1.2 billion mobile phone users and 600 million smartphone users. According to the study, married couples are mostly distracted while having a conversation with their

partners as 69 per cent of respondents confessed not being attentive enough while conversing with their spouses. Indians are accepting the problems and are willing to change their smartphone-linked behaviour. About 88 per cent of people would want to devote more leisure time to meaningful conversations with their spouses, said the study.



**Corporators will be on an exposure trip to other states soon to learn about the models there, and efforts will be made to implement them in the City**

opment work will gain more pace. Moreover, Bhubaneswar is preparing to host the Hockey World Cup-2023, and it is expected that the City will be a good host and will attract more visitors from around the world," said the Mayor.

She further mentioned that the marginalised groups and transgender community in City are getting more job opportunities. City Corporators will be on an exposure trip to other states soon to learn about the models there,

and efforts will be made to implement them in the City, she said. Das also thanked Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for his constant support and coordination in undertaking developmental projects. She also assured that more number of community health centres, sports centres, cleanliness drives and other activities will be taken up under MUKTA scheme.

# Want to make our students globally competitive: Pujari



Internationalization of Higher Education is a must, he added.

Pujari further said that skill education is necessary for the students so that they don't have to search for the job and they get it easily.

Earlier, the Minister had a detailed discussion with Nottingham Trent University, UK for the Internationalization of Higher Education in the state December 8.

The Higher Education department is eyeing collaboration with leading universities of England and Australia for starting dual degree programmes in order to align itself with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020. These universities are Nottingham Trent University in England and Deakin University, Australia.

Odisha's focus area is skill development. Both the foreign universities are known for their skilling courses. We are initially planning to focus on skill and competency areas like machine learning, data science, data mining (big data management) and artificial intelligence which can be offered and pursued online," said a higher official of the department.

Currently, almost all the public universities in Odisha have at least 50 foreign functional research collaborations with a majority of them being Utkal, Ravenshaw, Sambalpur and Berhampur universities.

But unlike other public universities in the country, none of the state universities have yet entered into agreement with any foreign universities for teaching-learning.

## The Higher Education department held an interaction meeting on skill embedded higher education in Odisha with Australian university

Australian universities. The Australian delegate presented their plan and layout to the vice chancellors of the state universities.

The Vice-Chairperson of State Higher Education Council and all the vice-chancellors of state public universities had a fruitful discussion with the Minister-Counsellor of Australia and the Vice-Chancellor of Deakin University.

Speaking on this occasion, Pujari said that this is a step in the direction of the vision of the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to make our students global citizens and globally competitive.



DEMOLITION DRIVE: An excavator deployed by BDA pulling down an illegally built house at Nicco Park road in Bhubaneswar, Monday

# Parl passes energy conservation bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** A bill to mandate the use of non-fossil energy sources such as biomass, ethanol and green hydrogen and allow carbon credit trading in the country was passed by Parliament Monday.

The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2022 was cleared in the Rajya Sabha by a voice vote on Monday. The Lok Sabha cleared the legislation in the previous session in August this year.

The bill provides for penalties for violations by industrial units or vessels, and on manufacturers if a vehicle fails to comply with fuel consumption norms.

The amendments also seek to

promote renewable energy and the development of a domestic carbon market to battle climate change.

The bill is aimed at helping the country achieve its international commitments on climate change.

It aims to introduce new concepts such as carbon trading and mandate the use of non-fossil sources to ensure faster decarbonisation of the Indian economy and help achieve sustainable development goals in line with the Paris Agreement.

Replying to a debate on the bill, Minister for New and Renewable Energy RK Singh said the bill is environment friendly and will allow carbon trading in the country.

He noted the bill is a step to-



WARDS TAKING A CONCRETE ACTION TOWARDS REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS.

"This is something which is essential for the planet. We don't have any alternative. This is the only planet which we have and we have to do our best to save it. We are doing our best but if you ask me whether the other developed countries are doing their best, I will say I have questions, I have doubts. We hear a lot of talk but do not see

any concrete action," he stated. Concrete action is what the country is taking and will continue to take in future as well, he added.

"For the government, the environment is precious and it will take all steps for that," he said, adding India has now become a leader in the energy transition.

Currently 24 per cent of the energy consumption is by the housing sector and the Energy Conservation Code for buildings will also apply to office and residential buildings with a connected load of 100 kilowatt or above.

However, he added, the state government has been given the liberty to reduce the building load up to 50KW.

## CLASSIFIED LOST

I, Vikram Kumar Jaiswal, S/o. Sri Ramji Jaiswal, R/O- Plot No. AA/2, Civil Township, PS- Raghunathpalli, Rourkela declare that I am the authorized person/signatory of the partnership firm in the name of M/s Jay Jagannath Steel Industries located at Ranibandh Rajgangpur, Dist- Sundargarh. As the unit is completely stopped we decided to surrender the power connection and to take back the security deposit of Rs. 17,59,726.00 Kept with WESCO, Burla presently RED. TPWODL, Rajgangpur, Dist- Sundargarh. Therefore while heading to the Office of the Executive Engineer, RED, TPWODL Rajgangpur with the packet of containing money receipt 5 Nos. for a sum of INR 12,89,454.00 are as followed (i) Money Receipt no.-022/25053, Dtd.08.06.2005 of INR 2,00,000.00, (ii) Money Receipt No.-022/25004, Dtd. 11.02.2005 of INR 2,45,880.00, (iii) Money Receipt No.- 022/324080, Dtd. 01.10.2006 of INR 1,00,000.00, (iv) Money Receipt No.- 022/458117, Dtd. 31.03.2006 of INR 1,40,000.00, (v) Money Receipt No.- 665074, Dtd. 19.09.2006 of INR 6,03,574.00 was lost/dropped somewhere near by Ranibandh, Rajgangpur. Despite my best effort I failed to find out the packet containing the receipts. The above statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

# Strong action will be taken against the guilty: Amat

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Odisha Forest and Environment Minister Pradip Amat Monday said strong action will be taken against the persons including officials involved in alleged poaching of a wild tusker in the Similipal tiger reserve.

As per reports, it was alleged that some of the forest staff burnt an elephant and threw the charred remains to a nearby stream to destroy the evidence after poachers killed the jumbo and removed its tusks in the core area of the tiger reserve.

Talking media persons here, Amat said, "Investigation is going on and we have asked to complete it soon. Either any senior officer or any Class IV employee, whoever is involved in the crime, strong action

## ELEPHANT POACHING



will be taken."

Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF), wildlife, Sushil Kumar Popli said the Similipal field director had received an anonymous call that such an incident had happened.

"After receiving the allegation, we have scanned the entire Janabil forest area involving officials from north and south divisions of

Similipal. We had not received any direct evidence. However, during interrogation of forest staff of Jenabil, we got some clues and later, found small-sized bones from a nearby waterfall."

He said the bones collected from the spot have been sent to the Centre for Wildlife Health at Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) Bhubaneswar for examination.

"As per preliminary investigation, we have suspended three forest officials. After getting proper evidence, we will lodge a criminal case under relevant sections of the Wildlife Protection Act," Popli said.

Besides, the joint task force has been sent to the Jashipur area in Similipal to further investigate the case, he added.

# Farmers assured of actions against lumpy skin disease

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Fisheries and Animal Resources Development (F&ARD) department Monday assured that all possible measures are being taken by the government to prevent lumpy skin disease in the state.

As per information provided by the department, the infected cows are being treated through 541 veterinary hospitals/dispensaries, 3,239 livestock aid centers and 314 mobile veterinary units in the state.

"The affected cattle are being recovered after treatment by the veterinary staff. As a preventive measure, vaccination of cattle is being done through 'Goat Pox Vaccine'. As cattle usually do not die of this disease, the herdsmen are being advised by the department to take care of their cattle without get-

ting panicked," said an official.

In case of occurrence of this disease in any area, the department has issued advisories to immediately report it to the nearest Livestock Inspector, veterinary doctor or chief district veterinary officer, said the department.

The department has issued two toll free numbers, 1962 or 155333, which livestock farmers can call to get expert advice on prevention and control of the disease. As of December 12, symptoms of lumpy skin disease have appeared in 13,222 cattle in the state. Out of them, 6,451 have recovered after treatment, the department informed.

"December 12, 875 cows got cured after treatment and treatment of other affected cattle is being carried out by the department. 80,000 cattle have been vaccinated December 12.

# 'Child marriage prevention a priority'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Bhubaneswar and Cuttack Police Commissioner SK Priyadarsi Monday inaugurated the prestigious annual Kalinga Fellowship 2022 in the presence of delegates from India and abroad. In his address, the commissioner said that the prevention of child marriage and sexual abuse is a priority and should be addressed keeping in mind the social and cultural values of Odisha.



Child marriage, he said, is still a big issue across the state, citing a recent example where the police in the state Capital itself had to stop one such case. "This is happening in the heart of the City. Imagine the magnitude of the problem in the state as a whole," he said.

Emphasizing the objectives of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that call for ending gender violence at the earliest, he said reintegration of the victims is another issue that has to be addressed. The Kalinga Fellowship, which debuted in 2017, is a social leadership platform set up to facilitate breakthroughs in strategy on the United Nations' SDG number five that concerns gender equality. The fellowship was co-founded by the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), Bridge Institute, UK, and FXBIS (FXB India Suraksha).

Welcoming the delegates, director of the Bridge Institute, UK, Simon Mackenzie, outlined the objective of the institute, which brings business, government, and civil society leaders together to solve problems, and prepare leaders who want to change the world with the requisite leadership skills.

KISS Vice Chancellor Deepak Kumar Behera stressed on framing policies that take cognizance of customary practices coming in the way of rehabilitation of victims of child sexual abuse.

# Court Digitisation Hubs launched in 10 districts

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Dec 12:** District Court Digitization Hubs (DCDH) was inaugurated in 10 districts of Odisha by the Chief Justice of India (CJI), Justice DY Chandrachud in virtual mode in presence of S Muralidhar, Chief Justice of Orissa High Court Monday.

The districts where DCDH was inaugurated are Angul, Bhadrak, Jharuguda, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh and Sonepur. These hubs will cover digitization works of all the 30 districts of the state. Each DCDH would be assigned with the digitization work of the nearby districts. The objective of the DCDH would be to digitize the disposed of case records of the parent districts as well as that of the nearby assigned districts. The scanning work for the paperless courts of the said nearby districts would also be taken up in the concerned DCDH.

Muralidhar stressed upon the need of harnessing technology as



an effective tool for imparting quality justice. He said establishment of e-facilitation centres in all the districts and regular training of all the stake-holders has helped a lot in reaping the benefits of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) initiatives like e-filing, e-payment of Court Fees, and Virtual Hearing.

In the inaugural address, Chandrachud applauded the ICT measures of the High Court of Orissa and said the digitization work undertaken by the High Court under the leadership of S Muralidhar is now a role model for all the High Courts of the country. The CJI emphasized on digitization as the most important step towards modernization of judiciary, especially the trial courts which are the backbone.

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# Digital learning goes for a toss in Rayagada schools

ICT labs gathering dust in 62 institutions as generator sets go missing



REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rayagada, Dec 12:** The Odisha government's plan to provide digital learning to students through Information and Communications Technology (ICT) laboratories in schools in this district has flopped, sources said Monday. Lack of supervision by the government and improper implementation have virtually pushed the project into extinction despite expenditure worth ₹13.64 crore. In the process students hoping to derive benefits of digital learning are getting deprived.

ICT labs lying defunct in institutions like GCD High School (HS) and GBM High School in this town, Kashipur HS, Jagadamba HS, Chandrapur Girls' HS, Kailashpur HS, Kerada HS and Penikana HS in other parts of the district are perfect examples of how money has gone to waste. Schools where labs have been set up are locked up now with majority of the computers found in dustbins.

Locals have smelled a rat in the implementation of the project.

Alleging large-scale irregularities in the programme, they have demanded a high-level probe.

Sources said that in a bid to provide computer-aided learning to students, the state government launched the ICT project in 4,000 schools under e-Vidyalaya scheme. Accordingly, the government sanctioned ₹22 lakh to each school.

The Odisha Knowledge Corporation Limited (OKCL), tasked to implement the project, divided the schools into six zones and assigned various firms to carry out the work. However, the project failed to yield success as the Odisha government abruptly sacked coordinators who were appointed to impart computer training to teachers and students.

Sources said, 62 schools in Rayagada district were selected for the project. Among them seven schools were in Rayagada block, four in Rayagada town, six in Bissam Cuttack block, three in Chandrapur block, two in Gudari town, six in Gunupur block, three in Gunupur town, seven in Kalyansighpur block, four in

Kashipur block, three in Muniguda block, seven in Kolnara block, four in Padmapur block and six in Ramnaguda block.

Two servers, 10 computers, 10 N-computing devices, one K-Yan projector, one smart board, one printer, 10 headphones, one webcam and one speaker were set up in each of these schools. Over 10,000 students in these schools started learning how to use computers after launch of the project. A coordinator was appointed in each school to teach Mathematics, Science and English mainly to students of Class-IX and Class-X with the help of computers.

However, the project ran out of steam after eight years. Digital learning for students now is a thing of the past. Observers alleged that large sums of funds have been misappropriated by installing old machines while submitting bills for new computers under the School Transformation Programme. Money was allegedly siphoned off in the name of setting up of new labs.

The UPS machines have become defunct. Sources also alleged that the silent generator sets bought for the project have also gone missing. They said some of these machines have found a way to the homes of officials of the Education and Social Welfare departments while in some cases they have been sold off for a quick buck.

When contacted some headmasters of institutions said that the labs are lying closed after the dismissals of coordinators while the computers are being used for school work.



SELECTION CAMP: A kabaddi match underway for selection of players to the under-14 girls' team at Bhuban in Dhenkanal district, Monday

OP PHOTO

## Forest official tries to die by suicide over death of pachyderm

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, Dec 12:** A Forest department official tried to die by suicide late Sunday night by consuming poison following the suspension of three officials over elephant poaching in South division of Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district. The official identified as Turam Purti, is a member of the Tiger Protection Force. On being informed, family members rushed Purti to the Jashipur hospital and later, shifted him to Karanjia hospital where he is currently undergoing treatment.

However, the reason why Purti took such a step is yet to be ascertained. Family members suspect that he may have consumed poison after being abused by one of the suspended officials for spilling out the truth about the death of an elephant and the destruction of evidence.

It should be stated here that an elephant was killed by poachers a few days back. Some forest officials tried to destroy evidence by burning the carcass. They have been suspended. Now the suicide bid by Purti has added a new dimension to the entire matter.

## Suspended officials confess their guilt in elephant poaching case

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, Dec 12:** The three forest officials suspended for their bid to conceal the poaching of a tusker in Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district and their subsequent attempts to destroy evidences by burning its carcass have reportedly admitted their crime before a probe team Monday.

During probe, the suspended officials including forester-cum-range in-charge Shiba Shankar Samal, forester Chandrabhanu Behera and guard Binod Das admitted to their guilt, regional wildlife field director T Ashok Kumar informed. Action will be taken against them and other officials who are found involved in the incident, he added.

It is suspected that the poachers might have helped the forest officials in burning the carcass. Allegedly after burning the carcass, the officials had buried some portions and thrown into the river the remaining part. "All involved in the matter will be brought under the ambit of the probe," an official of the investigating team said.

Notably, Similipal sanctuary is the second largest biosphere reserve



FILE PHOTO

in Asia. Despite the fact, the population of elephants is dwindling here. Poaching and lax security are among the main factors responsible for the deaths of elephants.

About a fortnight ago, an elephant was poached in Gurandia section under Jenabila range of Similipal. The poachers had decamped with its tusks. Forest department officials engaged in the area had tried to hide the matter by destroying evidences including burning of the carcass.

Local residents had informed the deputy director of the Similipal sanctuary about the incident. Since then investigations are on. CCF Manoj Nayyar from the office

of the PCCF in Bhubaneswar and a team of over 50 official have reached the spot and are conducting an investigation into the matter. They have also found parts of the burnt carcass.

Honorary wildlife warden Bibekananda Pattnaik alleged that more than three people must have been involved in the burning of the elephant carcass. "I think the poachers helped the forest department officials," he said.

Former honorary wildlife warden Bhanumitra Acharya said the pachyderm numbers are dwindling in the sanctuary as the poachers have been able to break through the security ring set up for the range.

## Facelift on anvil for Jaleswar rly station

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jaleswar, Dec 12:** The railway station in this town will soon undergo a facelift at an expenditure of ₹2.5 crore, officials informed Monday. In fact renovation work has already started. The railway station after its renovation will witness some major changes. Entrance to



FILE PHOTO

the station will be possible from the Platform No. 4 side while the administrative office will also be shifted close to the same platform.

The Jaleswar railway station which functions under Kharagpur Railway Division of South-Eastern Railways annually brings in close to ₹11 crore in revenues and caters to 10 lakh people from Mayurbhanj district and West Bengal.

The sanctioned funds will be spent on construction of car and cycle stand, a park, a ramp, repairing of roads leading to the station, installation of a statue of Bhaktakabi Dina Krushna Das, a new booking counter and toilets for passengers and visitors. Work will start soon and will be completed within their deadline, chief engineer Sanjay Banerjee informed. "The renovation will help in beautification of the railway station and in resolving the problems of people," Jaleswar railway station manager, Khagendra Mandal said.

## 2 arrested in Keonjhar murders over witchcraft

**Keonjhar:** Two persons were arrested Monday in Keonjhar district for allegedly murdering a 45-year-old man and his wife on suspicion that they practiced witchcraft, police said. The bodies of Bahada Murmu and his wife Dhani Murmu, 35, were found in a pool of blood outside their house in Rasool Jhumukipatiya Sahi in Daitari police station area Sunday morning. Bahada's nephew Dhaneswar and a contract killer, identified as Rabi Hembram, were arrested in the case, police said. Dhaneswar had hired Rabi for ₹10,000 as he suspected that due to Bahada's 'witchcraft' his father fell sick a few months ago, police informed. Dhaneswar was detained for questioning and during interrogation, he confessed to the crime, leading to the arrest of the contract killer, police claimed. The murder weapon has also been found, they added.

## MGNREGS MESS IN DIGAPAHANDI

### Job card issued in name of postmaster

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Digapahandi, Dec 12:** Irregularities in MGNREGS projects are being reported from various parts of Odisha. The latest one to surface is the issuance of job cards in the names of many government officials in this block of Ganjam district.

One such case has come to the fore from Bhamrapur under this block after local residents voiced their protests.

Santosh Kumar Bhatt works as post master at Bhamrapur sub-post office. However, an MGNREGS job card (No. OR-12-009-008-003/18043) has been issued in his name. Also names of five members of Bhatt's family have been mentioned in the card. Surprisingly two of them work in government-run offices. Another name among the five is of a 78-year-old woman, who has allegedly died.

Sources said wages of 12 days of a particular project have been cred-



FILE PHOTO

ited into bank accounts of some of the names mentioned in the card.

Notably, during the Covid-19 pandemic and even after the threat had subsided, the Odisha government has laid special stress on the proper execution of MGNREGS. The aim is to provide minimum 100-day work period for all job card holders. However, that is rarely happening in this block, locals alleged.

"Machines should not be used in MGNREGS projects. There is need

for a high level probe into such irregularities. Action must be taken against those who are blatantly violating rules by using machines," stated locals including Kailash Chandhi, Abhimanyu Sarangi and Rabi Mishra.

Bhatt meanwhile feigned ignorance when informed that there was a job card in his name.

When contacted, BDO Haladhara Sabar said that the matter will be investigated and proper action will be taken.

## Hubby beats woman to death over failure in delivering child

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, Dec 12:** A woman was beaten to death by her husband at Dudhishola village under Baripada Sadar police limits in Mayurbhanj district, Sunday night. The deceased was identified as Bangi Marandi, wife of Rasika Marandi. Police have arrested the accused over a complaint filed by the deceased's brother and produced him in court Monday. Rasika allegedly beat Bangi to death for her failure to give birth. Sources said that Rasika had been torturing Bangi on this issue for a substantial period of time. The two regularly fought over this issue.

The incident occurred when Rasika came back home drunk Sunday and started abusing and beating up his wife. He bludgeoned the head of his wife with a stick when she protested. A profusely bleeding Bangi collapsed on the spot. She was taken to the hospital by neighbours. However, doctors pronounced her dead on arrival.

# OTP roadblock for ABHA registration in Jajpur dist

PEOPLE BEING FLEECE AS THEY SEEK TO LINK MOBILE NUMBERS WITH THEIR AADHAAR CARDS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rasulpur, Dec 12:** The failure to link mobile numbers with Aadhaar cards and get an OTP for registration has proved to be a roadblock for many in the Centre-sponsored healthcare scheme Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) under this block in Jajpur district, sources informed Monday. People who have not linked their mobile numbers with Aadhaar cards are not getting the one time password (OTP) required for registration of their names in ABHA.

This block has over 1.5 lakh Aadhaar card holders but only 20 per cent of them have been able to register their names in ABHA. The scheme aims to help the economically weaker sections of the society with healthcare facilities. The Odisha government is not willing to implement the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana in the state but has accepted ABHA.

People can also register their names in ABHA if they have a driving licence. They have to carry their driving licences and verify it at the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission camp held near their place of residence. They will get an ABHA number after the verification is done. A special campaign has been launched all over Odisha to allot ABHA numbers to those living in the state.

People having an ABHA number can avail of healthcare facilities all over India. The ABHA number will have a record of the patient's past history of diseases and the treatment undertaken. Accordingly the patient will then be treated.

However, only 35,000 people have received their ABHA numbers at the Madhuban community health centre under this block. This is because, most of the others do not have their mobile numbers linked to their Aadhaar cards and hence cannot generate the OTP.



This has prompted people to rush to Aadhaar centres to get their mobile phone linked with their cards. However, they are allegedly being fleeced at the centre and are being charged ₹150-₹200 for linking their mobile numbers

to their cards. Many poor families are failing to shell out the cash and hence are being deprived of healthcare facilities.

Even those who have linked their mobile numbers with their Aadhaar cards are finding it difficult to reg-

ister for ABHA. This is because most of the time the ABHA servers remain down. As a result, registration of names is progressing at a snail's pace. Agitation by ASHA workers in this block has also not helped in the cause.

People have demanded that their mobile numbers be linked with their Aadhaar cards free of cost and also to extend the validity of the OTP to 24 hours instead of the 10 minutes at present. They feel that if these two issues are looked into, the number of registration for the ABHA scheme will increase substantially during the duration of the special campaign.

When contacted, health officials at Madhuban CHC said that the special campaign for ABHA registration will soon be closed, but online registrations will continue. Any person, wishing to register his or her name in ABHA should contact health workers, they added.

EAST COAST RAILWAY		
CATERING SERVICES ON GENERAL MINOR UNITS AT DIFFERENT RAILWAY STATIONS		
Sl.No.	Tender No.	Tender Title
1.	G-129-CATG-GMU-BBS-1	CATERING STALL NO-2 THROUGH GENERAL MINOR UNIT (GMU) AT BHUBANESWAR STATION ON PLATFORM NO. 1 NEAR SECOND CLASS WAITING HALL.
2.	G-129-CATG-GMU-BBS-2	CATERING STALL NO-3 THROUGH GENERAL MINOR UNIT (GMU) AT BHUBANESWAR STATION ON PLATFORM NO. 1 NEAR SECOND CLASS WAITING HALL.
3.	G-129-CATG-GMU-BBS-3	CATERING STALL THROUGH GENERAL MINOR UNIT (GMU) AT BHUBANESWAR STATION ON PLATFORM NO. 2/3 NEAR CUTTACK END FOOT OVER BRIDGE.
4.	G-129-CATG-GMU-BBS-4	CATERING STALL THROUGH GENERAL MINOR UNIT (GMU) AT BHUBANESWAR STATION ON PLATFORM NO. 4/5 NEAR MIDDLE FOOT OVER BRIDGE.
5.	G-129-CATG-GMU-BBS-5	CATERING STALL THROUGH GENERAL MINOR UNIT (GMU/LADIES) AT BHUBANESWAR STATION ON PLATFORM NO. 6 NEAR CUTTACK END FOOT OVER BRIDGE.
6.	G-129-CATG-GMU-BBS-6	FRESH FRUIT & JUICE STALL THROUGH GENERAL MINOR UNIT AT BHUBANESWAR STATION ON PLATFORM NO. 1 NEAR GRP OFFICE.
7.	G-129-CATG-GMU-CTC-1	CATERING STALL THROUGH GENERAL MINOR UNIT AT CUTTACK STATION ON PLATFORM NO. 2/3 MIDDLE OF THE PLATFORM.
8.	G-129-CATG-GMU-PURI-1	CATERING STALL THROUGH GENERAL MINOR UNIT AT PURI STATION ON PLATFORM NO. 1/2 AT KHURDA ROAD END.
9.	G-129-CATG-GMU-BALU-1	CATERING STALL THROUGH GENERAL MINOR UNIT AT BALUGAON STATION ON PLATFORM NO. 1 AT KHURDA ROAD END.
10.	G-129-CATG-GMU-BALU-2	CATERING STALL THROUGH GENERAL MINOR UNIT AT BALUGAON STATION ON PLATFORM NO. 2/3 AT MIDDLE OF THE PLATFORM.

Advertised Value (₹): (1) 77,81,800/-, (2) 77,81,800/-, (3) 25,74,000/-, (4) 71,29,200/-, (5) 33,97,229/-, (6) 26,52,520/-, (7) 23,40,000/-, (8) 21,06,000/-, (9) 10,72,500/-, (10) 10,72,500/-  
EMD (Bid Security) (₹): (1) 3,89,100/-, (2) 3,89,100/-, (3) 1,28,700/-, (4) 3,56,500/-, (5) 1,69,900/-, (6) 1,32,700/-, (7) 1,17,000/-, (8) 1,05,300/-, (9) 53,700/-, (10) 53,700/-  
Tender Document Cost (₹): 5,900/- (for Sl. No. 1, 2 & 4), 2,950/- (for Sl. No. 3 & 5 to 10).  
Completion Period : 05 (Years) (for all the tenders).  
Tender Closing Date and Time: At 1200 Hrs. of 05.01.2023 (for all the tenders).  
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : <https://www.irops.gov.in>  
PR-797/N/22-23 Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager / Khurda Road

**OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, GHUMSUR SOUTH DIVISION**  
Bhejput, Bhanjanagar, Ganjam, Odisha, Pin - 761126  
Phone No-06821 -241015, Fax No-06821 -241014,  
E-mail: dfo.ghumsursouth@odisha.gov.in  
Letter No.8995 Dated: 09.12.22

**INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)**  
E-Procurement Bid Identification No.  
No.MM-337: GH (S)-BN)-F-E & C.C-02/2022-23

1 Name of work	: Construction of Buildings
2 No. of works	: 02 Nos.
3 No. of covers	: Single Cover
4 Estimated Cost	: Rs. 10.03 to 15.89 Lakhs
5 Period of Completion	: Three Calendar Months
6 Date & Time of availability of Bid documents in portal	: From 10.00 A.M. of Dated 13.12.2022 to 05 PM Dated 20.12.2022
7 Last date/time for receipt of Bids in the portal.	: Upto 5.00 P.M. of Dated 20.12.2022
8 Date of opening of Bid documents	: At 11.30 AM of 22.12.2022
9 Class of Contractor	: "D" & "C" Class Contractor
10 Name and address of officer Inviting Bid	: Divisional Forest Officer, Ghumsur South Forest Division, Bhejput, Bhanjanagar

Further, details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal [www.tenderodisha.gov.in](http://www.tenderodisha.gov.in) in the Addendum/corrigendum if any will be hosted in the website only.  
Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer  
OIPR-08051/11/0012/2223 Ghumsur South Division

FOCUS ECONOMY

# PROGNOSIS FOR NEXT YEAR



**India can take solace that its growth rate is higher than most of the other large economies. But in the coming year the focus needs to be on increasing resilience and ensuring that lower growth does not cause more hardship to the poorest in the country**

Even software exports which are India's strong point will be affected by massive layoffs in the tech sector in the US. As for government's support, since there is no fiscal room to further expand the deficit, it cannot be counted upon to support growth next year. The combined fiscal deficit (states plus Centre) is above 10% of GDP and the debt ratio is also at a high of 90%. As for investments, the FM has exhorted the private sector to increase investments.

There are early signs, but overall, the numbers are very sluggish. The recent impressive growth in bank credit should be treated with caution, since much of that growth has come from housing, vehicle loans and retail credit. This accounts for a very small portion of consumers. The real push must come from credit growth to industry and commercial projects. As for consumer spending supporting strong growth, that is hampered by two things: inflation and unemployment. Inflation has been above 6% for almost three years. That affects consumers, as they try to cut back on the purchase of discretionary items.

Wholesale price inflation which affects producers and small entrepreneurs is in double digits. The other influence on consumer spending is from unemployment which has now officially climbed to 8%. Job anxiety too can curtail consumer spending. So, all four growth drivers – consumers, investors, government, and exports are facing challenges. Hence slower growth during 2023 is to be expected. Added to this are the challenges from the exchange rate, since the trade deficit is large. Interest rates are already rising adding to the cost of borrowing and cost of capital.

India can take solace that its growth rate is higher than most of the other large economies. But in the coming year the focus needs to be on increasing resilience and ensuring that lower growth does not cause more hardship to the poorest in the country.

*The writer is a noted economist.* ©THE BILLION PRESS

There have been a slew of reports and papers on the Indian economy in the past two weeks. The most important one was the government's own release of data on the economy. This was the official growth estimate for the second quarter of this fiscal, i.e., from July to September from the National Statistical Office. The data comes with a two-month lag and was released at the end of November. The other major report was from the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee. The MPC gave its latest estimate of growth for this fiscal as well as outlook for inflation. Just a day before the MPC forecast was a report from the World Bank on India's growth for this year and the next. Apart from these reports from reputed and official agencies, was a report on India's decadal prospects, from the global bank Morgan Stanley, which got a lot of publicity. Apart from these reports there were several others with an in-depth analysis of growth performance and prospects, complemented by the constant flow of real-time data such as the stock market, tax collections, passenger and cargo traffic, corporate profitability results and so on.

Are the major reports consistent with each other? Take the MPC of the RBI. The MPC revised growth estimates downwards from 7 to 6.8%. It was concerned about the global slowdown, the negative impact on India's exports and headwinds from geopolitical tensions. Added to all this was the tightening of global financial conditions, i.e., higher interest rates and perhaps lower capital flows to emerging market economies like India. MPC said that for the next two quarters growth would slow down even further to 4.3 and 4.2% respectively. None of this is exceptional. You can't accuse MPC of being unreasonably cautious. By contrast the World Bank revised its estimates of India upward from 6.5 to 6.9%, citing improved prospects for the domestic economy. Their respective caution and optimism might appear to be contradictory but their final number estimate of

growth in fact has almost converged. So maybe the World Bank was too cautious earlier and hence revised its estimate upward.

The Morgan Stanley report is extraordinarily upbeat. It takes a decadal view and predicts a doubling of the economic size to 8.5 trillion dollars, and also its per capita income. The report is addressed to global stock market investors and tells them that India's rise and growth in its stock market is "once in a generation shift, and (great) opportunity for investors and companies." Since it takes a medium to long term view, you cannot disagree with Morgan Stanley, at least for now, although the Financial Times of London, commenting on this report advises caution to investors. Growth alone does not spell stock market wealth especially for dollar investors. The FT cites the examples of Brazil and China where stock investors have lost money despite good economic growth.

So, it's best to examine the data as reported by the government itself and then make a prognosis. The second quarter saw economy expanding by 6.3% (compared to last year same period), and this rate of expansion was slower than 13.5%

recorded during April to June. So, the slowdown is palpable and next two quarters might see even slower growth. In terms of the size of the economy it is only about 7.5% bigger than in 2019, which means over the past three years the average growth is barely 2.5% per year. This is the impact of the sharp dent during COVID. But over that same period the US economy (with half million COVID deaths) has expanded faster and so has China (with very few deaths, and despite very harsh lockdowns). It is true that even at 6.8 or 6.9%, this year India will continue to be the fastest growing economy in the world. Bear in mind that China and the US together make up 45% of the global economy, whereas India's share is 3.5%. So, India's growth has to be much higher in order to make a difference to its domestic living standards.

The drivers of economic growth are consumer spending, investments in new capacity and projects, government's fiscal push and exports. The latter clocked negative during October and is badly affected by global recession. In gems, jewellery and engineering, exports were down by more than 20% compared to last October.



Ajit Ranade

**THE RECENT IMPRESSIVE GROWTH IN BANK CREDIT SHOULD BE TREATED WITH CAUTION, SINCE MUCH OF THAT GROWTH HAS COME FROM HOUSING, VEHICLE LOANS AND RETAIL CREDIT**

## In the Booth

We have every one of us a role to fulfill, a work to do, a place which we alone can occupy.

THE MOTHER



In the 182 seat Gujarat Assembly, the recently concluded 2022 election results gifted 156 seats to the BJP which was 52.50% of total votes. The Congress got 17 seats or 27.28% of total votes polled. With a mere 5 seats to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), this new entrant could muster only 12.92% of total votes.

If the Congress and AAP vote percentages are added it would be 40.20%. That implies the BJP is ahead of both these two parties combined by 12.30% votes. While the Samajwadi Party got 1 seat only, 3 seats have gone to Independents. One of the Independents is said to be a BJP rebel.

In the 2017 Gujarat Assembly polls, while 99 seats had been won by the BJP, the Congress had mustered an impressive 78 seats.

These figures, even though sketchy, offer a very clear picture of what is happening in elections. It is true that enormous amounts of money are being spent by the ruling parties, wherever they may be in power, to regain power in their respective constituencies. However, it may not be absolutely correct to say that only money decides the fate of politicians in India today. This argument can be strengthened by taking the example of Himachal Pradesh results where the Congress, in its present weakened form without access to big money, could defeat the BJP which was already in power since December 2017.

What then drives Indian democracy is a question that should be ranking any political thinker. Admittedly, democracy in India has shrunk to the base process of voting only. Once voted to power, present day politicians seem happy to pander to the idea of creating a 'Deep State'. A state which does not respond to citizens and tries to bar them from accessing any information, even bare data concerning where tax payers' money is being spent, as seen in the new Data Protection Bill, will be a monster that could devour anything and everything. For example, the small yet very significant military skirmish between the Indian and Chinese armies on 9 December 2022 should open the eyes of all citizens of this country. This incident, the true magnitude of which is still unknown, indicates an utter failure of Indian diplomacy in the immediate neighborhood as also political bravado of the BJP and its leadership. Failure of diplomacy is predictable since the onus lies on a retired Indian Foreign Service (IFS) bureaucrat who never shone while in service. That shows how pitifully man power deprived the BJP is in terms of foreign policy comprehension. All neighboring countries of India stand inimical to it. With this situation in mind and the latest Chinese aggression, one can feel shaky when hearing rumors that a 'small, limited and controlled' war would be waged to retrieve Pak occupied Kashmir (PoK) areas to create a nationalistic fervor prior to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The current events are a clear warning that if India dares to change the status quo in PoK through military adventurism, the situation may not remain small nor limited and the outcome would certainly not be controlled by the Indian forces alone.

If one looks further into the matter, the victories by the BJP seem to be predictable in some ways. As long as the voting is on religious sentiments, especially in areas where Moslems had previously been aggressive and antagonistic, the BJP seems to enjoy an upper hand. Interestingly, according to early reports by the Election Commission, urban voter turnout even in Gujarat this time was very low. This could be an indication of fatigue shown by conscious Gujarati voters whom many so called liberals are ready to condemn.

On the other hand, where voting is anything but religion based, the dices do not necessarily fall in favor of the BJP. States like Bihar, Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Jharkhand and even Orissa are some glaring examples. It has also to be pointed out that the Moslem population in these states has consistently tried to play cool and has remained under the radar for a very long time in history. Although Hyderabad was earlier known for its aggressive Moslem population that jumped into riot like situations earlier, the rural parts of Telangana and also Andhra do not seem to keep wounds festering on communal lines.

The future of India now depends not only on the rabid and illogical Hindutva types but equally on the violently aggressive Moslems who have nothing to show in their past activities to prove any point against their so called present day oppressors.

## WISDOM CORNER

“Wealth is like sea-water; the more we drink, the thirstier we become; and the same is true of fame.”  
ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

“Keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children.”  
KAHLIL GIBRAN

“The degree of freedom from unwanted thoughts and the degree of concentration on a single thought are the measures to gauge spiritual progress.”  
RAMANA MAHARSHI

## WORDSWORTH

### Domesday

On 24 November 1997, as part of its new policy of openness, the British government published a detailed schedule of all the property and goods it owns (as a sign of the times it is available on CD-ROM as well as in a 550-page book). It lists about 300 billion pounds worth of valuables, including foreign embassies, paintings, landholdings and miscellaneous goods. The formal title of this document is the Register of National Assets but the press has decided, in one of its periodical fits of concerted mild inaccuracy, to call it the New Domesday Book or Domesday Book II. The listing is certainly wide-ranging, but it has only a little in common with the original Domesday Book, which was ordered by William I in 1085 to assess the wealth of England for possible taxation purposes. Nobody is proposing to tax items on the Register; it's more probable that some of them will be sold off to raise cash for the Treasury. In origin, Domesday is just a Middle English spelling of doomsday, a name which only came to be applied to the survey a century after its compilation, at first facetiously as being an unavoidable and final judgement (contemporaries called it "the description of England"). A doom was originally a statute, decree or judgement (especially applied to the day of the Last Judgement in Christian theology, as in the crack of doom, and doomsday itself).

There had earlier been doombooks, codes of laws, particularly the one said to have been compiled by King Alfred at the end of the ninth century. The doom-settle or doom seat was in early medieval times the place of judgement in a court of law. Later doom came to refer more generally to one's fate or destiny, often with a sense of evil befalling one. It's closely related to the verb doom, which first came into the language with the sense of pronouncing judgement or acting as a judge; later it weakened to mean expressing an opinion or considered view and is now rather a formal word. It's also, if you go back far enough, linked to do. The Russian Duma (/ˈduːmə/ Help with IPA), an elected council, is also related to it, as is Dáil (/ˈdɑːl/) the name for the lower house of the Irish parliament. The English suffix -dom is another cousin, which first meant a jurisdiction, an area over which some official had the power of asserting his doom, such as a kingdom, but which later evolved to mean some condition or state, such as freedom or wisdom. Yet another – though much more distant – relative is theme, which in Greek derives from the same root as the English do.

### Donkey's years

It's a pun on donkey's ears, they being long. The phrase, meaning a long time, is chiefly in British use, though known in the USA and elsewhere, and was first recorded in 1916 as donkey's ears (which is why we're sure about the punning origin). Within ten years or so it is recorded in the modern form. The idea was supported by the belief that donkeys did in fact live a very long time.

## SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

# Nature loss hurts people everywhere

The recent United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm El-Sheikh offered encouraging but insufficient signs of an emerging political consensus on the need for global solidarity in the face of global warming. Now, world leaders need to attend to another existential risk to people and the planet: the alarming and growing loss of biodiversity. In the ongoing Convention on Biological Diversity's COP15 summit at Montreal, governments have to agree on a global deal to put the world's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030. The biodiversity crisis is no less important than the climate crisis, and it is escalating quickly. It must be a top political priority for all countries.

Given the current rates of biodiversity loss, some scientists estimate that we are on track to lose three-quarters of the world's species within only a few centuries. This mass extinction and the ongoing threat to ecosystems and habitats is inextricably linked to climate change.

To succeed, COP15 must not only deliver an agreement on the overall mission. It also must set clearly defined goals and establish concrete plans to protect 30% of all land and ocean areas by 2030. Leaders must come with both the national plans and the financing

needed to advance these objectives.

When I was first elected president of Colombia in 2010, I found myself running a country that was almost entirely flooded for 18 months. The climate pattern known as La Niña, aggravated by global warming, meant near-biblical rainfall. Lacking the tools or knowhow to handle the situation, we saw that we needed to make peace with nature. Experts advised focusing on the protection of biodiversity so that is what we did. Colombia, one of the world's most biodiverse countries, now has a combined protected area that is larger than Japan or the United Kingdom.

We understand both the value of nature and what we stand to lose when it is eroded. We also have come to appreciate what we can learn from those with the closest relationship to the land. Many indigenous communities had been warning of an ecological crisis for decades, only to have their voices and rights dismissed. Nature loss hurts people everywhere. It is already harming human health, reducing air quality, undermining our ability to grow food or obtain water, exacerbating extreme weather events, and weakening our ability to mitigate or adapt to climate change. These problems make biodiversity loss a security issue. Continued damage to our ecosystems is one of

the biggest long-term risks to our societies. As an economic matter, the collapse of certain essential ecosystems is all it would take to push countries like mine into bankruptcy. Consider, for example, that around 75% of food crops rely on animal pollinators such as bees, birds, and butterflies. The loss of all animal pollinators seems unthinkable, yet it is a real threat. And if food becomes scarcer, the poorest will suffer first.

Moreover, the destruction of habitats is a serious public-health threat, not least because it is bringing humans and animals into closer and more frequent contact. The WHO warns that this is both causing existing infectious diseases to spread more quickly and accelerating the emergence of novel zoonotic pathogens.

Finally, not only is climate change one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss; the destruction of ecosystems is undermining the planet's ability to neutralise the effects of greenhouse-gas emissions. South America's Andean forests, for example, act as critical carbon sinks, absorbing atmospheric carbon dioxide that would otherwise be hastening the pace of global warming.

Forests, wetlands, underwater kelp forests, mangroves, and other natural systems also provide pro-

tection from extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heatwaves, and storms, by acting as natural buffers or reservoirs. Biodiversity loss not only makes climate change worse, but also eliminates our best line of defense against it.

COP15 offers a major opportunity for governments to achieve a breakthrough – equivalent to the 2015 Paris climate agreement – that unites the world behind one mission: to halt, and ideally reverse, biodiversity loss by the end of this decade. To be sure, the current effort suffers from a lack of high-level political engagement, leading many to question why we have two separate convention processes for issues that go hand in hand. They are right to wonder.

In the meantime, though, we cannot afford further delay on setting ambitious targets to protect and restore biodiversity this decade. The recent "loss and damage" agreement at COP27 demonstrated that, with sufficient resolve, countries can work together on seemingly intractable issues. With time running out, world leaders must nurture this spirit of cooperation in Montreal.

*The writer, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, is a former President of Colombia.* ©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Juan Manuel Santos

**MANY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES HAD BEEN WARNING OF AN ECOLOGICAL CRISIS FOR DECADES, ONLY TO HAVE THEIR VOICES AND RIGHTS DISMISSED**

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Scintillating performance

Sir, Kudos to young wicketkeeper-batsman Ishan Kishan for playing an outstanding knock against Bangladesh in the third One Day International (ODI) match. Kishan's scintillating performance at Chattogram that broke several records in one go will go down in history as one of the most remarkable innings played ever by a batsman. Virat Kohli, his partner at the crease, also looked in a golden touch when he surpassed Ricky Ponting's landmark by slamming his 72nd international hundred and ending his three years long drought of ODI centuries. Both Ishan Kishan and Virat Kohli must be lauded for salvaging Team India's pride in the final match of the series. By joining the elite club of double tons, Ishan has now emerged as an able contender for the squad of the 50 Overs World Cup scheduled for next year. He has passed the audition with flying colours.  
**Tushar Anand, PATNA**

### Care for elderly

Sir, The Assam government has approved special casual leave to its employees to spend time with their parents for the second consecutive year. Chief Minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma had announced this initiative for state government employees after assuming office in 2021. This indeed is a very good gesture, an initiative worth emulating by other states and the Centre. Industrialisation, urbanisation and globalisation have cast their shadow on traditional family set up and the beautiful values and norms that once were an asset in our Indian heritage but have faded over the years. Today, the nuclear family system has replaced the joint family system. In a joint family system our parents and grandparents were cared for, and consulted by their children and loved and respected by their grandchildren. Due to fast paced and turbulent changes happening in the society, the respect for elders is fast dwindling. The life of the elderly in India is turning from bad to worse due to many factors created by the modern world. It is really unfortunate that many of them are forced to live lives of humiliation, discrimination, abuse and isolation, without financial, medical or emotional support. And what is shocking is that this is common across all social classes and across urban and rural areas. Special casual leave as initiated by the Assam government is definitely a step to make the younger generation understand and be aware of respecting, caring and supporting the elderly. The government should also monitor so that this good initiative is not misused by some.  
**M Pradyu, KANNUR**

# national

## of the day quote

Rajiv Gandhi (former Prime Minister) once said if one rupee comes from Delhi only 15 paise reaches the ground, those days are now gone

ASHWINI VAISHNAV | UNION MINISTER

After drinking liquor, people become evil. We have imposed liquor ban on the demand of women of the state and consensus of every political party. It has benefitted a large section of society. Hence, it will continue here

NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CM

It should be ensured that no innocent businessmen were harassed and action taken against only those against whom there is solid evidence

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

## SHORT TAKES

### SI alleges assault by advocate hubby

**New Delhi:** A woman sub-inspector (SI) of Delhi Police accused her advocate husband of abuse and physical assault in southwest Delhi's Dwarka, officials said Monday. The matter came to light after Doli Tevathia posted a video and described the alleged assault on Twitter, they said. "I am a sub-inspector in the Delhi Police. Presently on maternity leave. I am constantly facing abuse from my husband advocate Tarun Dabas.

### Punjab Police SIT grills Badal

**Chandigarh:** Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal was on Monday questioned for nearly three hours by a special investigations team of Punjab Police probing into the 2015 Kotkapura police firing case. The special investigations team (SIT), led by Additional Director General of Police LK Yadav, had summoned Badal to appear before the probe team Monday. Badal was the deputy chief minister and holding the home portfolio when incidents of desecration of religious texts and the subsequent police firing at people protesting against it had taken place in Faridkot in 2015.

### Pak-based OTT platform blocked

**New Delhi:** The government Monday issued directions for blocking a Pakistan-based OTT platform's website, two mobile applications, four social media accounts and smart TV app, saying a series being shown by it was detrimental to India's national security and integrity. The platform Vidly TV had released a web series titled "Sevak: The Confessions" on the anniversary of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks and was found to be detrimental to the national security, sovereignty and integrity of India, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said.

### Arunachal: Drone carries medicines

**Itanagar:** After Meghalaya, drone-based services were launched in Arunachal Pradesh Monday to deliver medicines and other healthcare essentials in the remote, mountainous and far-flung areas to save time and costs, officials said. Gurugram-based TechEagle has developed the drone-based services and launched it in collaboration with the Arunachal Pradesh government and World Economic Forum.



Elections are not a beauty contest and the Congress party has most of the times refrained from naming the chief ministerial candidate before elections as it believes it is a contest among parties, their ideologies and manifestos

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

## 415MN LIFTED OUT OF POVERTY

More than 400 million people were lifted out of poverty in India between 2005-06 to 2019-21, the government said Monday citing UNDP's Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2022



# Bhupendra Patel begins 2nd innings as Guj CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gandhinagar, Dec 12:** Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Bhupendra Patel Monday took oath as the Chief Minister of Gujarat for a second straight term at a star-studded ceremony in Gandhinagar along with a 16-member Council of Ministers, which included one woman, four days after the saffron outfit stormed to power in the state with a historic mandate. Patel (60) was administered the oath as the 18th Chief Minister by Governor Acharya Devvrat at a grand ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, several members of the Union Cabinet and chief ministers of BJP-ruled states at the Helipad Ground near the new Secretariat here.

Sixteen other ministers, eight of them of cabinet rank - the new ministerial team has representation from Patidar, Koli, tribal and Dalit communities - were also sworn-in after the BJP December 8 won seventh straight term in office in Gujarat with victory in a record 156 Assembly constituencies in the 182-member House.

The Congress was relegated to a distant second spot with 17 seats, while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) finished third with win in five segments. The new entrants include 11 former ministers. The Council of Ministers has only one woman member - Bhauben Babariya - who was elected from the Rajkot Rural (Schedule Castes) Assembly seat. She has been cabinet rank.

The seven other Cabinet ministers are Kanu Desai, Rishikesh



Patel, Raghvji Patel, Balvantsinh Rajput, Kunvarji Bavaliya, Mulu Bera and Kuber Dindor.

Harsh Sanghavi and Jagdish Vishwakarma were sworn in as ministers of state (MoS) with an independent charge. Sanghavi was Minister of State for Home in the earlier Bhupendra Patel government. The six other ministers of the state are Parshottam Solanki, Bachu Khabad, Mukesh Patel, Praful Pansheriya, Kuverji Halpati and Bhikhusinh Parmar.

Of these 16 ministers, four belong to the Koli community (Bavaliya, Khabad, Solanki and Mukesh Patel), three are Patidars (Raghavji, Rishikesh and Praful), three OBCs (Vishwakarma, Parmar and Bera) and two are tribals (Halpati and Dindor). Sanghavi is a Jain, Desai a Brahmin, while Rajput belong to the Kshatriya community.

Prime Minister Modi, who addressed nearly three dozen campaign rallies across the state, and is widely credited for the BJP's stellar poll performance, congratulated CM Patel and his new team in a tweet. "Congratulations to Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel on taking

oath as CM of Gujarat. I would like to also congratulate all those who took oath as Ministers. This is an energetic team which will take Gujarat to even newer heights of progress" the PM tweeted after the ceremony.

Of the 11 former ministers who were inducted into Bhupendra Patel's new team, seven were part of the government led by him from September 2021 to December 2022. They are Sanghavi, Jagdish Vishwakarma, Kanubhai Desai, Rushikesh Patel, Raghavji Patel, Kuber Dindor and Mukesh Patel.

Four others - Solanki, Bera, Khabad, and Bavaliya - had served as ministers in previous BJP governments. Prominent among those who have been dropped from the first Bhupendra Patel ministry were Jitu Vaghani, Purnesh Modi and Kiritsinh Rana. Key ruling party MLAs like Alpesh Thakor, Hardik Patel and Rivaba Jadeja - who were expecting a place in the Council of Ministers - were ignored but can hope to get portfolios in a future cabinet expansion.

## 3 coaching students die by suicide in Kota

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kota, Dec 12:** Three students preparing for competitive exams in Rajasthan's Kota have allegedly committed suicide in two separate incidents, police said Monday.

Two deceased were from Bihar while one teenager was resident of Madhya Pradesh, they said, adding no suicide notes have been found yet.

The deceased were identified as Ankush Anand (18), a NEET aspirant, and resident of Bihar's Supaul district and Ujjwal Kumar (17), a JEE aspirant from Gaya district. Both Bihar natives were found hanging from ceiling fans in their respective rooms early Monday morning in the same Paying Guest accommodation in Talwandi area under Jawahar Nagar police station, police said. While Pranav Verma (17), a NEET aspirant from the MP's Shivpuri district, has allegedly consumed some poisonous substance in his hostel under Kunhari police station area on late Sunday night, they said.

Initial inquiry revealed that both were irregular in attending their coaching classes for quite a long time and were out of track of the studies and that was likely to have driven them to study stress and to take the extreme step, the senior officer said. However, no suicide notes were recovered from their rooms, he added. Ujjwal Kumar's sister has also been taking coaching in Kota and living in girl's hostel in the same area, police said.



## BOGTUI KILLINGS

# Prime accused found dead in CBI custody



Security personnel stand guard near a damaged house at Bogtui village, in Birbhum district (PTI/FILE)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** In a suspected case of suicide, the prime accused in the violence in Bogtui village of West Bengal's Birbhum district was found dead in CBI custody Monday, officials said.

Lalan Sheikh, who was arrested December 4 from a hideout along the Bengal-Jharkhand border, was "found hanging" in the agency's Rampurhat camp office in Birbhum, a source in the Central Bureau of Investigation said.

"The body of the prime accused in the Bogtui violence was found hanging in the washroom of the guest house, where we have set up our temporary camp, at around 4:30 pm. We have informed the police and all necessary procedures are being followed," the CBI source told PTI. The agency has informed the National Human Rights Commission and judiciary in accordance with the laid down procedure, officials here said.

At least 10 people were killed in the arson and violence in Bogtui that followed the murder of local TMC leader Bhadu Sheikh March 21. The CBI is probing the case on the orders of the Calcutta High Court.

In its charge sheets filed in the cases linked to the Bogtui violence and arson, the federal probe agency has alleged that it was a "direct fallout" of Sheikh's killing. It has been alleged that after Sheikh was killed, his loyalists and group members, armed with sharp weapons, crude bombs and country-made firearms, went on a rampage burning the houses of rivals in the village.

The CBI has alleged the rivalry between groups of the deceased, Palash Sheikh and Sona Sheikh for dominance in the area and control over the income from illegal collection of money from commercial vehicles and other unlawful activities had existed for a long time.

## 40% questions in Class X, 30% in Class XII to be competency based



### CBSE BOARD EXAMS 2023

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** At least 40 per cent questions in the CBSE Class X exam and 30 per cent in Class XII exams in 2023 will be competency based, the Ministry of Education said.

These questions will comprise multiple formats such as objective type, constructing response type, assertion and reasoning and case based. The information was shared by Minister of State for Education Annapurna Devi in response to a written question in Lok Sabha.

"In pursuance of NEP-2020, CBSE has been introducing competency-based questions in the Classes X and XII board examinations to reform the pattern of examinations.

These questions comprise multiple formats such as objective type, constructing response type, as-

### No separate entrance test for AIIMS, other INI

MBBS admissions to all the AIIMS and other institutes of national importance will continue to be through NEET with the proposal for a separate entrance test for such institutes being rejected at the recently held governing body meeting of the AIIMS. The governing body of AIIMS headed by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya took the decision December 6. It rejected the proposal of a separate entrance examination at the undergraduate level, as distinct from NEET, for all the AIIMS and institutes of National Importance after deliberation. "After deliberations, it was felt that the current practice of a combined entrance examination for all medical colleges be continued," the minutes of the meeting read.

sertion and reasoning and case based format," she said. "In the academic session 2022-23, approximately 40 per cent questions in Class X board examinations and approximately 30 per cent questions in Class XII are competency based," the minister added. Theory examinations for Class X and Class XII for the academic year will begin from February 15, 2023. However, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is yet to announce the exam schedule.



Kashmiri Pandits, working under Prime Minister's Development Package, raise slogans during a protest demanding their relocation in Jammu (PTI PHOTO)

## Anil Deshmukh bailed out after 13 months

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, Dec 12:** The Bombay High Court Monday granted conditional bail to former Maharashtra minister Anil Deshmukh after he spent nearly 13 months in jail custody in alleged corruption case lodged by the CBI.

However, after Additional Solicitor-General Anil Singh, ap-

pearing for the CBI, sought a stay on the order as it plans to move the Supreme Court, the high court said the bail order would be effective after 10 days.

A senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) Leader, Deshmukh, 74, was nabbed early on November 2, 2021 in alleged corruption and money-laundering cases being probed by the Central Bureau of

Investigations and later the Enforcement Directorate. Justice M. S. Karnik, who had reserved his order on Dec. 8, pronounced the verdict, allowing Deshmukh bail on a Rs 1,00,000 bond. Last month, the high court had granted him bail in the ED money-laundering case, but the CBI Special Court had rejected his bail plea, which Deshmukh challenged in the high court.

## Delhiites feeling the 'December heat' wait for cold days

### THE CITY HAS MOSTLY REMAINED WARM DURING THE DAY SO FAR THIS MONTH

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** "Is it winter yet?" This is how most of the residents in the national capital are reacting now a days as December has almost reached midway. However, with Delhiites yet to feel the cold December, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast for the week indicates that the minimum temperature could drop to around 6 degrees Celsius



by December 17.

The maximum temperature in the national capital Monday was recorded at 28.7 degrees Celsius, which is likely to drop over the week ahead, the forecast indicates. As per experts, the temperature

is likely to fall to around 24 degrees Celsius by December 15. "Due the impact of Western disturbance, winds were light over North West India leading to increase in temperatures. Maximum temperature of Delhi was 28.4 degrees, 4 de-

The maximum temperature in the national capital Monday was recorded at 28.7 degrees Celsius, which is likely to drop over the week ahead, the forecast indicates

As per experts, the temperature is likely to fall to around 24 degrees Celsius by December 15

grees above normal. Will drop in the next 2-3 days," said Mahesh Pahlawat, vice president meteorology and climate change, Skymet.

An official said that misty mornings are also on the forecast for Delhi over the next six days and shallow to moderate fog is likely over isolated parts of Delhi, Haryana, Chandigarh and Punjab

over the next two days. The IMD record in Delhi's Safdarjung stated that in 2021, December 5 was the hottest day which recorded 26.5 degrees Celsius while in 2007, the highest temperature recorded was 26.9 degrees Celsius December 25, which is considered as a coldest day. The city has mostly remained warm during the day so far this month. "Since I shifted to Delhi, this is the first time in the last four years that I am waiting desperately for a cold December. It feels like I am sitting somewhere in Rajasthan," said Shobit Sharma, a resident of Malviya Nagar in south Delhi. Meanwhile, the air quality in the national capital on Monday remained in the moderate category.





# UP byelections show BJP's slippery grip on Dalit votes

### THE RESULTS OF THE BYELECTIONS ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE PARTY WITH DALIT VOTERS' SUPPORT ENDS UP WINNING

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Dec 12:** The results of the byelections to Mainpuri Lok Sabha and Khatauli Assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh made it apparent that the BJP failed to win Dalit votes, which is being considered a big challenge for the upcoming elections.

The candidates from the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Congress, however, did not contest in these elections.

According to the data from political parties, there are around 1.5 lakh Dalit voters in Mainpuri which were dominated by the BSP. Gradually, the party's hold on the votes weakened, which divided the voters and resulted in the BSP winning only one seat in the 2022 Assembly elections. The results of the byelections also made it clear that the party with the Dalit voters' support ends up winning the polls.

According to election data, there are more than 50,000 Dalit voters in Khatauli seat. Rashtriya Lok Dal's (RLD) Jayant Singh and Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav devised a strategy to gain the Dalit



votes in the seat, wherein a combination of Jats, Gurjars and Dalits was seen. Azad Samaj Party chief Chandrashekhar Azad also contested to focus on the Dalits. The BJP suffered huge losses with a direct breach in the vote bank after the alliance of the RLD, the SP and Azad's party.

In the byelections, Azad has been seen several times on SP platforms openly campaigning for the SP and RLD candidates, unlike in the Assembly elections. According to experts, the alliance candidates have secured votes in almost every village of the Khatauli seat. The alliance won 44 booths, while the BJP could win only 25. Experts believe that the saffron party selected the wrong candidates for the seat whose behaviour harmed its chances of winning.

Many BJP leaders worked to win the Dalit votes but failed due to the alliance's social engineering.

Senior political analyst Rajendra Singh said that due to non-availability of BSP candidates in the seat, the alliance roped in Azad Samaj Party's Chandrashekhar and reached out to every village.

According to a senior SP worker, Mainpuri benefited from sympathy for late SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav and development, along with Akhilesh Yadav's strategy and village visits. Apart from this, a team of Dalit and cadre leaders from the SP was created who reminded the villagers of the Constitution and the work done by Mulayam Singh and got the votes in their favour, resulting in the party's huge victory. BJP district presidents could not prevent the SP from winning in their own booths.

Senior political analyst PN Dwivedi said that the role of Dalit votes in SP's victory in Mainpuri could not be denied. He added that a strong combination of Muslim, Gurjar, Jat and Dalit votes was responsible for BJP's loss.

# Is Nitish losing political relevance in Bihar?

After the formation of the Mahagathbandhan in Bihar in August this year, three byelections took place and the BJP, which is the lone Opposition party in the state, has managed to win two seats of Gopalganj and Kurhani

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Patna, Dec 12:** In Bihar, there are three political forces - RJD, BJP and JD(U) - and whenever two have come together, they have formed the government in the state. This was proven in 2010, 2015 and 2020.

Now, such a situation is changing in Bihar as Nitish Kumar-led JD(U) and Tejashwi Yadav-led RJD are jointly running the government in Bihar, but they are failing to convince the voters. Is the myth of the two-party-making-government breaking now? Are Nitish Kumar and Tejashwi Yadav losing relevance in Bihar - these are the big questions in Bihar these days.

After the formation of the Mahagathbandhan in Bihar in August this year, three byelections took place and the BJP, which is the lone Opposition party in the state, has managed to win two seats of Gopalganj and Kurhani. Even the Mokama seat was not won due to RJD or Tejashwi Yadav. It was the impact of Bahubali leader Anant Singh, who helped his wife Neelam Devi to win the bypoll.

Prashant Kishor, who is currently in East Champaran for his Jan Suraj Padyatra, said: "You are talking about uncle (Nitish Kumar) and nephew Tejashwi Yadav but they are only cheating the people of Bihar. What is the capacity of the



uncle-nephew government in Bihar; they lost two out of three bypolls. The seat of Mokama was won due to Bahubali leader Anant Singh. They are unable to win bypolls." "Tejashwi Yadav had promised to give 10 lakh jobs from the first signature when he came to power. Is the ink of his pen dried up or the pen broken? Why is the cabinet meeting not taking place on jobs?" Kishor asks.

The result of Kurhani bypoll has given a clear message that the anti-incumbency factor is creeping against Nitish Kumar and it is rising. He is the longest serving chief minister of Bihar, still the development works are not taking place

as it was expected. "The voting patterns in Bihar are changing now. The Mahagathbandhan government promised 20 lakh jobs and youths of Bihar are expecting jobs from Nitish and Tejashwi. Unfortunately, they are not giving jobs in accordance with the promises they have made in the past. Caste factor is relevant in Bihar, but if the political parties would only depend on it and make a plan accordingly to win the election, it is the biggest mistake in the current situation. You cannot fool the people, you have to deliver. I personally believe that the anti-incumbency against Nitish Kumar is affecting Tejashwi Yadav,"

said Rajan Sharma, a retired government employee of the education department.

"The Mahagathbandhan government is failing on several issues like liquor ban, inflation, crime, corruption, issues of farmers, industries, food processing units and others. When Tejashwi Yadav was the Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly, he used to raise the issue of unemployment, lack of industries and food processing units. We have not seen any industry or food processing unit installed in the last three months," Rajesh Kumar, a resident of Danapur said.

"The political parties of Bihar are only thinking about how their own goals would be achieved through permutation and combination of caste and community factors and through vote 'Katwas'. This is actually a negative politics the RJD, JD(U) or the BJP are doing. No one thinks about the actual development of Bihar. They just use blame game politics to pass the poll examinations. The Mahagathbandhan leaders blame the BJP for running communal agendas to polarise voters and while the saffron leaders blame them for the return of jungle raj, corruption, scams," said Sanjay Kumar Pandey, a resident of RK Puram, Patna.

# Bihar Yatra to witness presence of Rahul, Kharge

The yatra is likely to be more than 1,000 km long and cover nearly half of the state's 38 districts

AGENCIES

**Patna, Dec 12:** AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will visit Bihar as part of a 1,000 km 'Yatra', that will commence later this month, a senior party functionary said Monday. The Bihar Yatra will be on lines of the Bharat Jodo Yatra currently being undertaken by Gandhi and other Congressmen.

Addressing his inaugural press conference upon being appointed as the BPC president, Rajya Sabha MP Akhilesh Prasad Singh said Kharge has already accepted the invitation to address the rally at Banka, where the state-wide yatra will take off December 28.

"When the yatra reaches Patna, a huge rally will be organised which will be addressed by either Sonia Gandhi or Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, depending upon their respective availability," said Singh adding that Rahul Gandhi, "will definitely be at the public meeting in Gaya where the yatra is scheduled to conclude. By that time he will be through with the Bharat Jodo Yatra."

Although the official website of the "Bharat Jodo Yatra" states that

the 3,500 km long march will end in Pathankot on January 21, there have been reports in a section of the media that it will conclude at Delhi on the Republic Day.

The yatra in Bihar is likely to be more than 1,000 km long and cover nearly half of the state's 38 districts.

The new Bihar Congress president also said that his party was not satisfied with only one cabinet berth in the Nitish Kumar government and he would be meeting the chief minister soon to press for more.

He also said that there was a need for a "coordination committee" in the ruling "Mahagathbandhan" and claimed, "had there been a better coordination among allies, we would not have lost Kurhani assembly by-poll."

"When we demand a coordination committee, we are not challenging the wisdom of the Chief Minister who is the leader of the Mahagathbandhan in Bihar. We are only pointing out to his initiative when the Grand Alliance was first formed in 2015 and he used to meet even district-level office bearers of the RJD and the Congress," added Singh.



ON WARPATH: Traders stage a protest under the banner of Varanasi Vyapar Mandal, at the GST office in Varanasi, Monday.

PTI PHOTO

# PHCs in UP to have telemedicine facilities soon

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Dec 12:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has said that all primary health centres (PHCs) in the state will be equipped with ultramodern facilities like tele-consultancy and telemedicine soon.

They will be linked with all medical colleges, district hospitals of the state as well as Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGI) and King George's

Medical University (KGMU), he added Sunday. "Health services must be linked with technology. Over 4,600 PHCs of the state will be linked with all medical colleges, district hospitals of the state as well as SGPGI and KGMU. For this, health workers of the state will also be specially trained," Adityanath said.

The Chief Minister, according to a statement, has also emphasised the importance of advanced health-care services in the state. "We are installing health ATMs at all primary

health centres for telemedicine. Over 4,600 primary health centres of the state will be connected with health ATMs, which will provide the facility of testing 60 types of diseases at a single centre. For this, proper training will also be provided to the paramedical staff," he added.

He also said, "India propagated yoga and as a result, over 200 countries all over the world are leading a healthy lifestyle. Our country is being seen as a big hub of health and wellness centres."

# Vehicles with RJD logos found 'smuggling' cattle

AGENCIES

**Kolkata/Patna, Dec 12:** Two vehicles with number-plates of Bihar having the logos of Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) pasted on their windscreens and carrying cattle were stopped by villagers from the Egra-Bankura Bypass near Raniganj in West Bengal's West Burdwan district. The villagers later handed over

over the vehicles to them. However, if the police do not register a case of cattle smuggling, we will start massive agitation in the district in the coming days," he added.

The district police officials were, however, totally tight-lipped over the incident. There was no reaction from the ruling Trinamool Congress on this count till the time the report was filed.

However, the leader of the op-



the two vehicles along with their drivers and helpers (total four) to the police. The locals alleged that the vehicles were carrying smuggled cattle.

BJP's youth wing secretary of the local Asansol (South) Assembly constituency, Avik Kumar Mondal claimed that the villagers stopped these two vehicles carrying cattle.

"Both these vehicles had number-plates of Bihar and the logos of RJD were attached on the windscreens of both the vehicles. The vehicles did not have proper documents like challans of the cattle they were carrying. Later the cops of the local Raniganj Police Station came and the villagers handed

position in West Bengal Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari has launched scathing attacks against the state government accusing the state police of directly facilitating cattle smuggling in the state.

"The state police are facilitating cattle smuggling through state-highways and district roads of Asansol-Raniganj-Bankura circuit. These vehicles involved in cattle smuggling move after midnight to avoid public attention without proper documents for transporting cattle. The state police supervise the entire operation during the night hours. Now it is proved that the nexus extends to Bihar as well," Adhikari claimed.

# Students to assist govt agencies during Magh Mela

IF SUCCESSFUL, THE INITIATIVE WILL BE REPLICATED DURING THE KUMBH MELA IN 2025 ON A LARGER SCALE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Prayagraj, Dec 12:** For the first time, about 500 students from various education institutions in Prayagraj will be trained as 'Magh Mitras' to help the government departments in crowd management, surveillance, rescue operation, and maintaining sanitation/hygiene during the Magh Mela which begins next month.

Volunteers from the Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology (MNNIT), National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Service Scheme (NSS), and other private engineering colleges will be tasked with helping the government agencies.

The Magh Mitras will also be guiding the pilgrims and devotees



with relevant information. Divisional commissioner, Prayagraj, and chairman, Prayagraj Mela Authority, Vijay Vishwas Pant said, "This is the first of its kind initiative for Magh

Mela where the administration is engaging young volunteers in such a large number to support them. This will not only help in better pilgrim experience but will also be a great exposure for these

students. They will be engaged for a period of 45 days, beginning January 5."

"We will also offer an opportunity to Magh Mitra volunteers to work with the government administration and be part of the spiritual legacy of Prayagraj," said Pant.

To equip them with all the relevant information a workshop will be organised where students/volunteers will be educated about the mela history and dynamics.

"They will also be given 'May I Help You' T-shirts for the identity purpose. Their services will be mainly sought for four areas - tourism, sanitation, security and planning," he said.

For tourism, the volunteers will be deployed at the tourist spots to help facilitate beautification, tem-

ple restoration, preservation and making creative collateral for promoting Magh Mela.

For sanitation, Magh Mitra will help to maintain a strict eye on mela area cleanliness and safe disposal of all kinds of waste.

On the security front, Magh Mitra volunteers will help the law enforcement agencies in crowd management, surveillance, emergency rescue operations and traffic management.

Similarly, on the planning front, the volunteers will assist mela authorities in coordinating with all departments, managing documentation at the mela office as well as event management.

If successful, the initiative will be replicated during Kumbh Mela in 2025 on a larger scale, said officials.



of the day quote

The enthusiasm which is visible in sports persons is being seen in every person who has come from there (Tamil Nadu to attend the Kashi Tamil Sangamam)

ANURAG THAKUR | UNION MINISTER

It was a great insult to the people of Pondicherry that a government subservient to the Governor was ruling the territory

MK STALIN | TN CM

I can't even imagine in my dreams to insult icons like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Maharana Pratap and Shri Guru Govind Singh. You are aware that I do not hesitate to express regrets or apologise immediately even if I unintentionally made a mistake

BHAGAT SINGH KOSHYARI | MAHA GOVERNOR

SHORT TAKES

EC to hear Shiv Sena's warring factions Jan 5

New Delhi: The Election Commission Monday fixed January 5 as the next date for hearing the arguments of the Shiv Sena's warring factions led by Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. The decision was taken after lawyers from both the factions during a hearing Monday sought more time to examine documents submitted by the rival groups to claim the party name and symbol Senior counsels Kapil Sibal and Mahesh Jethmalani appeared before the full Election Commission on behalf of the Thackeray faction and the Shinde faction of the Shiv Sena respectively.

Umar Khalid gets 7 day interim bail

New Delhi: A Delhi court Monday granted seven-day interim bail to student activist Umar Khalid, in the case relating to the "larger conspiracy" of 2020 Delhi riots, to attend his sister's marriage. Khalid had, however, sought two weeks bail. Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat passed the order making clear that the interim bail will start from December 23 and Khalid will have to surrender December 30. Senior advocate Trideep Pais represented Khalid whereas Special Public Prosecutor Amit Prasad appeared for Delhi Police. On December 7, a Delhi court had reserved its order in Khalid's plea seeking interim bail.

India, Lanka resume Chennai-Jaffna flight

Colombo/Chennai: India and Sri Lanka Monday resumed flight services between Chennai and Jaffna, three years after the island nation discontinued the services due to Covid, and the passengers expressed happiness about the hassle-free journey. The first flight on resumption of services landed this morning at the Jaffna International Airport, Upul Dharmadasa, the Chairman of the Airport and Aviation Services told reporters.

Dimple Yadav takes oath as Lok Sabha MP

New Delhi: Dimple Yadav, wife of former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav and daughter-in-law of late Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav, took oath as MP in Lok Sabha Monday. She was accompanied by her husband Akhilesh Yadav, when she arrived in the morning to take oath. In a heart-warming gesture, Dimple Yadav touched former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi's feet after taking oath as MP in Lok Sabha.

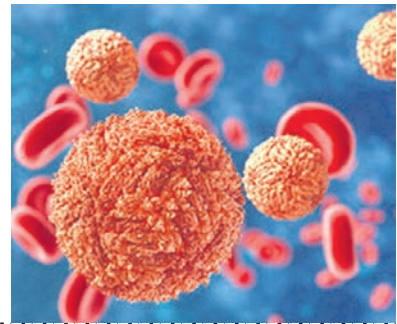


When the BJP wants people's votes, it gives free ration, oil, gram, jaggery and salt. But when it gets the votes, it stops giving free ration

AKHILESH YADAV | SP CHIEF

5-YR-OLD GIRL IS K'TAKA'S FIRST ZIKA VIRUS PATIENT

Karnataka Health Minister K Sudhakar Monday said a five-year-old girl from Raichur district has become the first confirmed Zika virus case in the state. The Minister also made it clear that there is no need for any worry or concern, as the government is taking all the necessary measures, and will also be issuing a set of guidelines



KHERI VIOLENCE CASE

How long Ashish can be kept in jail, asks SC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 12: While hearing a bail plea filed by Ashish Mishra, prime accused in the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence incident, the Supreme Court Monday observed that balance has to be struck between the rights of the victims' and the accused, and further queried, for how long can Mishra be kept behind the bars.

A bench comprising justices Surya Kant and Krishna Murari asked its registrar to ascertain from the Additional Sessions Judge, Lakhimpur Kheri, how much time the trial in the case is likely to take to conclude. Mishra is the son of Union Minister Ajay Mishra Teni.

During the hearing, justice Kant queried the Additional Advocate General of Uttar Pradesh Garima Prasad, "how long someone should be kept in...victim has rights, the accused also has some rights, society has interest in all these things...keeping him indefinitely would amount to pre-judging him as guilty."

Opposing Mishra's bail plea, Uttar Pradesh government counsel said it is a grave offence and there are statements of injured eyewitnesses regarding Mishra's presence at the crime spot.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing Mishra, said his client was not present at the crime spot. Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, representing the victims' families, vehemently opposed Mishra's bail plea and added that in murder cases when trial court and the high court had refused bail, then in such matters the apex court should not

EIGHT PEOPLE, INCLUDING FOUR FARMERS OCTOBER 3, 2021 WERE KILLED IN LAKHIMPUR KHERI IN CLASHES DURING A FARMERS' PROTEST. MISHRA WAS ARRESTED OCTOBER 9 LAST YEAR IN THE CASE

THE FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE FARMERS, MOWED DOWN BY A CAR BELONGING TO MISHRA IN LAKHIMPUR KHERI, HAVE BEEN OPPOSING MISHRA'S BAIL PLEA

interfere. Dave said this is a very serious case and pointed out that witnesses in the case have already been attacked.

The bench said the witnesses have been granted protection as per order of the court. Rohatgi said the records show that the person in the car was one Sumit Jaiswal and his client was not at the scene of the crime. He added that Mishra was at a wrestling match and records of mobile tower locations prove that, and questioned how is murder charge attracted?

Dave submitted that crime was premeditated and cited Mishra's father's statement that protesting farmers will be taught a lesson. "If someone can be killed merely because they are agitating, then nobody is safe in a democracy..." said Dave.

After hearing arguments, the top court sought details of the time frame within which the trial would be completed and also asked the UP government to file an additional affidavit giving details about the progress and pace of investigation and proceedings on complaint by Jaiswal. The top court will take up the matter for further hearing in January next year.



A farmer sprays pesticide in a mustard field in Morigaon district, Assam

PTI PHOTO

Smuggled gold seizures hit 3-yr high

Gold seizures across the country have gone up this year when compared to 2,383 kg seized in the 2021 calendar year and 2,154 kg in 2020. In 2019, 3,673 kg of gold was seized

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Gold seizures by enforcement agencies have hit a three-year high of 3,083 kg in November this year, with Kerala accounting for the maximum cases of smuggled gold seized, Parliament was informed Monday.

Gold seizures across the country have gone up this year when compared to 2,383 kg seized in the 2021 calendar year and 2,154 kg in 2020. In 2019, 3,673 kg of gold was seized. In 2022 (up to November), 3,083.61 kg of gold was seized in 3,588 cases.

In Kerala, 690 kg of the yellow metal was seized in 948 cases in 2022, up from 587 kg in 2021 and 406 kg in 2020. In 2019, 725 kg was seized. Besides Kerala, states which account for high gold seizures this year till November 2022 are Maharashtra (474 kg in 484 cases), Tamil Nadu (440 kg in 809 cases) and West Bengal (369 kg in 214 cases).

Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said the



Customs field formations and the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) keep constant vigil and take operational measures, such as passenger profiling, risk-based interdiction and targeting of cargo consignments, non-intrusive inspection, rummaging of aircraft and coordination with other agencies to deter gold smuggling. Last week, addressing the officers of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that smuggling of

gold "seems to have its own cycle" irrespective of customs duty

She had also asked the intelligence officers to study if there is a pattern and relationship between imports and smuggling. In July, the import duty on gold was hiked to 12.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent to ease pressure on the domestic currency and dampen imports.

Gold imports rose 33 per cent to USD 46.14 billion in 2021-22. India is the world's second-largest consumer of gold after China. As per a DRI report, the bulk of the precious yellow metal seized by it in 2021-22 fiscal came from the bordering nation Myanmar.

Chaudhary further said that in the last three years, National Investigation Agency (NIA) has conducted investigations and filed charge sheets in three cases of gold smuggling. "Modus Operandi circulars related to new modus/method used by the gold smugglers are issued from time to time," Chaudhary said.

Nora Fatehi sues Jacqueline, files defamation case

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 12: Hindi film actor Nora Fatehi has filed a defamation case against actor Jacqueline Fernandez, alleging that the latter made defamatory allegations against her for malicious reasons.

According to Fatehi, Fernandez sought to criminally defame her in order to destroy her career to further her own interests, since they are both working in the same industry and have similar backgrounds, amongst other reasons.

On December 2, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had questioned Fatehi regarding common Sukesh Chandrashekhar's ₹200 crore money laundering case. Both Fernandez and Fatehi had recorded their statement as witness in the case.

Earlier, fixed deposits worth ₹7.2 crore belonging to Fernandez were attached by the ED, which termed these gifts and properties as proceeds of crime received by the actresses. In February, the ED filed its first supplementary prosecution complaint against Chandrashekhar's aide Pinky Irani, who introduced him to Bollywood actresses.

It had been alleged in the charge sheet that Irani used to choose costly gifts for Fernandez and later used to drop it at her house after the payments were made by Chandrashekhar. In December last year the ED filed the first charge sheet in this matter before the court of Additional Sessions Judge Praveen Singh.

Chandrashekhar has spent around ₹20 crore on different models and Bollywood celebs. A few had, however, refused to take gifts from him.



Got a problem with Agnipath? Don't join it: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: The Delhi High Court Monday asked the petitioners who have challenged the Centre's Agnipath scheme as to which of their rights have been violated and said it was voluntary and those having any problem should not join the armed forces under it.

The high court said the Agnipath scheme has been formed by experts in Army, Navy and Air Force and judges were not military experts. "What is wrong in the scheme? It is not compulsory....To be frank, we are not military experts. You (petitioners) and me are not experts. It has been framed after great efforts by experts in Army, Navy and Indian Air Force. "There is a particular

policy that the government has framed. It is not compulsory, it is voluntary," a bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad said.

The bench further said, "You have to show us that a right is taken away.... Don't join then. There is no compulsion. If you are good you will be absolved thereafter (after 4 years). Are the persons to decide it (service in the scheme) should be made four years or five years or seven years". The high court was hearing a batch of pleas challenging the Centre's Agnipath scheme. During the hearing, advocate Kumud Lata Das, representing one of the petitioners Harsh Ajay Singh, said after being recruited under the scheme, the



THE SCHEME ALLOWS 25% OF THEM (YOUTHS) TO BE GRANTED REGULAR SERVICE SUBSEQUENTLY. AFTER THE SCHEME WAS UNVEILED, PROTESTS ERUPTED IN SEVERAL STATES AGAINST THE SCHEME

Agniveers will have life insurance of ₹48 Lakh in case of contingency which is much less than the existing one. Whatever the armed

The Agnipath scheme, unveiled June 14, lays out rules for the recruitment of youths in the armed forces

According to these rules, those between 17-and-a-half and 21 years of age are eligible to apply and they would be inducted for a four-year tenure

forces personnel are entitled to, these Agniveers will get them only for four years, the counsel argued, adding that if the service would

have been for five years, they would have been entitled to gratuity.

The counsel contended that after four years of service, only 25 per cent of the Agniveers will be considered for being retained in the force and there is no backup plan for the rest of the 75 percent. On the contention that this scheme has been formed in this way as it is a cost-cutting exercise of authorities, the bench asked where do the forces mention that it is a cost-cutting exercise.

The government submitted that the Agnipath scheme was introduced in the exercise of its sovereign function to make national security and defence more "robust," "impenetrable" and "abreast with changing military requirements".

LESSONS FOR CONG, BJP, AAP

The Congress may have snatched Himachal Pradesh from the jaws of the BJP but has been roundly routed in Gujarat. What went wrong remains the most asked question. If the ground reality remained similar, how come the end results spanned two ends of the Indian political spectrum? But first the data and then the details.

In Gujarat, the BJP wiped out Congress Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki's 1985 record of 149 seats when it bagged 156 of the 182 seats leaving the Congress with 17 after AAP opened its account with five seats this time. In vote share the BJP crossed past its 2017 picking of 49.1 per cent to 52.5 while the Congress fell from 41.4 to 27.3 per cent with AAP picking up 12.9 per cent of the votes cast. AAP may have won five seats but its candidates lost their deposits in 128 of them while forty one of the Congress met this fate. In Morbi where 135 people had lost their lives in a bridge collapse, the BJP bagged the seat with a margin of over 62,000 votes.

Notwithstanding the fact that the BJP lost two of the three electoral engagements -Himachal Pradesh and Delhi Municipal Corporation- and tasted defeat in bulk of the by-elections, its victory in Gujarat has hogged national headlines to the detriment of all the other electoral slights.

AAP was the unquantified third angle of the triangle in this election. Its high profile campaigning was expected to cut into BJP votes in the urban areas and Congress votes in the rural areas. However AAP despite its city showings failed to dent the urban strongholds of the BJP but severely bled the Congress in Saurashtra-Kutch as well as South Gujarat, the two regions which were projected to be its sheet anchors this time as well. The Congress which had bagged 90 of the 54 seats in Saurashtra-Kutch in 2017 was left with just three this time. The Congress has been reduced to third place after AAP picked up four seats here.

South Gujarat threw up a bigger surprise when the BJP picked up 23 of the 27 sched-



break-up of the BTP in the tribal belt caused by a father-son skirmish saw its work force turn to AAP. In Dediapada its candidate Chaitar Vasava won. In many other tribal seats, it was AAP that emerged as the runner up.

Though a detailed analysis will bring out many more aspects of the Gujarat results over time, but in hindsight it remains a continuing story of AAP's entry and its impact. In the Surat municipal corporation elections last year AAP had got 27 of the total 120 seats with the remaining being picked up by the BJP while the Congress was wiped out. Later in the Gandhinagar municipal corporation elections, a traditional Congress bastion where the BJP usurped power through defections, the AAP entry changed the scenario. The BJP bagged 41 of the 44 seats reducing the Congress to 2 while the AAP could merely manage one seat. In near similar style, the BJP tally soared in the 2022 assembly elections, the Congress was down from 77 seats in 2017 to mere 17

seats this time while for all its bluff and bluster of forming the government, AAP mauled the Congress but could manage only five seats for itself.

There are some visible takeaways from the just concluded Gujarat elections. The Congress need to do some serious stock taking. After its impressive performance in 2017, the party just went into a shell and was rarely visible on the ground. AAP moved in late but due its aggressive stance on the ground and later in campaigning made its presence felt. In 2017 it was wiped out, this time it has marked presence in the Vidhan Sabha with five legislators. Like it did in Punjab, AAP will now work to become the main challenger to the BJP in 2027 unless the Congress overhauls and revitalizes its ground level set-up to pick up the gauntlet hurled at it. The BJP may have done splendidly well for itself in Gujarat, but it has been fighting every election in the country from the gram panchayat up to Parliament on Modi's name and face.

# international

## of the day quote

Zimbabweans will see a vast improvement in electricity supplies in 2023 as the government removes barriers to power generation investments in the country

EMMERSON MNANGAGWA | ZIMBABWEAN PRESIDENT

Former Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa was PTI Chairman Imran Khan's benefactor and now he (Khan) abuses him

KHAWAJA ASIF | PAKISTAN DEFENCE MINISTER

Turkey has begun making its own short-range ballistic missiles called Tayfun

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN | TURKISH PRESIDENT

## SHORT TAKES

### Sikh youth shot dead in Canada

Toronto: The death of 24-year-old Sanraj Singh due to gunshot wounds in Alberta province comes latest in the series of Sikhs killings in Canada. Police said they responded to reports of gunshots in the area of 51 Street and 13 Avenue of Edmonton, capital of Alberta, at approximately 8:40 p.m. on December 3. Upon arrival, they located a male sitting in a vehicle in medical distress. Singh was given CPR by the police until paramedics arrived and declared him dead.

### 3 boys die after falling into lake

London: Three young boys who fell through ice covering a lake in central England have died and a fourth remains hospitalized as weather forecasters issued severe weather warnings for large parts of the United Kingdom. Rescuers pulled the boys, aged 8, 10 and 11, from the icy waters Sunday afternoon and rushed them to the hospital in the West Midlands, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of London. But they could not be revived after suffering cardiac arrest. The fourth child, who is 6, remains in critical condition. Emergency workers searched through the night for two other children who were reportedly with the group.

### Three killed in ambush

Brisbane: Two Australian police officers and a bystander were fatally shot Monday in an ambush at a remote property in Queensland state as officers were investigating reports of a missing person, news reports said. At least two gunmen were reported to have opened fire as police arrived at the rural property in Wicambilla.

## FIGHTING COVID SURGE

# China plans to drop some travel tracking

The move follows the government's dramatic announcement last week that it was ending many of the strictest measures, following three years during which it enforced some of the world's tightest virus restrictions

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, Dec 12: China planned to stop tracking some travel on Monday, potentially reducing the likelihood people will be forced into quarantine for visiting COVID-19 hot spots, as part of an uncertain exit from the strict pandemic policies that helped fuel widespread protests.

At midnight, the smart phone app that recorded a person's travel between cities and provinces will be disabled. Another app used to restrict the movement of those who test positive or enter an area with a recent outbreak remains in effect. They're part of a package of pandemic apps, some of which have also been used by local governments to suppress protests.

The move follows the government's dramatic announcement last week that it was ending many of the strictest measures, following three years during which it enforced some of the world's tightest virus restrictions. That included near-constant testing, open-ended lockdowns and requirements that a clean bill of health be shown to access public areas.

Last month in Beijing and several other cities, protests over the restrictions grew into calls for leader Xi Jinping and the Communist Party to step down — a level of public dissent not seen in decades. While met with relief, the relaxation has also sparked concerns about a new wave of infections potentially overwhelming

health care resources in some areas.

The easing of measures means a sharp drop in testing, but cases still appear to be rising rapidly. China reported 8,500 new infections on Monday, bringing the nation's total to 365,312 — more than double the level on Oct 1. It has recorded 5,235 deaths — compared to 1.1 million in the United States.

China's government-supplied figures have not been independently verified and questions have been raised about whether the ruling Communist Party has sought to minimise numbers of cases and deaths. Fever clinics at hospitals in Beijing received 22,000 patients on Sunday — 16 times higher than previous week.

Following a rush last week to buy cold and flu medicine in many major Chinese cities, pharmacies in Hong Kong have reported a run on such medications by customers supplying relatives in mainland China, according to Lam Wai-man, chairman of the pharmacy trade association in the semi-autonomous southern Chinese city. Hong Kong has already lifted most of its COVID-19 restrictions.

"Everyone on the mainland wants to buy some pills to have in reserve at home," Lam said. Alan Cheung, the owner of the Sands Medicine Shop in the Wan Chai district, said he was receiving around 10 inquiries about flu medication from mainland residents every day. "Normally, no one would ask me about this kind of product," Cheung said.



# EU tops up Ukraine's arms fund

REUTERS

Brussels, Dec 12: European Union foreign ministers agreed Monday to put another 2 billion euros (\$2.1 billion) into a fund that has been used to pay for military support for Ukraine, after it was largely depleted during almost 10 months of the war.

More top-ups may be possible at a later stage, said the European Council grouping of the bloc's member states. "Today's decision will ensure that we have the funding to continue delivering concrete military support to our partners' armed forces," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said.

In their monthly meeting in Brussels, ministers will also try to agree on further sanctions on Russia and Iran. However, it remained unclear whether Hungary will block these decisions, resort-



Today's decision will ensure that we have the funding to continue delivering concrete military support to our partners' armed forces

JOSEP BORRELL | EU FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF

ing to what diplomats have denounced as "blackmail diplomacy" due to a dispute over locked EU funds for Budapest.

"There is agreement, in principle, but there's also the big elephant in the room," a senior EU



WHITE CARPET: Snow covers the tracks as tube trains are parked in London. Snow and ice have swept across parts of the UK, with cold wintry conditions set to continue for days

# IRAN CARRIES OUT SECOND EXECUTION

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, Dec 12: Iran executed a second prisoner Monday convicted over crimes committed during the nationwide protests challenging the country's theocracy, publicly hanging him from a construction crane as a gruesome warning to others.

The execution of Majidreza Rahnavard came less than a month after he allegedly fatally stabbed two members of a paramilitary force about purportedly becoming angry after security forces killing of protesters.

The development underscores the speed at which Iran now carries out death sentences handed down for those detained in the demonstrations that the government hopes to put down. Activists warn that at least a dozen people already have been sentenced to death in closed-door hearings. At least 488 people have been killed since the demonstrations began in mid-September, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that's been monitoring the protests. Another 18,200 people have been detained by authorities.

Iran's Mizan news agency, which falls under the country's judiciary,



German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock described the execution as a blatant attempt at intimidation of Iranians

Activists have put pressure on companies providing cranes to Iran in the past, warning they can be used for executions

Executions conducted in public with a crane have been rare in recent years, though Iran used the same manner of hanging to put down unrest following the disputed 2009 presidential election and the Green Movement protests that followed

published a collage of images of Rahnavard hanging from the crane, his hands and feet bound, a black bag over his head. Masked security force members stood guard in front of concrete and metal barriers that held back a gathered crowd early Monday morning in the

Iranian city of Mashhad. Mizan alleged Rahnavard had stabbed two security force members to death Nov 17 in Mashhad and wounded four others. Footage aired on state TV showed a man chasing another around a street corner, then standing over him and stab-

# Pak PM condemns 'unprovoked' firing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, Dec 12: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday condemned the "unprovoked" firing by Afghan Taliban forces in the border area of Chaman in the restive Balochistan province that killed seven people and said that the interim government in Kabul must ensure that such incidents were not repeated in the future.

The Pakistani Army's media wing initially said six died in Sunday's shelling, but the death toll later rose to seven. Sixteen others were wounded, the army said, blaming the casualties on the "unprovoked and indiscriminate fire" of heavy weapons by Afghan forces on civilians.

The firing in Chaman, the main border crossing for trade between the two countries, follows a series of deadly incidents and attacks



that have skyrocketed tensions between Islamabad and Afghanistan's Taliban rulers.

Condemning the incident, Prime Minister Sharif tweeted that the interim government in Kabul must ensure that such incidents are not repeated in the future. A senior Pakistan government official said that "it was unprovoked and indiscriminate gunfire which continued for a while and this included artillery shelling by Afghan Border forces."

# KABUL HOTEL ATTACKED, THREE KILLED

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kabul, Dec 12: A hotel catering to foreign visitors in Afghanistan's capital of Kabul was attacked Monday and three of the assailants were killed, a Taliban official said.

Two foreign residents were injured when they jumped out of windows to escape, said Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban government's spokesman. Residents reported explosions and gunfire and photos and video posted on social media showed smoke rising from the building.

The Emergency Hospital in Kabul said in a tweet that there was an explosion and gunfire near a hotel approximately a kilometre away. "So far, we have received 21 casualties — 3 were already dead on arrival."

Khalid Zadran, the Taliban-appointed spokesman for the Kabul police chief, said the attack lasted several hours. He said a "clean-up" operation was ongoing. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but the regional affiliate of the Islamic State group — known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province and a rival of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban — has increased its attacks since the Taliban takeover of the country last year.

A resident of the Shar-e Naw neighbourhood where the attack happened said that he heard explosions and then several gunshots. He spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals from Taliban officials. Another resident in the Shar-e Naw neighbourhood said that a gun battle was still going on. He said he and his family were staying inside their home about three blocks away from the attack site.

# North Korean hackers use unique tactic to spy on foreign experts

REUTERS

Seoul, Dec 12: When Daniel DePetris, a U.S.-based foreign affairs analyst, received an email in October from the director of the 38 North think-tank commissioning an article, it seemed to be business as usual. It wasn't.

The sender was actually a suspected North Korean spy seeking information, according to those involved and three cybersecurity researchers. Instead of infecting his computer and stealing sensitive data, as hackers typically do, the sender appeared to be trying to elicit his thoughts on North Korean security issues by pretending to be 38 North director Jenny Town.

"I realized it wasn't legit once I contacted the person with follow up questions and found out there was,

in fact, no request that was made, and that this person was also a target," DePetris said, referring to Town. "So I figured out pretty quickly this was a widespread campaign." The email is part of a new and previously unreported campaign by a suspected North Korean hacking group, according to the cybersecurity experts, five targeted individuals and emails reviewed by Reuters.

The cybersecurity experts suspect the hackers are targeting people who are influential in foreign governments to better understand where Western policy is headed on North Korea. The hacking group, which researchers dubbed Thallium or Kimsuky, among other names, has long used "spear-phishing" emails that trick targets into giving up passwords or clicking at-



tachments or links that load malware. Now, however, it also appears to simply ask researchers or other experts to offer opinions or write reports.

According to emails reviewed by Reuters, among the other issues raised were China's reaction

in the event of a new nuclear test; and whether a "quieter" approach to North Korea "aggression" might be warranted.

"The attackers are having a ton of success with this very, very simple method," said James Elliott of the Microsoft Threat Intelligence

Center (MSTIC), who added that the new tactic first emerged in January. "The attackers have completely changed the process."

MSTIC said it had identified "multiple" North Korea experts who have provided information to a Thallium attacker account. A 2020 report by U.S. government cybersecurity agencies said Thallium has been operating since 2012 and "is most likely tasked by the North Korean regime with a global intelligence gathering mission."

Thallium has historically targeted government employees, think tanks, academics, and human rights organisations, according to Microsoft. "The attackers are getting the information directly from the horse's mouth, if you will, and they don't have to sit there and

make interpretations because they're getting it directly from the expert," Elliott said.

North Korean hackers are well-known for attacks netting millions of dollars, targeting Sony Pictures over a film seen as insulting to its leader, and stealing data from pharmaceutical and defence companies, foreign governments, and others. North Korea's embassy in London did not respond to a request for comment, but it has denied being involved in cyber crime.

In other attacks, Thallium and other hackers have spent weeks or months developing trust with a target before sending malicious software, said Saher Naumaan, principal threat intelligence analyst at BAE Systems Applied Intelligence.

# business

## of the day quote

I think in the first half, we have done a little over 30 million tonne. In the next half, our e-auction sales may go up to 40 million tonne

**PRAMOD AGRAWAL** | CHAIRMAN, COAL INDIA

Governments across the world and internet forums have lagged behind in rulemaking for big technology players for their innovations that can cause harm to society, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar

**KARAN VERMA** | CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, FAAD

Foreign Direct Investment of ₹119.19 crore in FY-2022-23 has been made for one coal mine located in Jharkhand

**PRALHAD JOSHI** | COAL MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Steel output rises 5% in November

**New Delhi:** India's crude steel output rose by about 5 per cent to 10.34 million tonne (MT) in November 2022, according to SteelMint India. As per the research firm, the top six steel makers -- SAIL, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, JSPL, AMNS India and RINL -- produced 6.28 MT steel and the rest 4.06 MT came from the secondary sector. The country had produced 9.88 MT of steel during the same month of 2021, the SteelMint data showed. In November 2021, large producers jointly manufactured 6.09 MT steel, while the secondary industry produced 3.79 MT, it added.

### Microsoft to buy 4% stake in LSEG

**London:** Microsoft is to take a 4% equity stake in London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) as part of a 10-year commercial deal to migrate the exchange operator's data platform into the cloud, the British company said Monday. It is the latest sign of deepening ties between financial services providers and a handful of big global cloud companies such as Microsoft, Google, Amazon and IBM, which have prompted regulators to scrutinise the ties more closely.

### Tata to open 100 Apple stores

**Mumbai:** Indian salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Group plans to open 100 stores across the country that will only sell Apple Inc products, the Economic Times newspaper reported Monday. Tata Group's Infiniti Retail, which runs the consumer electronics store chain Croma, will be an Apple-authorized reseller and set up stores at shopping malls, high-street and neighbourhood locations, the report said. Tata has begun talks with premium malls and high streets and the lease terms include details of brands and stores that cannot be opened near these outlets, a retail consultant aware of the matter told the publication.

### Uniparts makes tepid mkt debut

**New Delhi:** Shares of engineering systems and solutions provider Uniparts India made a tepid market debut Monday. The company's shares debuted at ₹575 -- 0.34 per cent lower than the issue price of ₹577 on the BSE. It later fell 6.58 per cent to ₹539. At the NSE, it started the trade at ₹575. Its market valuation was at ₹2,542.38 crore on the BSE. The Initial Public Offer (IPO) of Uniparts India was subscribed 25.32 times earlier this month.



A total of ₹36,145 crore has been spent by various companies across the country to carry out development activities as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility

**NIRMALA SITHARAMAN** | FINANCE MINISTER

## INDIA-UK FTA TALKS RESUME

British trade minister Kemi Badenoch will hold her first face-to-face meeting with her Indian counterpart Monday in New Delhi in an effort to spark life into talks over a free trade agreement (FTA) between the countries. The trip marks the first formal round of negotiations since July



## 11-MONTH LOW

# Retail inflation eases to 5.88%

THE RBI, WHICH HAS HIKE BENCHMARK INTEREST RATES BY 2.25% IN FIVE TRANCHES SINCE MAY TO CONTAIN PRICE RISE, HAD LAST WEEK PROJECTED RETAIL INFLATION COMING BELOW THE UPPER TOLERANCE THRESHOLD OF 6% IN THE JANUARY-MARCH PERIOD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** Retail inflation dipped below the RBI's upper tolerance level of 6 per cent for the first time in 11 months in November as softening prices of food items brought relief but the central bank may wait for more data before pausing hikes in interest rates.

As per the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) Monday, the consumer price index (CPI) based inflation declined for the second consecutive month to 5.88 per cent in November, from 6.77 per cent in October 2022. It was 4.91 per cent in November last year.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said the CPI inflation unexpectedly slipped below 6 per cent in November, reflecting a base-effect led cooling in food inflation and a correction in vegetable prices.

Inflation in the food basket was 4.67 per cent in November, against 7.01 per cent in the previous month. However, there was a sequential uptick in the year-on-year inflation for miscellaneous items, fuel and light, and pan, tobacco and intoxicants segments.

Bank of Baroda Chief Economist Madan Sabnavis said although there is easing in food prices, the core component continues to be irksome, with clothing and footwear, fuel and light and the miscellaneous categories witnessing high inflation of above 6 per cent each.

Within the miscellaneous group, inflation has been high in household



How much the CPI inflation eases further in December 2022 will hold the key to the MPC's February policy decision on rates, as the contraction in the IIP is expected to be transitory, reversing after the festive holiday period

**ADITI NAYAR** | CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA

- Retail inflation within RBI's tolerance band for first time in 2022
- Inflation in the food basket was 4.67% in November, against 7.01% in October
- RBI projected headline inflation to average 6.7% in 2022-23, with Q3 at 6.6% and Q4 at 5.9%

goods, health, recreation, education and personal care. "Companies have been passing on higher input costs to the customers which has resulted in this category being sticky," he noted. Sabnavis said since the advantage of the base effect will not be available in December, inflation can be above 6.5 per cent.

"We may expect RBI to continue to increase rates by another 25 bps in February as inflation will be above 6 per cent," he said.

After remaining above the

Reserve Bank's upper tolerance threshold of 6 per cent since January, retail inflation has declined to its lowest level in 11 months in November 2022. In December 2021, the retail inflation stood at 5.66 per cent.

Assuming an average crude oil price (Indian basket) of \$100 per barrel, the RBI projected headline inflation to average 6.7 per cent in 2022-23, with Q3 (October-December) at 6.6 per cent and Q4 (January-March) at 5.9 per cent.

# Dalmia buys cement biz of Jaypee Group



*Dalmia is presently the fourth largest cement manufacturer in India after UltraTech, Adani Cement (which recently entered into the segment by acquiring ACC and Ambuja Cements) and Shree Cement*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) and its group firms Monday announced the sale of remaining cement assets to Dalmia Bharat Ltd at an enterprise value of ₹5,666 crore and exit from the sector as part of its strategy to reduce debt.

According to the deal, Dalmia Bharat Ltd will purchase 9.4 million tonne of cement capacity along with a thermal plant from Jaypee Group flagship firm JAL and its associate company across several states.

The move would help Dalmia Bharat Ltd increase its manufac-

turing capacity to 45.3 million tonne per annum (MTPA) from the existing 35.9 MTPA, enabling it to expand its presence in central India, as the company strives to become a pan-India player.

In a regulatory filing, Dalmia Bharat informed that its wholly-owned subsidiary Dalmia Cement Bharat Ltd (DCBL) has entered into a "binding framework agreement for the acquisition of clinker, cement and power plants from Jaiprakash Associates Ltd and its associate company".

The deal includes a total cement capacity of 9.4 MTPA, along with clinker capacity of 6.7 MTPA and thermal power plants of 280 MW at an enterprise value of ₹5,666 crore, it added.

The acquisition will help Dalmia to expand its footprint into the central region, it added. JAL's assets are situated in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Besides, it will also "represent a significant step towards realisation of its vision to emerge as a pan-India cement company with a capacity of 75 MTPA by FY27 and 110-130 MTPA by FY31," it added.

## Nov sees highest IPO listings in '22

**New Delhi:** There were nine initial public offers (IPOs) in November, the most in a month this year and the fourth highest in just over a decade, said a report Monday suggesting that companies were hopeful of the market rising. In November, the Nifty 50 touched its lifetime high of 18,614 and the Sensex rose to its peak of 63,284. There were 32 IPOs with an issue size of \$7.6 billion till November this year, said the Dealtracker report by Grant Thornton Bharat. Money raised by the 32 IPOs till November 2022 was considerably lower than the \$15.4 billion raised by 53 IPOs in the same period in 2021.

# Direct tax mop-up nears 62% of BE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** The net direct tax collection grew 24 per cent to ₹8.77 lakh crore in the April-November of the current fiscal, the Finance Ministry said Monday. This represents 61.79 per cent of the full-year Budget Estimates (BE) of direct tax collection for 2022-23 (April-March).

"Direct tax collection net of refund stands at ₹8.77 lakh crore as of November 30, which is 24.26 per cent higher than the net collection for the corresponding period last

- NET DIRECT TAX COLLECTION GROWS 24% IN APRIL-SEPT THIS FISCAL
- AS OF NOV 30, TAX COLLECTION STANDS AT ₹8.77 LAKH CRORE
- GST COLLECTION HAS FLATTENED TO AROUND ₹1.45-1.50 LAKH CRORE PER MONTH



year," the ministry tweeted. The collection accounts for 61.79 per cent

of Budget Estimates for FY 2022-23. The Budget estimated direct tax

collection at ₹14.20 lakh crore this fiscal, higher than ₹14.10 lakh crore collected last fiscal (2021-22). Tax on corporate and individual income makes up for direct taxes. Tax collection is an indicator of economic activity in any country.

The collection from the levy of tax on goods and services sold (GST) has flattened to around ₹1.45-1.50 lakh crore per month.

Refunds amounting to ₹2.15 lakh crore were issued between April 1 and November 30, which is about 67 per cent higher than the last year.

## PPL bags FAI award

**Bhubaneswar:** Paradeep Phosphates Limited is once again recognised for its overall effort in maintaining the plant site and achieving desired production performance. The company was conferred with prestigious Fertiliser Association of India (FAI)'s - Best Performing Phosphoric Acid Plant award. Pranab Bhattacharyya, Chief Manufacturing Officer & Unit Head, received the award from Mansukh Mandavaya, Union Minister for Chemical & Fertilizers and Health & Family Welfare at the annual seminar of Fertiliser Association of India at New Delhi. The appreciation will inspire PPL to scale new milestones in industrial safety.



## India imports coal worth ₹2.3L-crore in April-Sept FY23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** India imported 208.93 million tonne of coal worth ₹2.3 lakh crore in April-September period of ongoing financial year.

In FY22, the country's coal import of 208.93 million tonne (MT) was worth ₹2,28,741.8 crore, Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi said. The coal import was 215.25 MT in FY21, 248.54 MT (FY20), 235.35 MT (FY19) and 208.25 MT (FY18), he added.

Import of coal in India consists mainly of coking coal and high grade coal, whose prices are normally higher than thermal coal.

The average landed price per tonne of imported coal up to September of current financial year was ₹19,324.79 while the average notified price per tonne (ex-collery) of domestic coal was ₹2,662.97 in the same period.

India imports coking coal and other high gross calorific value (GCV) coal as domestic production is limited due to either scarce reserves or non-availability.

Imported coal based (ICB) power plants in the coastal region import coal as they are so designed. Some end-users also import coal on commercial and logistic considerations as coal is under open general licence system.

# Gaming firms under lens for GST evasion of ₹ 23K-cr

THE DIRECTORATE OF ENFORCEMENT IS INVESTIGATING SEVERAL CASES RELATED TO CYBER AND CRYPTO ASSETS FRAUDS WHEREIN ONLINE GAMING ETC HAVE BEEN USED FOR SIPHONING THE PROCEEDS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** GST evasion of about ₹23,000 crore by gaming companies between April 2019 and November 2022 is being investigated by the tax officers, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said Monday.

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, the minister said the Enforcement Directorate has attached proceeds of crime of

more than ₹1,000 crore in several cases related to Cyber and Crypto assets frauds wherein online gaming etc have been used for siphoning the proceeds.

About evasion of Goods and Services Tax (GST), Chaudhary said Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) formations have initiated investigations against some gaming companies (including online gaming firms) located in India as well as



abroad. "The estimated evasion of GST by these companies works out of ₹22,936 crore, relating to the period April 2019 to November 2022," he said.

In these cases, as December 6,

2022, proceeds of crime of more than ₹1,000 crore have been attached/seized/frozen under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA). Also, 10 Prosecution

Complaints (PCs), including 2 supplementary PCs, have been filed before the Special Court PMLA.

Further, assets amounting to ₹289.28 crore have been seized under section 37A of the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, the minister said.

To a query on whether the Income Tax Department has issued notices to many gaming companies for non-payment of tax, Chaudhary said the information is not available, since no specific identification code for online gaming entities is available in Income Tax Return.

"The disclosure of information about specific taxpayer is prohibited except as provided under section 138 of the Income Tax Act, 1961," he added.

# CROATIA IN WAY OF MESSI DREAM



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Doha, Dec 12:** Tears are flowing from football's biggest superstars as they make emotional exits from what might be their last World Cup. First it was Neymar. Then it was Cristiano Ronaldo. Could Lionel Messi be next?

Momentum is building behind Messi's push to cap his career with the biggest prize in the game. The 35-year-old Argentina playmaker has carried his team to the semi-finals, almost in the same way Diego Maradona — the man with whom Messi is so often compared — led the South American nation to its second and most recent World Cup title in 1986.

Now in Argentina's way is Croatia, a country with a population of 4 million which is establishing a reputation as the most stubborn and durable of opponents while also boasting one of football's most graceful players in Luka Modric.

The teams go head to head at Lusail Stadium — also the venue for Sunday's final — in a meeting between the last two runners-up at the tournament: Argentina in 2014 and Croatia in 2018.

Argentina might have been expected to be in this position. The team arrived at the World Cup as the Copa America champion, on a 36-match unbeaten run and with Messi back in sublime form for Paris Saint-Germain.

There was much less noise around the Croatians, yet they keep on surprising just like four years ago when their run to the final included a 3-0 victory over Argentina in the group stage. They also reached the World Cup semi-finals in 1998.

Both teams have come through uncomfortable moments. Argentina's darkest time was right at the start of the tournament, after a 1-2 loss to Saudi Arabia in what will go down as one of the

World Cup's biggest upsets.

Inspired by Messi and one of the most fervent fan followings in Qatar, Argentina won their final two group games, ended up squeezing past Australia 2-1 in the round of 16 and then required penalties to get past the Netherlands in a wild quarterfinal match.

Messi now has four goals in the tournament in Qatar, leaving him one behind top scorer Kylian Mbappé. They are probably the two standout players at a World Cup that has seen many other top players live up to their lofty reputations.

Modric is a case in point. He might not have scored a goal. He hasn't even had an assist. But don't underestimate the importance to Croatia of the little magician who keeps things ticking in midfield and manages to assert some control for a team which fights until the last minute.

In 2018, each of Croatia's knockout games went into extra-time

before the team lost to France in the final, and the same thing is happening in Qatar, with victories in penalty shootouts over Japan in the last 16 and Brazil in the quarterfinals.

Croatia looked more comfortable against Brazil than against Japan, which shows the team might be happier to invite pressure and choose their moments to break forward rather than control games and be more susceptible to the counterattack. Containing Messi will be key and much of the responsibility there lies with holding midfielder Marcelo Brozovic, who protected Croatia's defense so well against Brazil.

Argentina will be without two players because of suspension: left back Marcos Acuna and right back Gonzalo Montiel. Acuna is the bigger miss, having impressed since coming into the team after the loss to Saudi Arabia, and he is likely to be replaced by Nicolás Tagliafico.

# England seal rare series win in Pak

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Multan, Dec 12:** Mark Wood (4/65) destroyed Pakistan hopes with his fearsome pace and led aggressive England to a sensational 26-run victory inside four days in the second Test Monday.

Pakistan, in pursuit of a challenging victory target of 355, were bowled out for 328 within an hour after lunch on Day 4 to send England into the third match with an insurmountable 2-0 lead in their first Test tour of Pakistan in 17 years.

England won the first Test by 74 runs in dimming light on the last day through the aggressive approach that has now brought them eight victories in their past nine Tests under new coach Brendon McCullum and captain Ben Stokes.

Wood grabbed four wickets including a contentious, game-changing, caught behind decision which denied lefthander Saud Shakeel (94, 213b, 8x4) his maiden Test hundred before lunch.

Shakeel's patient, third successive half century in just over five hours nearly pulled off Pakistan's highest-ever successful chase in a home Test after the hosts resumed on Day 4 on 198/4, needing a further 157.

Shakeel shared 80-run stand with Mohammad Nawaz (45) before Wood struck in his first over with the second new ball. He first had Nawaz caught down the legside off a short ball and then ended Shakeel's defiance with another short ball in the same area.

Wicketkeeper Ollie Pope took a low catch down the legside after Wood got Shakeel tangled. The third umpire, Joel Wilson of the West Indies, ruled in the bowler's favor after viewing several replays, after onfield umpire Aleem Dar referred the decision with a soft signal of out.

Pakistan had conceded a significant 79-run lead after it lost seven wickets for 37 runs and was bowled out for 202. Debutant legspinner Abrar Ahmed, who picked up seven wickets in England's first innings of 281, ended up with 11/234 in the game as England was bowled out for 275 in the second innings for



**SHEER PACE:** Mark Wood is airborne in ecstasy after dismissing a Pakistani batter, Monday

an overall lead of 354 runs.

Resuming on 198/4 with still 157 required, Pakistan lost Faheem Ashraf (10) in the day's sixth over when Joe Root had the lefthander caught at slip as Stokes chose to deploy spinners from one end.

Shakeel and Nawaz stifled England for nearly 22 overs before Wood struck twice in quick succession to raise England's hope of clinching the three-match series late in the first session.

But Shakeel, resuming on 54, and Nawaz, thwarted England's seam and spin bowlers, rising in confidence even after England took the second new ball with Pakistan still needing 109 runs.

Fast bowler Ollie Robinson thrice

went past Nawaz's bat, but the lefthander showed aggression against Root and left-arm spinner Jack Leach with some crisp boundaries before Stokes turned to the pace of Wood and gained two crucial wickets.

Ahmed made a brisk 17 that featured three extravagant boundaries against Wood in one over after lunch before England seamers Robinson (2/23) and James Anderson (2/44) wrapped up the tail to seal England win.

**BRIEF SCORES:**

England 281 & 275 beat Pakistan 202 & 328 (Saud Shakeel 94, Mohammad Nawaz 45; Mark Wood 4/65) by 26 runs.

# Rahane, Ishant likely to lose contracts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** The BCCI is likely to remove out-of-favour Test specialists Ajinkya Rahane and Ishant Sharma from its annual central contracts while Shubman Gill and Suryakumar Yadav may get promotion when the list for the 2022-23 season is finalised during the board's Apex Council meeting December 21.

Hardik Pandya, who is being seen as future T20 captain, is likely to get a promotion to Group B from C. The meeting, which has 12 items on the agenda, will be held via video conference.

A review of Indian team's performance in the T20 World Cup and Bangladesh ODIs is not part of the agenda but if chairperson deems necessary, non-listed items can be considered for discussion.

In a novel gesture, the Apex Council will also ratify a one-time payment for V Jaydevan, whose rain-rule formula is being used in domestic white-ball games for more than a decade now.

At the international level, ICC uses Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method (DLS) while VJD is used for Mushtaq Ali T20, Vijay Hazare Trophy and erstwhile Deodhar Trophy and Challenger Trophy.

Changes in Central Contract One of the major items on the agenda is "Retainership Contract"

of senior men and women cricketers.

It is understood that former vice-captain Rahane and speedster Ishant, who are out of India contention, will be axed from the fresh list. Stumper-batter Wriddhiman Saha will also be axed from the list as he was specifically told at the start of the year that he won't be selected for India again.

An A+ contract offers Rs 7 crore, Group A Rs 5 crore, Group B Rs 3 crore and Rs Group C offers Rs 1 crore to the cricketers. There are multiple metrics used by the BCCI in consultation with national selectors to determine the gradation system.

A+ and A are two categories where the players are either all-format regulars or at least certainty in Tests along with one of the two white-ball formats. To be in Group B, a cricketer has to play at least two formats while group C is primarily for single-format players.

Also, one needs to play a specific number of international games (per format) for inclusion in the list. The promotion however is performance-based and ICC ranking is also taken into consideration.

"Surya was in Group C but his performance in the last year warrants a promotion to Group B at least, if not A. He is currently World No.1 in T20I ICC rankings and is a serious contender in ODI team

also," a senior official, who is privy to the developments told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Gill, who is now a two-format regular (Tests and ODIs) can expect a promotion from Group C to B. Someone like Ishan Kishan, who has played considerable number of international games across two formats in 2022, is likely to enter the list.

Pandya, who has now led the national team in two T20I away series, might be included in group B after a string of consistent shows. He was demoted to Group C last year after missing a major part of last season due to a back injury.

Pointers The BCCI will also discuss the status of two of its premier jersey sponsors — edu-tech giant BYJU'S and kit sponsors MPL.

An Infrastructure sub-committee will also be formed and upgradation of five venues will also be discussed.

Appointment of consultancy firm Grant Thornton is also on the agenda list.

The venues for India's home series against Sri Lanka, New Zealand (ODIs and T20Is) and Australia (Tests and ODIs) have already been announced and it will be ratified by the Council along with new Cricket Advisory Committee, headed by former Test cricketer Ashok Malhotra

# India eves inch closer to semis



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Valencia, Dec 12:** India thwarted a late fightback from their Asian Games nemesis Japan to secure a 2-1 victory and inch closer to the semifinal spot at the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup here Monday.

Salima Tete gave India a fifth minute lead when she tackled two Japanese defenders with a change of direction inside the D before slotting the ball past Erika Nakamura with a cool-headed finish.

Jharkhand teenager Beauty Dungdung then scored her first International goal at the senior level

to seal their last-four berth. India started the match with a flurry of attacks and it was Player-of-the-Match Tete who finally gave them the upperhand with a superb finish. They could have easily got a few more but their penalty corner conversions remained a headache for the Janneke Schopman-coached side.

India got nine attempts from PC but none of them could be converted as their designated dragflicker Gurjit Kaur once again cut a sorry figure. India had lost 1-2 to Japan to settle for a silver medal in the 2018 Asian Games.

Japan made a strong fightback in the final quarter and it was Rui Takashima who pulled one back in the 49th minute but India managed to hold on to secure their second win from as many games.

India defeated Chile 3-1 in their opening match of Pool B in the eight-nation tournament. The Savita Punia-led side now has six points from two games to lead Pool B. They will need a draw against South Africa in their concluding league match here on December 14



# Tough test awaits India at WC, feels Zafar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** Former hockey captain Zafar Iqbal feels it won't be easy for India to reclaim the men's World Cup after 47 years as the hosts are clubbed in a tough pool alongside Spain, England and Wales. The mega event is scheduled to be held in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela from January 13 to 29.

India's only gold in the World Cup came at the 1975 Kuala Lumpur edition under Ajit Pal Singh's captaincy. Zafar said it would be a great achievement if the hosts manage to finish on the podium after the bronze at the Tokyo Olympics.

Australia, Belgium, the Netherlands, India, Argentina, Germany, New Zealand, England, France, Korea, Malaysia, Spain, South Africa, Japan, Chile and Wales are the 16 teams, who will be vying for the title. India are the top-ranked team in Pool D at fifth spot, ahead of World No.6 England,

No.8 Spain and No.15 Wales.

"At world-level competitions, you never know who will be in top form. Several teams are very strong, such as Belgium, Netherlands, Australia, England, Spain, and India," Zafar said in a Hockey India release.

"We will have tough matches in the group stages. We have Spain, England, and Wales, and all are equally strong in their own right. I am sure if India finish on the podium, it will be a great achievement.

"We have several gutsy players in the team, who always put in their best and who were the heroes of the Tokyo Olympics. So, we hope they can repeat the success once again," he added.

Zafar, a member of India's 1980 Moscow Olympics gold medal-winning side, said the ongoing football World Cup is an example that any team can cause upsets in a big-ticket sporting event.

"Former World Champions Spain, Germany and Brazil have all

been eliminated from the football World Cup. You never know which team can get a win over which team in such tournaments. It is always unpredictable and the Men's Hockey World Cup 2023 is unpredictable as well," he said.

Zafar, who also competed in the 1982 men's World Cup in Mumbai, said astro-turf has changed the game completely and modern-day hockey is all about power.

"During our time, hockey was

played on grass. But astro-turf started replacing grass in most parts of the world as the '80s came around. Even though the 1982 World Cup was played on grass at home, we were unable to perform (at our best, and were unable to qualify for the semifinals)," he said.

"Now, astro-turf has converted hockey into a game of power. The players need to be fitter and require more energy. We had to adapt to the European style of attacking hockey"

