



**DIAMOND JUBILEE FETE**  
CM Naveen Patnaik attends the diamond jubilee celebration of Sainik School in Bhubaneswar **DOWNTOWN P3**



**SNOWSTORM ENVELOPS US**  
A wild winter storm continues to envelop US bringing blinding blizzards, freezing rain and flooding to most of the country **INTERNATIONAL P10**



**BANGLADESH IN CONTROL**  
Bangladesh in strong position to level the series as they take command of second Test leaving India in a spot of bother **SPORTS P12**

## SC seeks Centre's reply on caste census plea



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 24: The Supreme Court has sought response from the Centre and others on a plea seeking directions for a caste-based census for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the upcoming Census.

A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice PS Narasimha issued notices to the Centre, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and others while seeking their replies.

It also tagged the matter with a similar case pending before it.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by advocate Krishan Kanhaya Pal who said that the governments are unable to share the benefits of the welfare schemes with all sections among backward classes due to a lack of caste-based survey and a caste-based census of the OBCs is of 'vital necessity'.

Pal had stated that despite the announcement made by the then Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh in 2018, there would be a census of the OBC population during the 2021 Census. However, the government refrained from tabling the report of the Rohini Commission that was established in 2017.



**WAIT OVER:** A man dressed as Santa Claus rides a horse carriage in Bhubaneswar to ring in the Christmas celebrations, Saturday (MORE P2) PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

## Unlinked PAN to be inoperative from April 1: I-T

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 24: The Income Tax (I-T) department, like many times earlier, Saturday issued an advisory that those permanent account numbers (PANs) which are not linked with Aadhaar by the end of March next year will be rendered "inoperative".

"What is mandatory, is necessary. Don't delay, link it today!" the department said in a public advisory. "As per Income-Tax Act, 1961, it is mandatory for all PAN holders, who do not fall under the exempt category, to link their PAN with Aadhaar before 31.3.2023. From 1.04.2023, the unlinked PAN shall become inoperative," it said.

The 'exempt category', according to a notification issued by the Union Finance Ministry in May 2017, are those individuals residing in the states of Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and Meghalaya; a non-resident as per the Income-Tax Act, 1961; of the age of 80 years or more at any time during the previous year and a person not a citizen of India.

- The person shall not be able to file I-T return using the inoperative PAN
- Pending returns will not be processed
- Pending refunds cannot be issued to inoperative PANs
- Pending proceedings as in the case of defective returns cannot be completed once the PAN is inoperative
- Tax will be required to be deducted at a higher rate

# CAG miffed over plastic waste

Plastic waste ends up in landfills due to absence of proper strategy to minimise, reuse or recycle it, the auditor observes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has expressed displeasure over the generation of plastic waste in urban areas of the state.

According to a recently released CAG report, 114 urban local bodies (ULBs) in the state generate around 8,08,139 tonne waste per annum. Of this, 45,339.40 tonne is plastic waste. Smart city alone generated around 15,292 tonne plastic waste in 2018-19. The figure went northward in 2019-20 when the City produced 17,520 tonne plastic waste.

The absence of proper strategy to minimise, reuse or recycle plastic waste led to its dumping at landfills and dump sites without processing, the CAG observed.

Although the centre and the state have been undertaking a host of awareness programmes on hazards of plastic waste and its disposal, it did not yield desired results.

**FIGURES SAY IT ALL**

- Smart city alone generated around 15,292 tonne plastic waste in 2018-19
- The figure went northward in 2019-20 when the City produced 17,520 tonne plastic waste

**> 114 URBAN LOCAL BODIES IN THE STATE GENERATE AROUND 8,08,139 TONNE WASTE PER ANNUM. OUT OF THIS, 45,339.40 TONNE IS PLASTIC WASTE**

"The civic bodies have failed to enforce norms for which banned plastic items like carry bags could be seen in almost all nook and corner of the state," said a shopkeeper in Bhubaneswar, who wished not to be named.

He added that not only plastic carry bags, some water bottles and milk pouches also go to the landfills. Apart from causing pollution, these plastic items at times turn fatal for bovines.

The state government had banned use of polythene in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Berhampur, Sambalpur, Rourkela and Puri beginning October 2, 2018. Exactly a year later, October 2, 2019, the state government banned use of polythene below 50 microns and single-use plastic below 200 microns at 114 ULBs. Accordingly, municipal corporation commissioners and executive officers of the civic bodies claimed to have taken

a host of measures to enforce the curbs. However, after the Covid-induced lockdowns and shutdowns, the enforcements were limited to the paper only.

According to Raghunath Sahu, a shopkeeper, "Awareness drives are mere eyewash. Ensuring complete ban on manufacture of plastic carry bags would go a long way in curbing the menace."

Chaitanya Pradhan, a Bhubaneswar resident, said ensuring complete ban on usage of plastic carry bags is a Herculean task. However, sensitising people on its dark side would definitely help.

According to Forest and Environment department director K Murugesan, people should realise about the ill impacts of the plastic on the mankind. Housing and Urban Development and Panchayati Raj departments have been asked to intensify drives and ensure proper enforcement of norms.

## Maa Mangala temple facelift plan in 15 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 24: 5T Secretary VK Pandian Saturday directed the officials concerned to prepare a master plan for the development of Maa Mangala temple at Kakatpur in Puri district within 15 days.

Pandian gave the direction after holding discussions with the servants, trustees and local people during his visit to Kakatpur.

He said the work for the development of the 'Shakti Pitha' will start after Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik approves the master plan prepared by the Odisha Bridge Construction Corporation (OBCC).

Under the programme, steps would be taken for the release of water from the temple premises, parking facilities for the visitors and development of the Prachi river bank. Earlier in the day, on the direction of the Chief Minister, Pandian reviewed the progress of Parikrama project around Srimandir in Puri and the construction of the Sri Jagannath Medical College and Hospital.

The construction of the medical



college teaching hospital would be completed by June 23 next year; it was learnt. Later, the 5T Secretary reviewed the development work of Chandrabhaga beach, expansion of Konark-Chandrabhaga state highway and the new ring road.

Pandian directed the officials to complete the expansion work of Konark-Chandrabhaga state highway by April 2023.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Don't try to spread love in our area. Only hate is allowed here

## Hockey Sundargarh's religion & culture: Coaches

- The game is rigorously practiced for the locally popular khasi (goat) tournaments played by local clubs. The name is self explanatory - the winning side wins the goat and the village later on feasts on mutton
- All the coaches agreed that a few common traits among the tribals have earned Sundargarh the tag of a hockey cradle



Odisha village. A game here involves not only the youths, but senior citizens too who use wornout sticks and even makeshift ones with enviable technical finesse.

Asked about the reason for the overwhelming popularity of the game, a local said, "It is because the game is our culture. Can you leave behind your culture and grow and live peacefully? Sundargarh and not Punjab is now called the cradle of hockey in India."

The game is rigorously practiced for the locally popular khasi (goat) tournaments played by

local clubs. The name is self explanatory - the winning side wins the goat and the village later on feasts on mutton.

He is echoed by Amulya Kumar Bihari, a former state level coach, who said, "Sundargarh could never have become a cradle without hockey being in the genes of its people and in their culture. You can't separate hockey from the people of Sundargarh like you cannot separate football from the South America."

Florencia Ekka, a woman coach from Saunamara who now trains young talents at Dhenkanal, shares the same feeling.

"For us hockey is religion and a cultural practice. It is in the blood of the people of Sundargarh, in their minds and is part of their daily activity," she said. Raju Saini, the coach at SAIL Hockey Academy who hails from Meerut, relates an amusing story to stress the point.

**Continued on P5**

## SHORT TAKES

### Another Russian tourist found dead

**RAYAGADA:** Two days after the death of a Russian tourist here, another of his companion was found dead under mysterious circumstances, Saturday. The deceased was identified as Antov Pavel, 65, a childhood friend of the deceased tourist Vladimir Vidanov. Pavel's body was recovered from near a newly-constructed building adjoining the hotel where they stayed. He is suspected to have died after falling off the terrace of the hotel building. Vidanov along with four other tourists had reached here from Daringbadi December 21. The incident occurred after Pavel and two other tourists returned after performing the last rites of Vidanov.

### Test must for returnees from five countries

**Gandhinagar:** Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya Saturday said RT-PCR test for detection of Covid-19 would be made mandatory for passengers from China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand for their travel to India. Any passenger from these countries found symptomatic or testing positive for coronavirus would be quarantined, he said. "Passengers from China, Japan, Singapore and Bangkok (Thailand) are being monitored through the 'Air Suvidha' portal," Mandaviya told reporters. In view of the pandemic situation, passengers of flights from China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Bangkok are required to upload their RT-PCR report in advance. **P9**

**WEATHER**

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	27.6°C	26.6°C
MIN	14.6°C	14.4°C
Humidity	67%	70%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Clear sky mainly



# Santa's homecoming

After a hiatus of two years, Christmas is being celebrated in Bhubaneswar with full fervour. This year's celebration is significant for a number of reasons and Orissa POST takes a close look at a few of them

## Xmas euphoria sets in



## What would they ask from Santa!

Legend has it that Santa Claus gifts sweets and toys to the kids and brings loads of goodwill. On the occasion of Christmas Day, a few celebrities share with Orissa POST what would they ask Santa if he were real

**Top Odia film star Sabyasachi Mishra**, known for his philanthropic activities, said, "If I meet Santa I would wish for a smile on everyone's face, I would ask him to make everyone smile so that there would be no gloomy faces around."

**Author and gender specialist Hiranmayee Mishra** said, "If I meet Santa on Christmas, I will ask him to make the Covid disappear forever and give a healthy time back to us."

**Hello Arsi actor Partha Sarathi Ray** said, "The concept of Santa is quite cute, I would like to ask Santa for world peace which is extremely important these days considering the kind of intolerance and hatred that we have in our country right now. I want Santa to take care of the kind of animosity that prevails regarding the religious, caste and boycott culture and make this planet a more peaceful and loving place to live by."

**Eminent play back singer Abhijeet Mishra** said, "If I meet Santa I would wish for happiness, love, and empathy around the world because that is what planet is lacking at the moment."

**Popular play back singer Antara Chakraborty** said, "This year has been a roller coaster ride for me because my parents have been unwell for some time now, but professionally the ongoing year was a super success. So if I meet Santa I will request him to pray Jesus for my parent's good health and gift some more amazing songs in 2023 by which I can entertain my loving fans."

**Fashion designer Pritam Nayak** said, "My list is unending, there's always more to ask for. Santa comes in with happiness and joy, if I meet him I will ask him to shower some on everybody around me. I would wish for everybody's good health, because that is what richness is."

**Actress Apsara Rani** said, "If I ever get a chance to meet Santa, I would ask for 10,000 million dollars so that I can help people suffering from poverty."

**Actress Swapna Priyadarshi** said, "I would ask him to make first movie *Love in London* a success."

### Decked up churches

Churches in Bhubaneswar are decked up to celebrate the Christmas with fun and fervour. A renovated St Vincent's Catholic Church at Janpath held midnight mass where prayers were held at Union Church, the oldest protestant church of the City.

From Christmas trees, Santa Claus masks to caps of all sizes, Christmas shopping is in full swing in Bhubaneswar.

City decorators are making a beeline to buy home decor items like Christmas trees and Santa Claus costumes at Satya Nagar, Unit-I, CRP, Baramunda and other places. This apart, many sellers from neighboring states have put up their makeshift outlets to make some fast buck.

Tushar Kanta Jena, a shopkeeper at Unit I said, "We had no business in the last couple of years due to Covid restrictions. As the markets are open now, we brought Christmas goods worth ₹15-20 lakh from Mumbai and Kolkata. We are expecting good business this year."

Different malls in the City are also decked up to celebrate Christmas. A 40-ft high Christmas tree was unveiled a few days ago at Nexus Esplanade Mall in Bhubaneswar. Similarly, Utkal Kanika Galleria also decorated the mall with Christmas theme designs.

Every small and big mall is

drawing good footfall with their live events, food stalls, flashmobs and many more.

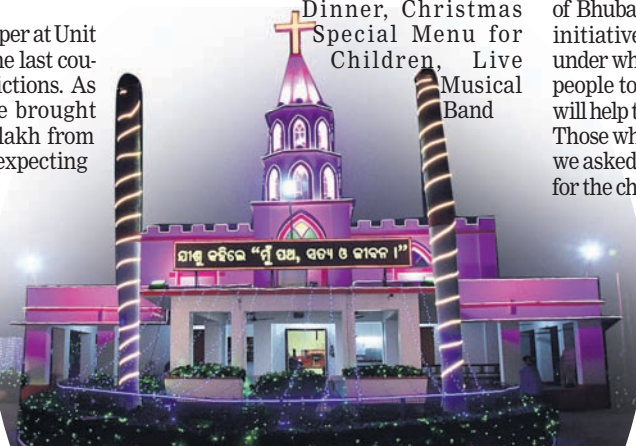
### City hotels wooing millennials

Several hotels in Bhubaneswar, to attract the millennials, started the celebration ahead of Christmas Eve which will continue till New Year. Empires Hotel in Bhubaneswar is organizing Christmas Carnival 2022. The event includes live performance by celebs, fun and entertainment programs, scrumptious delicacies for foodies, surprise gifts, lucky draws at Game Zone and magic shows. Similarly, Mayfair Hotel and Swosti Premium in Bhubaneswar are also celebrating Christmas to attract more clients. Their offers include Gala Cocktail Dinner, Christmas Special Menu for Children, Live Musical Band

Performance with singers, Christmas Theme Décor Ambience, Children Fun Activities with MC - DJ, Game Zone, Magic Show - Tattoo Artist - Santa Clause (Live), Christmas Special Gift Hamper & Plum Cake.

### 'Be the secret Santa'

Christmas is not only about hotel parties and gala dinner. Kids of poor and underprivileged too have the rights to the festivities, believes Unmukta Foundation of Bhubaneswar. It is organising the initiative of 'Be the secret Santa' under which the Foundation is asking people to donate books to kids as it will help them in building their future. Those who are not able to donate books we asked them to pay in cash to buy books for the children. "We have collected around ₹16,000 for the underprivileged kids to buy books. We've also created our creative library within communities at their doorstep to provide quality books and improve their learning," said Shweta Agarwal of the Foundation.



## India's first Christmas cake

The Christmas cakes are symbolised as a ritual of Christmas celebration; specifically, the act of sharing the cake with family or friends. The rich fruit cake that is often associated with Christmas was originally Twelfth Cakes (which were eaten at the parties on Twelfth Night ending the 12 Days of Christmas on 5th January). Such customs of cakes were started in India 140 years ago

in Kerala. In the year 1883 on the month of November, a merchant of Malabar Region named Murdock Brown went to the Royal Biscuit Factory in Kerala and asked its owner Mambally Bapu if he would bake him a cake for Christmas. The Scot, who ran a massive cinnamon plantation had brought a sample cake back from Britain and explained to Bapu how it was made. Mr Bapu knew how to bake bread and biscuits - a skill he learnt at a biscuit factory in Burma - but he had never made a cake. But decided to give it a try with Brown's inputs and the experiment came with some improvisations. Bapu mixed the cake batter with a local brew made of cashew apple instead of the brandy Brown had suggested getting from the nearby French colony of Mahe. The result was a unique plum cake made entirely from local ingredients. When Brown tried it, he was so happy with the results that he ordered a dozen more; he popularised British tastes among fellow Indians and exported the cakes to the soldiers during World War I. Mambally Bapu and the bakery he started are still going strong in Tellichery (now Thalassery) which are now part of India's Christmas lore. The Mambally family opened several outlets under different names which became a favourite destination for cake lovers.



CONTRIBUTED BY ARINDAM GANGULY, SMRUTI REKHA BARIK AND MADHUSMITA SAHU



## Transcending religious divide

It's impossible to escape the celebrations of Christmas. It ignites the soul with happiness much before the festivity begins. Shops blare out Christmas tune and hang baubles in their windows. With merriment in the air, a few non-Christians shared their perspectives on the festival

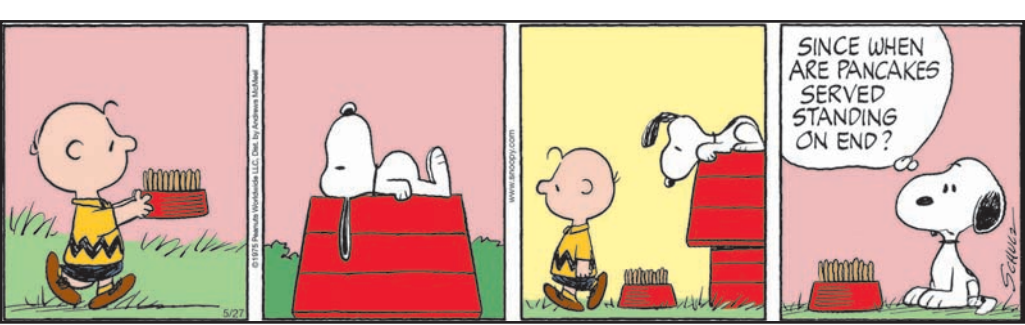
**Shikha Dutta**, an author living in New Delhi says, "I started celebrating Christmas with my children, to teach them that all faiths were equal. We used to decorate Christmas tree together and bake a cake. Today I have figurines of Jesus and Mary in my Puja room along with a rosary that rests with my Tulsi prayer beads. My children are all grown up now, but I know I taught them an important lesson that they will carry with them forever."

**Aneek Bansal**, a lawyer turned entrepreneur says, "Both Christmas and Diwali are popular festivals with many people drawn to them due to their rich tradition. Staying engrossed in work the entire time of the year and finding a good 10 days to spend with family is everything. Xmas is not about religion, in our family, it is about family getting together, celebrating the end of year and expressing thanks for all that we have."

Born to a Christian mother and a Muslim father, 24-year-old student **Shaheen** from Mumbai says, "As the daughter of a rather hybrid-religious family, Christmas was always fun and interesting as we tried to accommodate both sides. My entire family has religious views but were never hardcore on insisting we actually do religious things, for me it is spending few days with my family, eating good food, sitting together, exchanging presents, talking about the past year and the coming year and just enjoying the atmosphere of warmth."

**Anubhav Samal**, 23, who went to the New Stewart School in Cuttack recalls that in his school, Christmas used to be as normal a festival as Holi or Dusshera. "On the Christmas Eve, we got sweets and toffees and I remember the school chorus group reciting the Christmas carol and other such songs," says Anubhav. "On many Christmas days I recall giving my Christian friends company to the church and later I've fond memories of being served delicious food and drinks at their homes. I had a friend whose mom made good cakes and cookies, her hands were magical, we used to say, and for Xmas we got cake pieces stuffed with dry fruits packed in tiffin boxes for us to later savour at home," adds Anubhav, who attended the Baptist Church several times.

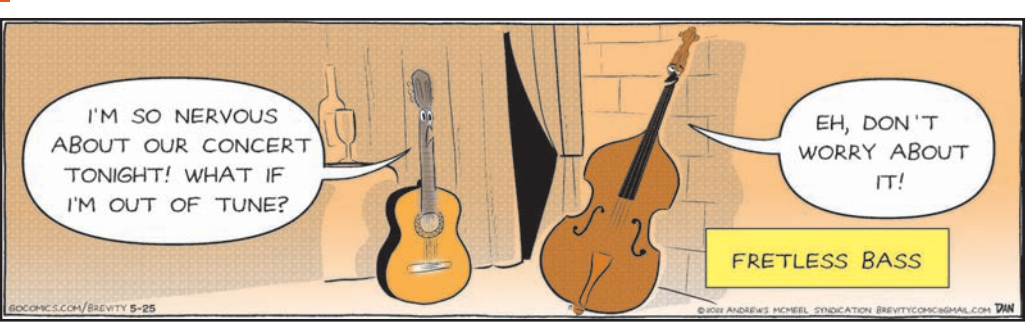
### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

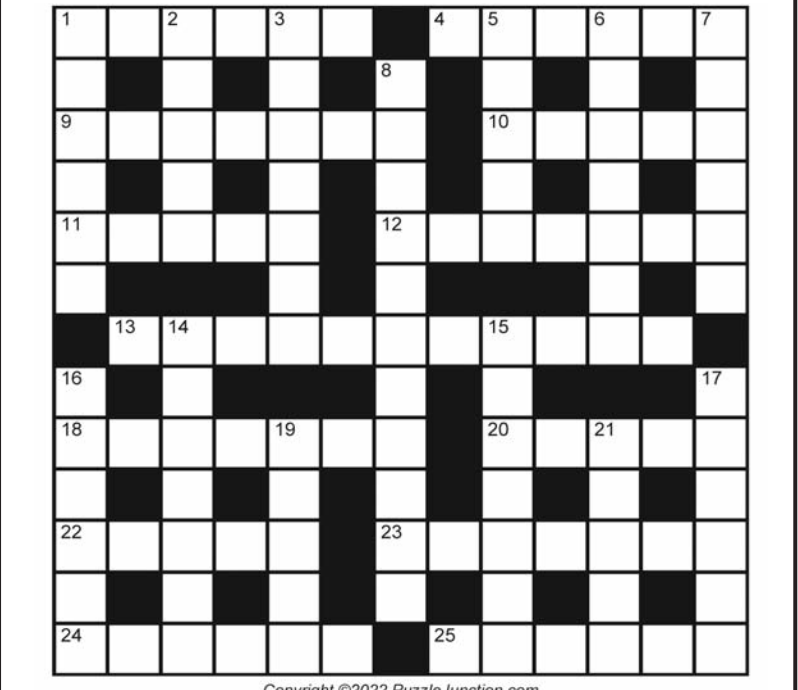


### BREVITY



### FUN post

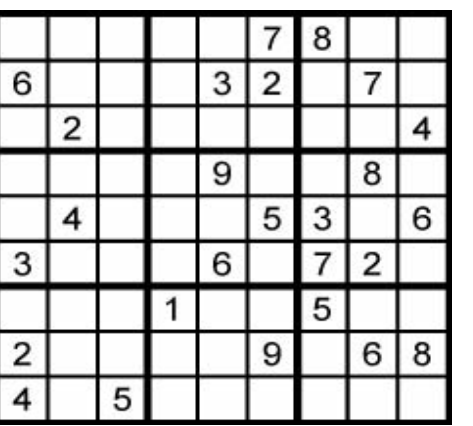
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Brute
  - 4 Morning eyeopener
  - 9 Germ
  - 10 Bridal path
  - 11 Was laid up
  - 12 Expulsion
  - 13 Trapshooting items (4,7)
  - 18 Feast
  - 20 Coward's lack
  - 22 Exorbitant
  - 23 Mob action
  - 24 Almsgivers
  - 25 Ledger column
  - 6 Style
  - 7 Come into view
  - 8 Bargainers
  - 14 Light source
  - 15 Digs up
  - 16 Humiliated
  - 17 War horses
  - 19 Certain berth
  - 21 Words of wisdom

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



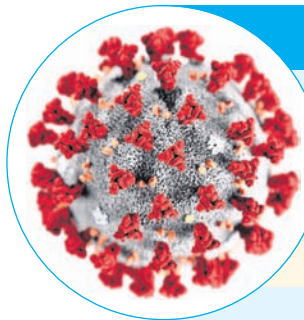
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	66,13,48,515	63,39,45,526	66,84,979
India	4,46,76,879	4,41,42,791	5,30,691
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

### PROMOTING CULTURE

Union Ministry of Culture Joint Secretary Sanjukta Mudgal inaugurating the Kalinga Utsav at Rail Auditorium in Bhubaneswar, Saturday



# Live up to expectations of school and nation: Naveen



**Bhubaneswar, Dec 24:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday urged students of Sainik School, Bhubaneswar to live up to the expectations of the nation.

Attending the diamond jubilee celebration of Sainik School here, Patnaik said, "I would like to urge the young cadets sitting here to seize each and every opportunity that you get, and live up to the expectations of the school as well as the nation."

Set up by legendary leader Biju Patnaik in 1962, Bhubaneswar Sainik School, after 60 glorious years, has become a benchmark for quality education, character building and personality enrichment, he said.

He said the school has not only produced some of the finest soldiers of the country, but a large number

**The Chief Minister said the school has produced a large number of cadets who have made significant achievements in the fields of civil services, medicine, engineering, merchant navy and entrepreneurship**

of its cadets have made significant achievements in the fields of civil services, medicine, engineering, merchant navy, entrepreneurship and many other fields.

It can take pride in its galaxy of alumni for the significant contribution they have made to society, the Chief Minister said.

Patnaik further said that the

strength of our education system does not lie in academic excellence, but rests in the ability to empower the students with knowledge, confidence, responsibility, and ability to think and face situations of life independently.

The school stands apart for its efforts to instill the ethos of armed forces, and endeavour to awaken the individual potential of each student to serve his or her motherland in every sphere of life, he added.

In the end, I once again congratulate entire sainik school family on the auspicious occasion of Diamond Jubilee and hope this event helps in igniting the minds of the cadets in shaping the kind of India we all aspire, he signed off.

Ranendra Pratap Swain, Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Empowerment, Fisheries and Animal Resources Development, Col Balu Bharath, Principal and Hardaman Singh, President, Old Boys Association (OBA) and others were also present.

The celebration commenced with the Chief Minister, unveiling the bust of Biju Pattanaik, the Founding father of the School followed by the felicitation of the parents of the brave heart of the school, Captain Ashutosh Kumar, who was posthumously awarded the Shaurya Chakra for his gallant act against the terrorists at the J&K border November 8, 2020.



**HOCKEY FEVER:** People taking selfie against the backdrop of a sculpture made ahead of the Men's Hockey World Cup at Jaydev Vihar Square in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

# BJP to hold Satyagraha December 26

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 24:** In protest of rising politically motivated crime in Odisha, the state BJP has decided to hold Satyagraha December 26, on the very day when ruling BJD will celebrate its silver jubilee foundation day.

Addressing the media, state BJP president Samir Mohanty alleged that

during the 23 years BJD rule, Odisha has turned into a haven for political crimes. He alleged that prime witnesses in the Mamita Meher murder case, the Puri ZP member murder case and Mahanga double murder cases were eliminated.

"Mamita Meher murder main accused Gobinda Sahu was murdered inside the jail with the help of police. It was feared that Sahu

would disclose the names of politicians and Ministers during his appearance in court scheduled on the day," Mohanty alleged. Similarly, the main accused in the Mahanga double murder case was also murdered, he alleged.

Alleging that the BJD government has created a record of destroying all evidence of sensational murder cases, Mohanty the state BJP

workers will hold a four-hour-long Satyagraha near the statues of great personalities across the state December 26.

Reacting to the BJP protest, BJD leader Amar Satpathy said the BJP has become so intolerant that it has announced to hold such a protest on the BJD's foundation day. The people of Odisha will not accept such political activity of the BJP, he said.

# CP collects Archana's specimen signature

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 24:** A three-member team of Commissionerate Police Saturday visited the special jail at Jharpada here to take the handwriting sample and handwriting paragraph of the lady black-mailer Archana Nag, prime accused in the sextortion case. The team included assistant Commissioner of Police of special squad Himanshu Sekhar Swain, Khandagiri police Inspector In-Charge Dayanidhi Nayak and a lady sub-inspector.

Following the permission from the court, the team reached the Jharpada jail in morning and collected a specimen signature and handwritten paragraph of Archana.

"We have seized some diaries of the accused person which contains some handwritten matter. We had sought the court's permission to collect the specimen signature and handwritten paragraph. Following court's nod, we went to the Jharpada jail to collect the same. The collected materi-

**City police Friday submitted the chargesheet in the case registered against Archana**

als will be sent to the state handwriting bureau to match her handwriting with the contents of the diary," told a senior police official.

The official also informed that effort is underway to collect handwritten paragraphs and specimen signature of Jagabandhu Chand, Archana's husband and co-accused in the case, for matching after the court grants permission.

Meanwhile, the City police Friday had submitted the chargesheet with case record containing 501 pages in case (646/22) registered against Archana and Shradhanjali Behera on the basis of the complaint lodged by Akshaya Kumar Parjia. However, questions were raised over the omission of Behera's name from the chargesheet.

# 47 kg brown sugar seized by Special Tack Force in 2022

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 24:** The Special Task Force (STF) has seized brown sugar weighing over 22 kg during the year 2022. Meanwhile, the state police have managed to seize a total of 47 kgs of brown sugar including seizure by STF.

In a first, the STF sleuths also busted a racket involved in the illegal trade of cocaine and seized 202 mg of the costly psychoactive substances. The state police recorded the seizure of 1162 quintals of cannabis including 25.24 quintal ganja seized by the sleuths of STF in 2022.

The STF also seized opium weighing 517 gm and Rs 65 lakh in cash during the above period.

This apart, properties worth more than Rs33 crore, illegally acquired through supplying narcotic drugs, have been forfeited by the state police till date. Similarly, ill-gotten assets of drug traffickers



worth over Rs 12.85 crore have been seized and forfeited by the STF as well.

The state police destroyed seized materials including ganja weighing 658 quintals (38 Quintals seized by STF) and brown sugar weighing 27 Kg (22 kg by the STF) during the above period.

The STF, on the other hand, has arrested 133 accused persons after registering 75 cases including 27 under NDPS Act and 31 under wildlife acts. As many as 14 criminals were held from outside the state by the STF this year so far.

The STF seized 14 leopard skins,

1 Leopard Cat Skin, nine live pangolins, over 22 kg pangolin scale, 14 elephant tusk, two leopard teeth, 29 leopard claws and 46 live wild parrots in 2022. For the first time STF seized one Royal Bengal Tiger hide this year.

As many as 14 Fire Arms, 60 ammonitions and 8 magazines were recovered from the possession of criminals.

This apart, the STF sleuths have rescued around 229 cows while being transported to outside the state flouting various rules under The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

# 'Patha Utsav' starts today

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 24:** The much awaited weekly street festival 'Patha Utsav' will make a comeback in the Capital city Sunday, the day of the Christmas.

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has made special arrangements to celebrate the festival starting December 25.

As per BMC sources, people of the City can participate in the street festival every Sunday from 6.30am to 9am between the Master Canteen Square and the Ram Mandir Square. "The BMC has also made plans to start the street festival at Bhubaneswar Central, North and Ekamra assembly constituencies," informed an official.

"We are alert about the surge in Covid-19 cases in some countries, abroad. Patha Utsav in Bhubaneswar will be celebrated with full caution as per the latest Covid guidelines issued by the Health Department," said BMC Commissioner Vijay Amruta Kullange. The civic body has made arrangements to welcome the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup trophy



through bike rallies, he also informed.

It should be mentioned here that Patha Utsav is a platform where local art, history, culture, and heritage are showcased to promote art enthusiasm among budding artists, and reading habits among children. "It also involves story-telling and street plays that promote social messages. Musical shows are also performed in the festival. Earlier, pala, a folk song and dance drama, had also attracted spectators as they are rarely performed on streets of urban areas," added the BMC official.

# CM hails Panda for Sahitya Akademi Award

**Bhubaneswar:** CM Naveen Patnaik Saturday congratulated and felicitated renowned litterateur Gayatribala Panda for being chosen for the prestigious Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award 2022. A renowned writer himself, CM commended Panda for bringing laurels to the state and termed the award a big milestone in her career. Rajya Sabha MP and her husband Manas Mangaraj, and their son Maneet Mangaraj, were present on the occasion. An eminent writer, Panda, will receive the Sahitya Akademi Award 2022 for her book of poetry 'Daya Nadi'. The book is about the Kalinga War which was fought on the foothills of Dhauli, located on the banks of the Daya River. The book has been translated into Hindi.

# Jingle Spells 3.0

**Bhubaneswar:** Bhubaneswar Poetry Club in association with Red Bull organised poetry, music and storytelling programme 'Jingle Spells 3.0' at Press Club of Odisha Saturday. On this occasion, more than 60 artists from Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Raipur recited poetry, took part in storytelling and did musical performance on several languages including Hindi, Bengali, Odia and English.

# NAVY WEEK CELEBRATIONS

## INS Chilika organises Indian Navy Band concert at KIIT



**Bhubaneswar, Dec 24:** As part of Navy Week Celebrations 2022 and Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, INS Chilika organised an Indian Navy Band Concert at Campus 6, KIIT University here Saturday.

On the occasion, Governor Ganeshi Lal graced the occasion as the chief guest. The programme was attended by several civilian dignitaries, retired military personnel serving officers of

Indian Armed Forces, officers of the Odisha Police, NCC cadets and school students.

The Indian Navy band enthralled and mesmerised the audience with instrumental & vocal scores ranging from martial music, patriotic songs, popular Bollywood and Odia Music. The event concluded with recently released 'Indian Navy Anthem - Call of the Blue Waters' also known as 'Hum Taiyyar Hai' rendered by the Naval band with full fervour.

Other musical score performed include colonel bogey, raag kafi, cornfield rock, teri mitti, maa tuje salam and rangabati.

The INS Chilika Band led by P Paul Raj band conductor and includes performers Sumeet Shah, S Mondal, Namdas Vijay, Sk Sahid, Ajay Bhatt, G Rajesh, Leslin KB, Stephen Zou, Durgesh Chandra, Packia Raj, Mohan Rao, Shishir Gautam, Thongam Deva, Sunny, Vashishath Kumar, Madan Chettri and Adithya Prakash.

The Indian Navy band conceptualised by a handful of musical stalwarts in 1945 has been eulogized all across the world from the year of creation till date. This band has performed on occasions like the Republic Day parade.

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In sincerity is the certitude of victory. Sincerity! Sincerity! How sweet is the purity of thy presence?

THE MOTHER



## Spy Tales

India's spies and spymasters do not usually write their memoirs. This is in keeping with bureaucrats, judges, ministers and their like elsewhere on the subcontinent who, when they do write, usually put out works exculpating their actions while condemning their circumstances or their peers.

AS Dulat headed the Intelligence Bureau in Kashmir in 1988-90 when the insurgency broke out and was head of the Research and Analysis Wing when IC-814 was hijacked in 1999. He has written a fine work that takes us through the broad doctrine of India's intelligence agencies, especially as it has evolved in the last three decades. The book is a patchwork of chapters that is part memoir, part character sketches and part reflections on postings. At its heart is a rich 50-page essay on spy craft, the Indian intelligence community's outlook and his own view of his work. It is headlined 'wilderness of mirrors', a phrase used by another intelligence man describing the 'stratagems, deceptions, artifices' used by the Soviets to confuse their opponents. Dulat reveals some, though not much, of what it is that intelligence officers actually do. He says that 'desk work is actually quite important'. He is a man of the field and likes to be known as such but it is clear that he looks up to the intellectuals more than he does the dashing doer type. He refers to MK Narayanan, the former national security advisor who was his senior in the IB as 'the great Narayanan' in three places. There is a sketch of the current NSA Doval and while Dulat describes his action-packed career glowingly personally he appears attracted towards the thinkers, the Smileys rather than the Bonds. His writing reveals he is a thinker himself. Of his early years he says that 'those were the days that the IB would boast of classical learning that transformed policemen into intelligence officers and even men of letters.' Presumably this is no longer the case.

Other things have changed over time as well. In his earlier days counter-intelligence (seeking out and engaging foreign spies in India) was a more important aspect of spying than it has become.

'Today, counter-intelligence does not have the kind of importance' because 'counterterrorism has now rightly taken prime place'.

Part of this was by default. In Kashmir when the insurgency was building, the Indian establishment had no little information. 'We had no inner contacts within militant networks' because of which 'militancy was increasing by the day in the Valley, and we were clueless about how to stem the tide.'

In January 1990 the IB lost four officers in three weeks. Dulat's officers surrounded him and demanded that they be sent back home. 'We can't stay here anymore' they said. It is remarkable how little things have changed.

What is the role of the intelligence officer in such a place? Dulat is clear that it is to 'engage with them'. That makes sense. Spies are useless if they fraternise only with their own. We learn the enemy only by being in its midst. But India's governments for 30 years have followed the opposite path, likely sliding into this posture by default. Delhi has only seen things in black and white Dulat says and adds that such a position doesn't work in difficult areas like the northeast and Kashmir.

It doesn't help us that the intelligence agencies refuse to hire Muslims out of suspicion, something Dulat has been vocal on for years. More disturbingly, he writes that of the very idea of dialogue (with the Hurriyat) and of engagement with the militant groups is looked down on by the Indian state now. 'This line of thinking has been considered soft by most of my colleagues in Indian intelligence'. The reason he says is Pakistan. It tends to switch off thinking in some sort of Pavlovian response in India's state apparatus. Pakistan is 'at the heart of paranoia, mistrust, lack of imagination and absolute convention that governs much of the espionage game in Kashmir.'

Like the shift in national security and the military focus on counterinsurgency after 1990 he says that for intelligence 'Pakistan, in our minds is our only adversary.' And yet having arrived at or defaulted to this conclusion the state apparatus and its individuals don't want to engage with the adversary. For instance, by trying to recruit the ISI chief, because 'somehow we have an apprehension that a Pakistani is untrustworthy, that he will create trouble, that he is, simply speaking, a rascal.'

It is remarkable that such primitive thinking exists in, of all places, that part of the state concerned with understanding and defanging the enemy. Dulat says a CIA chief's first question in morning meetings would be 'Have you recruited anyone new since last night?' He adds that 'there was no point in pretending that this was not actually the basic principle of our business.' But what business is possible when we have no capacity or desire to recruit?

This shift in focus, or more precisely this abandoning of one strand of intelligence, has not proven beneficial as the situation in Kashmir reveals. What this head of RAW, who was also one of the IB's senior most officers (he also had a position in the Vajpayee PMO) has written is astonishing. He quotes the spy and writer John le Carre as saying 'If you are looking for the psyche of a country, its secret service is not an unreasonable place to look.' We will look at the wider implications of what Dulat has revealed next week.



Aakar Patel

**Spies are useless if they fraternise only with their own. We learn the enemy only by being in its midst. But India's governments for 30 years have followed the opposite path, likely sliding into this posture by default**



Indira Hirway

**THE AVERAGE DAILY WAGE RATE OF WORKERS IN GUJARAT IS AMONG THE LOWEST IN INDIA**

The BJP has won for a record seventh term in the Gujarat Assembly elections held earlier this month. The win is no doubt historic, and it feeds on the image of a model of development that the BJP claims has brought good governance and direct benefits to the people of the State. Hard numbers taken from official sources, however, tell a slightly different story and raise questions on just how much of that development has benefited the poorest in Gujarat. For example, the average daily wage rate of workers in Gujarat is among the lowest in India. The rate is ₹295.9 for daily workers, when it is ₹377.7 in Kerala, ₹478.6 in Tamil Nadu, ₹519 in Jammu and Kashmir, ₹462 in Himachal Pradesh. In Bihar, the rate is ₹328.3, and in Odisha, it is ₹313.8. The numbers are from table 105 titled: "State-wise Average Daily Wage Rates in Rural India" published by the Reserve Bank of India's Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2021-22' released in November 2022. The share of informal unorganised workers in the total number of workers is high at over 80% and indicates that a large part of the workforce is less protected. Is it a sign of the skewed or uneven nature of development in Gujarat that while workers are paid relatively lower in the state, MLAs received a 65% hike in salaries in 2018, taking their monthly salaries and perks to ₹1.16 lakh per month, among the higher brackets of MLA salaries in India.

Gujarat, known as the "Jewel of Western India" is one of the most prosperous states in the country, with its per capita income 70 per cent more than that of all India. Though the state's population is only about 4.75% of the national population, its GDP is 8.36% of national GDP; its industrial output is 17.44% of national industrial output and it receives 23% of FDI of the national total. It is fair then to say that Gujarat has experienced a rapid increase in incomes in the last decades, but it is equally fair to argue that this comes at the cost of workers

### FOCUS GUJARAT

# UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT



**Now that elections are over, it is important to address some real issues of long term and sustainable development in Gujarat**

while money flows more to the rich and the upper echelons of society. So much so that the number of billionaires in Gujarat has increased and at the last count was reported at 60. This is the Gujarat that is viewed as the growth engine of India.

The picture that emerges is of the prosperity of Gujarat being based on the sweat and blood of about 75-90 lakh workers, including 30-40 lakh migrant workers who come to Gujarat out of distress and survive on what are amongst the lowest wages in the country. This gap then explains why Gujarat is seen by some as the home of crony capitalism where undue favours including undue subsidies and incentives rather than free market forces have pushed large corporate business houses to promote rapid economic growth in the state. Today, a small number of these super-rich business houses control all major sectors in the state. It is not surprising that the conditions of the small and minor sectors in the state are miserable today. Indeed, the MSME sector in Gujarat is finding it difficult even to survive. Speaking about the smaller sectors this June, Jaimin Vasa, president of the Gujarat Chemical Association, said that post COVID-19, an estimated 3,600 MSMEs in the chemical sector closed down in Gujarat while several others have turned sick.

The poor status of education in Gujarat is another pointer to growth and development that does not mean much for ordinary people. According to the National Family Health Survey - NFHS-5 (2019-20), the literacy rate in Gujarat is 84.70 for men, 70.30 for women and 77.70 for men and women combined. This shows that more than 22% people are illiterate in this model of development. The official data from NFHS-5 also observes that the school dropout rate is high in Gujarat: 93.79% students complete their primary schooling and 77.43% students complete secondary school education (22.57% drop out), and only 43% completed higher secondary.

When modern industries (high tech, robotics) are rising in the state, even skilled workers may not get work unless they are super-skilled. With low education and low skills, most workers will be left out of the fourth industrial revolution technologies that are increasing in Gujarat. One major reason for this state of affairs could be the increasing privatisation of education, including high-tech and professional education. Looking at the downside of this development model, the Fitch subsidiary India Ratings, noted that Gujarat has more capital-intensive industries (refineries, petrochemicals and chemicals), which are technology-driven and

not necessarily labour-intensive. In contrast, for example, a state like Tamil Nadu has textile clusters, among others, which are highly labour-intensive.

The economic and political strength of a small group of large industrial/business houses in Gujarat is reflected in major economic, social and political decisions in the state. The overall neglect of masses and particularly the bottom 30-40% population is reflected in the neglect of their quality and volume of education and health levels, low and poor quality of employment, and high unemployment of the educated.

A neglected area in education is early childhood care and education (ECE) for children between 0 to 6 years. This ECE is critical for the overall development of children's nutrition and health, education and early childhood development. The National Education Policy recommends holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid formulation of lifelong learning and well-being. The Integrated Child Development Scheme is designed for this purpose, as a pre-school education programme. Though this programme runs very well in states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, it has many limitations in Gujarat: low wages, low budgets, poor qualification and training to workers and irregularity are some of the serious concerns.

Predatory capitalism has brought prosperity to the state at a certain high level and is limited to a section of the population. This is at the cost of the unorganised sector, the unemployed and others in the bottom rungs of society. Now that elections are over, it is important to address some real issues of long term and sustainable development in Gujarat.

*The writer is Director and Professor of Economics, Centre For Development Alternatives, Ahmedabad. Views are personal*

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### SPECTRUM CULTURE

# When will peace of Christmas come home?



Hanna Hanania

**OUR FAITH IS NOT IN A CHANGE OF HEART BY OUR OCCUPIERS, BUT IN THE JUSTICE OF OUR CAUSE**

As mayor of the Palestinian city of Bethlehem, I have the privilege of lighting the Christmas tree in Manger Square and attending Midnight Mass at one of the world's oldest churches, built in the fourth century by the Byzantine Empress Helena. But my most important duty is to help give people faith and encouragement. When I lit the Christmas tree on December 3, I expressed my hope that the light would radiate to the world our desire for peace, and we prayed together that Christmas would fulfill its promise and bring people together.

Bringing people together has two meanings for Palestinians living under occupation. It can mean the togetherness of time shared with friends and relatives. But as the mayor of the city where it all began for Christians 2,000 years ago, I must think of the larger Palestinian family.

The fact that we have been living for decades under occupation means that we cannot enjoy the sense of togetherness that all people want during their great holidays, particularly the religious ones. Our people in Gaza cannot come freely to Bethlehem, and our brothers and sisters in Jordan and other countries cannot easily obtain visas from an occupying power that ap-

plies exaggerated entry restrictions. Citizens of other Middle East countries, like Lebanon and Syria, which have no peace agreement with Israel, have no chance at all.

The fact that a Palestinian Christian like me, or a Christian living in a nearby Arab country, cannot simply come to Bethlehem for Christmas should be unacceptable to everyone - as should the eight-meter-high wall that still encircles our city, despite being declared illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004. This wall is a constant reminder of separation rather than togetherness.

This year marks 150 years since the municipality of Bethlehem was established. Under Palestinian Authority law, a Christian Arab serves as mayor here and in similar Palestinian cities. But the challenge of keeping Christian Arabs in Palestine has become more difficult because of the occupation. While many Palestinians suffer under foreign military rule and wish that they could leave, Palestinian Christians are leaving in larger numbers simply because they have connections with the wider world through churches and the tourism business.

Bethlehem's population has grown over the years, and so has the number of hotel rooms - some-

thing unavailable to Mary and Joseph 2,000 years ago. But the growth of our population and tourist accommodations has been restricted by the wall Israel built on our land, and by the occupiers' refusal to allow us to pursue normal urban planning, partly because of Israeli settlement activity. These settlements, too, have long been considered illegal by the United Nations Security Council, yet Israel continues to build and confiscate land in violation of international law, which forbids occupiers from benefiting from their military conquests.

Christmas is celebrated three times in Bethlehem, reflecting the rites of the three main churches that have been here for centuries. Catholics and those following the Gregorian calendar hold midnight mass on December 25, while Orthodox Christians, who follow the eastern calendar, begin their Christmas celebrations on January 6. Armenians hold the ritual on January 18. As we do every year, we will observe all the formalities dictated by the Ottoman Status Quo. This centuries-old system of unwritten rules requires a very strict protocol governing where local leaders meet the head of the respective church and who is allowed to accompany the patriarchs and

bishops at various entrance points.

Ten years ago, UNESCO declared Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity to be in danger. After extensive renovation by the Palestinian government, funded by private and official donors, the church's mosaics and other elements, damaged by a fire centuries ago, were restored. But we Palestinian Christians, who have been living continuously in Bethlehem for 2,000 years, do not want our churches to become museums. We want Christian pilgrims from around the world, including Arab Christians, to come to Bethlehem to visit the living stones. For now, we are blessed that our people still hope and insist on a better tomorrow despite the absence of any serious peace talks.

When we lit the Christmas tree, we prayed that the light from Bethlehem - from the darkness of military occupation - would reach the entire world. Our faith is not in a change of heart by our occupiers, but in the justice of our cause. Two millennia ago, the skies of Bethlehem were lit as angels heralded the birth of Jesus by declaring, "Peace on Earth and goodwill to all." This Christmas, all of us in his hometown continue to yearn for that true peace.

*The writer is the mayor of Bethlehem. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE*

### WISDOM CORNER

- In the long run, the sharpest weapon of all is a kind and gentle spirit. ANNE FRANK
- In law a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others. In ethics he is guilty if he only thinks of doing so. IMMANUEL KANT
- He is happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds peace in his home. JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

### WORDSWORTH

#### Eavesdropper

It began in Anglo-Saxon England. The word came from Old Norse and originally referred to the area around a building that was liable to be wetted by water flowing off the projecting eaves of the roof above (gutters hadn't been invented yet). There was an ancient custom that stopped a landowner from building within two feet of his boundary, for fear that the water cascading off the eaves might cause problems for his neighbour. By the end of the medieval period, the word eavesdropper had been invented for somebody who stood within this strip of ground, under the projecting eaves and close to the walls of a building, in order to listen surreptitiously to the conversations within. The verb to eavesdrop in the same sense came along about a century later.

### LOL

#### Tough Rats

Three rats are sitting at the bar bragging about their bravery and toughness. The first says, "I'm so tough, once I ate a whole bagful of rat poison!"



The second says, "Well I'm so tough, once I was caught in a rat trap and I bit it apart!" Then the third rat gets up and says, "Later guys, I'm off home to harass the cat."

#### Unscrupulous practices

Sir, Parents wanting the best possible education for their children to next generation tech-savvy professionals striving to build their careers, education technology company Byju's quickly became a beacon of hope for Indians seeking a brighter future. Founded in 2011, the Bangalore-based startup launched its learning app in 2015 and soon snowballed into a multibillion-dollar behemoth - and India's leading ed-tech business with members of the country's burgeoning middle class seeking jobs and financial security in one of the world's biggest tech hubs. But as the company has grown, so have the complaints. Byju's employees say its success is built on the back of an abusive and exploitative work environment and unscrupulous sales practices that involve profiling, pursuing and pressuring potential customers from poorer backgrounds to buy its courses. Media platform Context spoke to 26 salespeople - 18 current and eight former - who outlined harsh working conditions with excessive hours, incidents of physical and verbal abuse, and a culture in which they are encouraged to mislead clients to make sales by almost any means. This is the real face of privatisation of education. In fact when the motive of education becomes profit, it loses its quality and value. Economics says, without exploiting labour cost profit can't be earned. This is what is happening with education. The education policy of the Indian government is responsible for this.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

#### COVID caution

Sir, The Indian government has approved the first ever intranasal COVID vaccine as a booster dose for the people of India. Bharat Biotech has prepared the vaccine. The good thing about this vaccine is that it can be used as a heterogeneous booster dose, if anybody has taken any other vaccines before then he or she can also take the booster dose. It will be made available in the CoWin app soon. Anyone above 18 years can take the booster dose. The recent surge in COVID cases in a few countries has made the government of India cautious again. Now every state government should make the booster dose procurement process faster. The administration also needs to do tests and genome sequencing of positive cases. For worst situations, the hospitals should also be kept ready. The common people need to mask up and take booster doses in time.

Deba Prasad Nayak, CUTTACK

## 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)

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FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
You have been too busy with work and social obligations. It is high time you took a break and did something for yourself. Your health may need attention. Ganesh says, everything else should take a back-seat if you're stressed out.

**TAURUS**  
You will manage to achieve all short-term goals that you had set today and your focus will now shift to setting long-term ones. Work pressure will continue but you will make it a point to find some time to renew your leisure activities. Family and friends will also figure in your scheme of things, predicts Ganesh.

**GEMINI**  
You will spend your time figuring out other people and their motivations today. You will probably spend time discussing issues of security and finance with your family members today. You will gain love and appreciation from people owing to your caring nature, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You will display a special attention towards beloved ones. This is an apt time for a frank chat on vital issues with your life-partner, says Ganesh. You never allow heart to dictate terms to mind, yet today will be sentimental with your wife. Today is the day to feel myriad emotions, says Ganesh.

**LEO**  
Your day will be one of mixed results. On one hand you will be dis-satisfied with your spouse or business partner, on the other hand you will make fantastic returns on your speculations. You will be able to maintain a balance owing to the advise of some friend, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
You will take your destiny in your own hands today. You possess the vision to penetrate the masks that people wear to hide their true selves. You will carefully select the friends to spend your time with, and you will also make plans for success. You need to brush up your presentation abilities, and may have to put in some extra efforts to get your ideas approved, says Ganesh.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says today is a good day for government related work. Those of you who are government employees will be able to get good results for their work. Your work will be rewarded and your performance and efficiency will be praised. You will be able to have a heart to heart talk with your loved one. Ganesh showers you with his blessings today.

**SCORPIO**  
Free your mind from negative thoughts. You need to be in high spirits to work with your team and delegate equal responsibilities to your team mates. Know their calibre and designate accordingly. Trust them with their work and the rest would fall in place.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The morning seems to begin on a lazy note today, as your energy level is equal to zero. Thus, you may try to decentralise your activities and divide it between your co-workers. But make sure the responsibilities are delegated in the right hands or you may have to regret your decision.

**CAPRICORN**  
You will want to expand the horizon of your business. But, you will be confused about the path to take for the expansion. You want to reach to the sky, but such a dilemma will keep you in a double mind. Listen to what your heart says, as it will guide you to the right direction, feels Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
You have managed to carve a niche for yourself. Today, you may see the tangible benefits of all your past hard work. But business rivals may poke and pinch; even your health may trouble you. However, you will manage to smile and take things in the right spirit, approves Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
You will experience mixed feelings today. On one hand tension and stress about how to set a deteriorating situation right will keep you worried, and on the other hand you will be in a mood to accept things for what they are. What you learn now will be very vital in your development, and will help you progress and become a better person in the future, says Ganesh.

GOBINDA DEATH PROBE

# CB visits Mahaling, seizes register to match handwriting

An envelope containing some writings on a paper has been recovered from his jacket after his death inside the Kantabanji sub-jail

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhawanipatna, Dec 24:** A Crime Branch (CB) team conducting a probe into the mysterious death of Gobinda Sahu inside the Kantabanji sub-jail premises visited the deceased's village Mahaling in Kalahandi district and conducted an investigation, Saturday. Jail officials had stated that Gobinda, the prime accused in Mamita murder case, committed suicide inside the Kantabanji sub-jail in Bolangir district while his family members termed it as murder. The team led by DSP Bijay Kumar Mallick visited the Mahaling Regional Higher Secondary School after their arrival. There they tried to match the handwriting in the envelope with that of Gobinda.

They also tried to ascertain whether the handwriting is of someone else and conducted the probe from various aspects. Notably, an envelope containing some writings on a paper was recovered from Gobinda's jacket after his death inside the Kantabanji sub-jail. It was found that the envelope was addressed to his elder daughter

Lipika Sahu, who is serving in a company outside the state.

They also held discussions with Kiran Kumar Singh, secretary of the college managing committee and Jaydev Mishra, principal (in-charge) in this regard and seized a register to match the handwritings.

Later, they visited Gobinda's residence and held discussions with the family members for over an hour. They also verified various documents and seized the handwritten diary of Gobinda for examination.

Gobinda's brother Santosh Sahu and Kiran Kumar Singh said that the CB team had seized the diary to match it with the handwriting contained in the envelope.

The CB team Friday had recreated the scene of Gobinda's suicide on Kantabanji sub-jail premises, Friday. It had called in two experts from Bolangir to check the footage of 16 CCTVs on the jail premises that might have captured visuals of the incident.

The CB officials have also inquired many jail inmates about Gobinda and his behaviour on the day of his suicide and before.



## Man gets 10-yr RI for minor's kidnap, rape

**Bolangir:** A fast track POC SO court sentenced a man to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment and slapped a penalty of ₹25,000 on him after convicting him in the 2017 kidnap and subsequent rape of a minor after holding her hostage at a house under Tusras police limits in this district, Saturday. The convict was identified as Antaryami Sahu alias Kahna, a co-villager of the survivor. Judge Biranchi Narayan Mishra also sentenced four of his associates to six months of imprisonment.



**DRAMA FEST:** Artistes enacted a play at Veer Surendra Sai 25th All Odisha Sambalpur Drama Competition at Aranyak Manch in Sambalpur, Saturday

# REVIVAL OF COAST CANAL DEMANDED

Despite having multiple benefits, it has been lying without utility for years at a time when priority is being given to revival of inland water channels

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, Dec 24:** Members of a local outfit based in Balasure, MPs of Bhadrak and Balasure districts have pressed for restoration of the Odisha Coast Canal in Balasure. The canal, built during the British regime, has been part of the National Waterway-5.

A delegation of Odisha Coast Canal Punaruddhar Manch recently met Midnapore MP Dillip Ghosh at Kharagpur and held discussion about renovation of Coast Canal and Hiji Tidal Canal.

They said if the canal is revived, it would provide an alternative mode of transport in terms of inland water channel for the people of Balasure and Bhadrak districts and would also help protect the countryside villages from saline water ingress and high tides during cyclones.

Notably, the construction of the 217-km canal was started in



**TRIBAL DANCE:** Artistes performed a tribal dance at a torch rally marking the inauguration of Budhadangar Lok Mahotsav-2022 organised by Brundaban Sanskrutik Anusthan at Kesinga in Kalahandi district, Saturday

## High school teacher nabbed for booze biz

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Dec 24:** Acting on a tip-off, Excise sleuths nabbed a government high school teacher and seized 125 litre of fake country liquor from his possession during a raid at his residence.

The accused was identified as Subhash Chandra Sahu, 55, a Hindi teacher posted at Satapandia Government High School and resident of Balarampali village under Kukulakhandi block in Ganjam.

He was caught red-handed while sealing liquor pouches in a machine during the raid. A packing machine and two sacks of polythene pouches were also seized from his possession while the liquor pouches were found without any label. The teacher doing liquor business has left chatters in the locality abuzz.

The arrest came after Deputy Commissioner of Excise Intelligence department Ashok Satapathy was tipped off about Sahu's involvement in fake liquor trade. He directed ASI Surendra Pradhan to form a team and conduct a raid.

During interrogation, he admitted to his involvement in making fake country liquor which he was selling in rural pockets of Ganjam district as well as in Berhampur city with the help of conduits. Sahu also admitted to his involvement in the trade since last 15 years, Excise ASI Pradhan said.

He was arrested and produced in the court Saturday from where he was remanded to the judicial custody after his bail plea was rejected.

# Ecocide on Parabhadi hill due to mining of stone elsewhere

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chandikhole, Dec 24:** Parabhadi hill near the world famous Lalitgiri Buddhist shrine in Jajpur is rich with Buddhist sculptures, but mining of khondalite stone from another area is taking a toll on the hill and its surroundings. The state government has decided to extract khondalite stone from the hill.

Culture lovers and various outfits have expressed concern over such development, saying the entire hill will be destroyed if khondalite stone is mined there. Reports said, 80 per cent of the Parabhadi hill is spread in Kesharaipur and Bandaeswar-Sukhuapada areas under Darpan tehsil while remaining 20 percent is in Lalitgiri mouza under Mahanga tehsil of Cuttack district. Many stupas and sculptures are on top of it which, historians say, were built when Buddhist culture was spread on the hill in around 2nd century BC.

The state government has been carrying out beautification of Srimandir at Puri under Abadha Yojana for which large quantities of khondalite stones are needed.

The Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) has been awarded the work of mining khondalite stones from the hill. The OMC conducted survey on the hill and it was decided that the hill will be mined for stone.



## Parabhadi hill near the world famous Lalitgiri Buddhist shrine is rich with Buddhist remnants, but mining of khondalite stone from another area is taking a toll on the hill

A machine was also brought for cutting stone. Later, mining was carried out in Kesharaipur, but surprisingly the mine was named as Sukhuapada mine.

After two months of mining, quality stone was not available there. Now, mining was started with machines at Gobindapur in Cuttack. Stones are brought from Gobindapur to foothill of Parabhadi hill where stones are cut and processed.

Though stones are not mined from the hill, hundreds of trees

have been cleared from the hill slope, which triggered grave concern among various local cultural outfits. Buddhayan, a cultural outfit, had apprised the district Collector and the Chief Secretary about such unnecessary felling of trees. President of Buddhayan, Pradipta Kumar Bhuyan also moved the High Court over the issue.

Bhuyan sought to know why a large number of trees were felled from the Parabhadi hill even though no mining was done from Sukhuapada mine. "Who will pay compensation for the loss of greenery?" he questioned.

Contacted, regional manager of the OMC, Gangadhar Nayak said that the khondalite stone mined from Sukhuapada mine is brittle and hence stone is being mined from Gobindapur. But he did not clarify why trees were cleared near the hill.

## YOUTH ABDUCTS, RAPES GIRL; HELD

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bahanaga, Dec 24:** A girl was allegedly abducted and raped by a youth in Bahanaga area of Balasure, police said Saturday. Police arrested the accused, identified as Ranjit Singh, son of Sania Singh of Konagadia.

The incident had taken place three months ago. A complaint was filed in this regard five days ago.

Reports said, Ranjit had abducted the girl of Taliapidhi village in a car at night. Later, he had raped her in a rented house under Khantapada police limits for days together. Then, the accused had taken the girl to a temple and married her against her will.

After the police complaint, the accused had absconded. Police carried out raids at different places and finally nabbed him Saturday.

## Expedite works of Jhadeswari ecotourism project: CS to DFO

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nayagarh, Dec 24:** Works of the ecotourism project at Jhadeswari in Nayagarh district are in progress at a cost of ₹65 lakh. Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra during his visit to the district Saturday directed the divisional forest officer (DFO) to complete the project in time.

The Chief Secretary reviewed the progress of various projects during his visit to Nayagarh, Odagaon and Sarankul blocks.

Continued from P1

## Hockey is Sundargarh's ...

He recounts a wedding he had attended in the residence of one of trainees where a hockey match was played between the families of the bride and groom and four dozen cocks were kept as prize and was called 'Prem Bhoj (love feast)'. "I was stunned ... I told myself that it is impossible for this place not to produce international players in large numbers consistently given the level of penetration of hockey in the lives of its people."

All the coaches agreed that a few common traits among the tribals have earned Sundargarh the tag of a hockey cradle.

"They (the tribals) are determined and obedient by nature," said Bihari. "It is not only their way of life, they are diligent too," commented Ekka.

Saini said the tribal hockey players totally abide by their coaches. "It is something like the age-old guru and sishya parampara."

He finds imprints of their dancing in the footwear for their defence and tackling styles.

For Bihari their close bonding helps in making good defenders.

The district has presented the country with a number of stars of the game - Dilip Tirkey, Lazarus Barla, Peter Tirky, the first Odia

tribal to represent the country in the junior national team, Silanand Lakra, Amit Rohidas and Sudhir Chirmaku.

The list of women hockey stars from the district is impressive too. The prominent among them are Subhadra Pradhan, Jyoti Sunita Kulu, a former women's hockey team captain, Deepgrace Ekka, Namita Toppo and Lilima Minz.

Sociologist Samarendra Mohanty said, "Sundargarh is the cradle of Indian hockey because the tribal players are persistent, obedient, are able to pick up the game's nuances quickly and adapt to modern techniques. When so many things come in a single package they naturally flourish."

Sundargarh has now surged ahead of Sansarpur, Punjab and Coorg, which were once bastions of hockey, he claimed adding the lure of decent jobs because of their prowess has added to the interest of the tribals in the game.

Odisha has three academies for hockey, of which two are situated in Sundargarh.

The state will host the Men's Hockey World Cup from January 13 to 29 which will be played out in Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar and Birsam Munda Stadium in Rourkela.



THE YEAR IN PICTURES



Civil unrest and protests against the government of Iran associated with the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini began 16 September and are ongoing as now. By December, Iranian security forces had killed as many as 450 protesters on the streets, and the government had begun publicly executing protesters convicted in rushed trials for crimes against the state.



A series of protests against Covid lockdowns began in China in November. The protests flared after a fire killed at least 10 Uygur residents fatally sealed in their residential tower - victims of China's brutal zero-Covid strategy. Now the Omicron variant is surging weeks after the authorities abruptly ended the zero-Covid policy, lifting strict testing requirements and travel restrictions.



The 2022 Gaza-Israel clashes lasted from August 5 to 7. More than 150 Palestinians and over 20 Israelis have been killed in the West Bank and Israel so far - the highest number of deaths in years.



A pedestrian suspension bridge over the Machchu river in the city of Morbi in Gujarat, collapsed October 30, killing at least 134 people. More than five hundred people were on the bridge at the time of the collapse, far exceeding the official capacity of 125. The 19th-century bridge had reopened five days earlier, in time for Diwali and the Gujarati New Year, following a lengthy closure for repairs.



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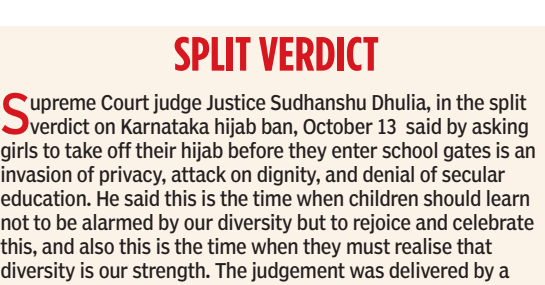
DOWN MEMORY LANE

YET ANOTHER YEAR IS DRAWING TO A CLOSE. THERE WERE INCIDENTS- UNTOWARD AND UNCALLED FOR THAT BORE A SENSE OF GLOOM AND DESPAIR. BOTH GOOD AND BAD MADE HEADLINES. THE YEAR WITNESSED DYNAMIC SHIFTS IN THE REALM OF POLITICS. BE IT IRAN, THAT WITNESSED MASSIVE PROTESTS AGAINST THE HIJAB RULES TO RISHI SUNAK'S RISE IN UK POLITICS OR EVEN A TRAGIC BRIDGE COLLAPSE IN GUJARAT, THE YEAR HAD IT ALL. SOME SHONE FOR THEIR INDIVIDUAL BRILLIANCES, WHILE SOME LEFT US FOREVER. ORISSA POST TAKES A LOOK AT THE YEAR GONE BY



THE NUPUR STORM

The BJP suspended Nupur Sharma and expelled its Delhi media head Haven Kumar Jindal as the row over her remarks against Prophet Muhammad escalated with protests from some Muslim countries. Amid demonstrations by Muslim groups and the sharp reaction from countries like Kuwait, Qatar and Iran, the BJP issued a statement asserting that it respects all religions and strongly denounces insults of any religious personality. A series of FIRs were filed in various towns across the country. A bandh was called by a Muslim organisation in Kanpur to protest the remarks on June 3, during which violence erupted with 40 people getting injured. Meanwhile, in a gruesome incident, a tailor was hacked to death inside his shop on a crowded street in Udaipur for supporting now-suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma on social media over her controversial remarks on Prophet Muhammad.



SPLIT VERDICT

Supreme court justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, in the split verdict on Karnataka hijab ban, October 13 said by asking girls to take off their hijab before they enter school gates is an invasion of privacy, attack on dignity, and denial of secular education. He said this is the time when children should learn not to be alarmed by our diversity but to rejoice and celebrate this, and also this is the time when they must realise that diversity is our strength. The judgement was delivered by a bench comprising justices Hemant Gupta and Dhulia. While Justice Gupta dismissed the appeals challenging the Karnataka High Court judgement, Justice Dhulia set aside the high court judgement and quashed the Karnataka government order dated February 5. The petitioners had moved the apex court, challenging the Karnataka High Court verdict refusing to lift the ban on hijab in educational institutions of the state. A bench of Justices Gupta and Sudhanshu Dhulia had reserved its judgement on the pleas on September 22 after hearing arguments in the matter for 10 days.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with young supporters during the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra'. The yatra, which started in Kanyakumari on September 7, will conclude in Kashmir. The yatra has so far covered states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan



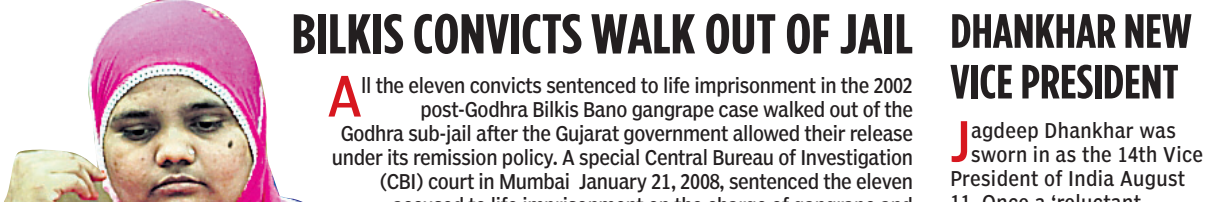
SHINDE GETS MAHA THRONE

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde July 4 comfortably won a crucial confidence vote in the state Assembly, cementing his grip on power after assuming office with the BJP support following a revolt in the Shiv Sena. He said the rebellion led by him was fallout of the 'unfair treatment' meted out to him, an apparent reference to his decade-old association with the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena. Shinde launched a rebellion against the Shiv Sena leadership and managed to get support of nearly 40 MLAs of the party, enough to escape provisions of the anti-defection law, leading to the collapse of the two-and-a-half-year old Maha Vikas Aghadi government led by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. Shinde, a Shiv Sena MLA from adjoining Thane city, was sworn in as the Chief Minister June 30, a day after Uddhav Thackeray quit the post. BJP's Devendra Fadnis was sworn in as the Deputy Chief Minister.



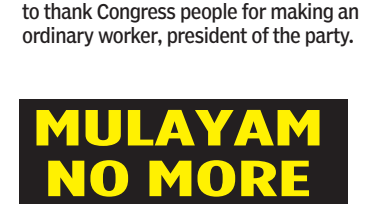
BILKIS CONVICTS WALK OUT OF JAIL

The eleven convicts sentenced to life imprisonment in the 2002 post-Godhra Bilkis Bano gangrape case walked out of the Godhra sub-jail after the Gujarat government allowed their release under its remission policy. A special Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court in Mumbai January 21, 2008, sentenced the eleven accused to life imprisonment on the charge of gangrape and murder of seven members of Bilkis Bano's family. Their conviction was later upheld by the Bombay High Court. These convicts had served more than 15 years in jail after which one of them approached the Supreme Court with a plea for his premature release.



DHANKHAR NEW VICE PRESIDENT

Jagdeep Dhanekar was sworn in as the 14th Vice President of India August 11. Once a 'reluctant politician', Dhanekar's re-emergence in the political scene in 2019 as West Bengal Governor surprised many, so has his rise to the office of the Vice President of India. Dhanekar was declared elected as the Vice President after he bagged 528 votes against his rival candidate Margaret Alva's 182. A man of many interests, his long legal career at the Rajasthan High Court and the Supreme Court and a brief stint as the junior parliamentary affairs minister at the Centre will come in handy as he presides over Rajya Sabha as its chairman.



KHARGE TAKES CHARGE

Vetsara leader Mallikarjun Kharge formally took over as Congress president October 25. Kharge, the first non-Gandhi to head the party in 24 years, defeated Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor in a direct contest for the president's post in the grand old party after the Gandhis opted out of the race. Speaking at the event after he was handed over the certificate of election to the top post at a function at the AICC headquarters, Kharge said he would like to thank Congress people for making an ordinary worker, president of the party.



GRUESOME MURDER

A 28-year-old man allegedly strangled his live-in partner and saved her body into 35 pieces which he kept in a 300-litre fridge for almost three weeks at his residence in South Delhi's Mehrauli before dumping them across the city over several days. The accused, a trained chef, evaded detection for six months, continued to live in the house they shared and was only arrested after details of the killing and its grisly aftermath came to light through his interrogation. Accused Aaftab Amin Poonawala told the police that he killed Shraddha Walkar after a quarrel over marriage and the idea of chopping her body into pieces was inspired by 'Dexter', an American crime TV series.



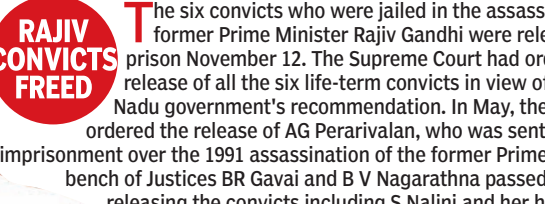
BORDER VIOLENCE

At least six people, five civilians and an Assam forest guard, died following 'unprovoked' firing by Assam police and state forest guards November 22. Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said. The Chief Minister said that Assam Police and forest guards entered Mukroh village in West Jaintia Hills District and resorted to 'unprovoked' firing, killing the five civilians of Meghalaya. An unknown forest guard of Assam was also killed in the firing.



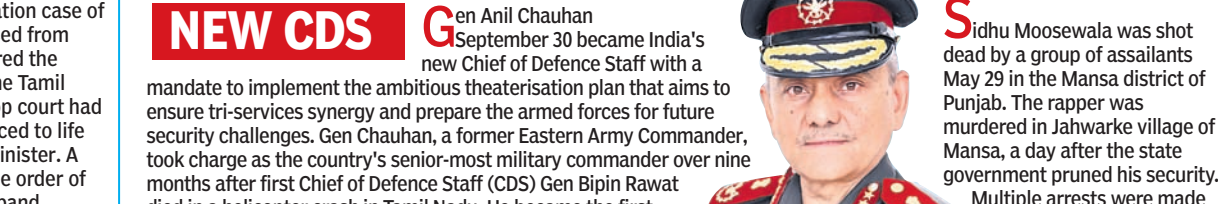
MULAYAM NO MORE

Samaajwadi Party founder and three-time Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, who spanned the state's most prominent political clan and played a key role on the national stage, died after prolonged illness. He was 82. Born on November 22, 1939, he came from a farming family. Yadav was elected an MLA 10 times and an MP, mostly from Mainpuri and Azamgarh, seven times.



RAJIV CONVICTS FREED

The six convicts who were jailed in the assassination case of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi were released from prison November 12. The Supreme Court had ordered the release of all the six life-term convicts in view of the Tamil Nadu government's recommendation. In May, the top court had ordered the release of AG Perarivalan, who was sentenced to life imprisonment over the 1991 assassination of the former Prime Minister. A bench of Justices BR Gavai and B V Nagarathna passed the order of releasing the convicts including S Nalini and her husband Murugan a.k.a. Sri Haran. The others who were released from prison were Shantanu, Robert Payas, Jayakumar and Ravichandran. Nalini and Ravichandran are from Tamil Nadu while the four others are Sri Lankan nationals.



NEW CDS

Gen Anil Chauhan became India's new Chief of Defence Staff with a mandate to implement the ambitious theatreisation plan that aims to ensure tri-services synergy and prepare the armed forces for future security challenges. Gen Chauhan, a former Eastern Army Commander, took charge as the country's senior-most military commander over nine months after first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Bipin Rawat died in a helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu. He became the first retired three-star Lt General-rank officer to return to the service as a four-star General. Gen Chauhan will also be the Principal Military Advisor to the Defence Minister on all tri-service matters as well as head department of military affairs as its secretary.

MANDATE 2022

IT'S PUNJAB

AAP leader Bhagwant Mann was sworn in as the Punjab Chief Minister March 16. Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit administered the oath of office and secrecy to Mann in the swearing-in ceremony that took place at Khairat Kalan, the ancestral village of legendary freedom fighter Bhagat Singh in Punjab's Shaheed Bhagat Singh (SBS) Nagar district. The AAP romped home winning 92 seats in the 117-member Punjab Assembly, decimating the Congress and the SAD-BSP combine.

RECORD WIN

BJP leader Bhupendra Patel took oath as the Chief Minister of Gujarat for a second straight term in Gandhinagar on December 12 in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Sixteen other ministers, including eight of cabinet rank, were also sworn in. In the Gujarat Assembly elections, counting for which was held December 8, the BJP won a seventh straight term by winning record 156 seats in the 182-member House. The Congress won 17 constituencies and AAP 5. Patel won the Ghatlodia seat with the highest margin of 1.92 lakh votes in the elections.

BJP RETURNS

BJP legislature party leader N Biren Singh was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Manipur March 21 for the second time after the Raj Bhavan in Imphal. Singh, along with five cabinet ministers, were administered the oath by Governor La Ganesan. Two political parties, the JD (U) with six members, and the Kukli People's Alliance with two members and one independent, extended their unconditional support to the BJP. The BJP returned to power in Manipur by winning 32 seats in the 60-member House in the Assembly elections.

SECOND TERM

Pushkar Singh Dhami March 23, took oath as the Uttarakhand Chief Minister, beginning his second term with a ceremony at which eight other members of his new Cabinet were also sworn in. Though the Bharatiya Janata Party returned to power with a strong mandate in the hill state bagging 47 of the 70 seats in the results declared March 10, Dhami failed to win from his own Khathina constituency.

GENERATIONAL SHIFT

Four-time Congress MLA Sukhdev Singh Sukhu, a son of a bus driver, was sworn in as the 15th Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh December 11 at a ceremony attended by a galaxy of senior party leaders including Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. The elevation of grassroots leader Sukhu marks a generational shift in the state Congress which has been under the shadow of former Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh. Sukhu's choice as the Chief Minister is being seen as the Congress giving the top post to a commoner, and also as the shifting of the party's power Centre from the Upper Himachal to Lower Himachal.

THE UNSTOPPABLE MONK

Yogi Adityanath took oath as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister for the second term on March 25 in a mega ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and top BJP leaders. Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak were also sworn in as Deputy Chief Ministers. The BJP-led alliance won 273 of 403 seats in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls. While the BJP got 255 seats, its allies Nishad Party and the Apna Dal (S) bagged 18.

GANDHIS UNDER GED SCANNER

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the National Herald money-laundering case. The probe pertains to alleged financial irregularities in Young Indian Private Limited, promoted by the Congress that owns National Herald. The newspaper is published by Associated Journals Limited (AJL) and owned by Young Indian. The investigating officer of the case is learnt to have questioned Rahul Gandhi about the incorporation of the Young Indian company, the operations of the National Herald newspaper, the loan given by the Congress to AJL, and the funds transfer within the news media establishment. Rahul Gandhi's mother Sonia Gandhi was also grilled by the agency in the case. The grand old party called the agency action vendetta politics by the Centre against the opposition. Congress supporters and leaders held protests on roads leading to the ED office.

CJI TAKES OATH

President Droupadi Murmu administered the oath of office to Justice DY Chandrachud as the 59th Chief Justice of India. Justice Chandrachud took the oath at a ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Justice Chandrachud is the son of former Supreme Court judge YV. Chandrachud, who was the longest serving CJI for being in office for about seven years and four months between 1978 and 1985. During his tenure, Justice DY. Chandrachud overturned two judgments of his father - which were related to adultery and the right to privacy.

RUSHDIE STABBED

Booker Prize-winning author Salman Rushdie was stabbed in the neck as he was about to give a lecture in western New York. Rushdie's 1988 book 'The Satanic Verses' was banned in Iran for being blasphemous and the country's leaders issued an edict calling for the author's death. A \$3-million bounty remains in effect for anyone who kills Rushdie. Salman Rushdie has lost sight in one eye and the use of one hand after the attack.

FACE-OFF AT LAC

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. It is the first major clash between the Indian and Chinese armies since August 2020 near Rinchen La in eastern Ladakh.

POWERFUL QUAKES

While earthquakes are frequent in Indonesia, a magnitude-5.6 quake shook the town of Cianjur in the western part of the nation November 21, killing at least 334 people. In another deadly quake, June 21, a magnitude-5.9 earthquake struck eastern Afghanistan, causing landslides, destroying thousands of homes, and killing an estimated 1,036 people. The earthquake has been dubbed the deadliest in decades in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is one of the most seismically active intercontinental regions in the world.

SUNAK UK PM

United Kingdom whose empire once spanned the globe had three Prime Ministers in just two months. The proximate cause for the turmoil at 10 Downing Street was more than fifty members of Boris Johnson's government resigning in July to protest the seemingly endless parade of scandals on his watch. He agreed to resign, and was succeeded by Liz Truss. She lasted just forty-five days - or 41 Scaramuccis - the shortest tenure of any British Prime Minister in history. Rishi Sunak, who helped engineer Johnson's downfall, got the honor of trying to pick up the pieces as Britain's first Prime Minister of colour. The bigger problem, and the broader cause for Britain's turmoil, is that Brexit has not produced the economic bonanza that proponents promised.

POPULATION EXPLOSION

The world reached its first landmark of 1 billion people in 1803. Over 200 years later, 15 November 2022, the world surpassed 8 billion people.

STAMPEDES

A crowd of mostly young people celebrating Halloween festivities October 29 in Seoul became trapped and crushed as the crowd surged into a narrow alley. In what could be South Korea's worst disaster in years, at least 149 people were killed and 150 others were injured. In Indonesia October 1 chaos erupted after thousands of fans invaded the pitch at Kanjuruhan Stadium in Malang as hosts Arena FC lost 2-4 to rival East Java club Persibaya Surabaya. Police fired tear gas, sending spectators rushing for the exit gates. The rush led to a stampede that killed dozens of people almost instantly. The death toll reached 131 and hundreds more were injured.

PELOSI'S TAIWAN VISIT

The China-Taiwan issue has escalated a war like situation after the visit of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in August 2022. The Congressional leader's stop in Taiwan infuriated Beijing, which launched a series of military exercises around the island. China's military for the first time fired missiles over Taipei, few waves of drones over some of Taiwan's offshore islands near the Chinese coast, sailed warships across the median line of the Taiwan Strait and surrounded the island in what Taiwan's military said amounted to a practice 'blockade'. Military tensions had not been so high between Taiwan and China since Beijing fired missiles into waters off Taiwan's coast ahead of the 1996 Taiwanese Presidential election, as the Chinese government tried to dissuade people from voting for Lee Teng-hui who it viewed as a separatist.

LULA'S COMEBACK

Former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula Bolsonaro in an election that marked a stunning comeback for the leftist leader and the end of the country's most right-wing government in decades.

NK'S MISSILES LAUNCH

The short-lived conciliatory attitude of the North Korean regime is gone for good. Kim Jong-un - the Supreme Leader of the country since 2011 - has fired more than 70 missiles over the past year.

ABE ASSASSINATED

8 July, 2022 the date on which a rare incident of political violence in Japan, the former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated by a gunman who opened fire at close range as the hugely influential politician delivered a campaign speech. It was all the more shocking given Japan's strict gun laws and low rates of violent crime in the country.

QUEEN PASSED AWAY

One would have to go back hundreds of years to find a monarch who reigned longer than Queen Elizabeth II. In her 70 years on the throne, she helped modernise the monarchy across decades of enormous social change, royal marriages and births, and family scandals. For most Britons, she was the only monarch they had ever known. Her death in September was arguably the most high-profile death this year, prompting a collective outpouring of grief and respect for her steady leadership as well as some criticism of the monarchy's role in colonialism. Queen died at Balmoral Castle in Scotland 8 September and She was succeeded by her eldest son, Charles III.

BUNDLES OF CRISIS

Political, economic, and climate crises wracked Pakistan in 2022. In April, Prime Minister Imran Khan lost a no-confidence vote in parliament, continuing a streak in which no Pakistani Prime Minister has ever completed a full five-year term. He led his followers in a series of protest marches on the capital of Islamabad seeking to oust his successor, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. In November, he was wounded in a failed assassination attempt. In August, torrential monsoon rains and melting glaciers triggered epic floods that compounded Pakistan's political and economic woes. One-third of the country was flooded, and more than one million homes were destroyed.

FOOT HONOR section with portraits of scientists and their achievements.

ECONOMICS section with portraits of economists and their work.

CHEMISTRY section with portraits of chemists and their discoveries.

PHYSICS section with portraits of physicists and their experiments.

PEACE section with portraits of peace activists and their work.

MEDICINE section with portraits of medical researchers and their findings.

LITERATURE section with portraits of authors and their works.



# KCR looks to influence national politics

IF KCR LEADS THE PARTY TO A THIRD CONSECUTIVE TERM IN POWER AND BECOMES THE FIRST LEADER IN SOUTH INDIA TO SCORE A HAT-TRICK, IT IS LIKELY TO BOLSTER THE CHANCES OF THE BRS ESTABLISHING ITSELF AS A FORCE IN SOME OTHER STATES AHEAD OF THE 2024 LOK SABHA POLLS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 24: The year 2022 saw the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) opening a new chapter in its 20-year-old history as it rechristened itself as Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) with the party supremo K. Chandrasekhar Rao eyeing a key role in national politics.

With the formal launch of BRS and the recent opening of its central office in New Delhi, the party is gearing up to expand its activities to different parts of the country.

KCR, as Rao is popularly known, will be projecting the Telangana development model to the rest of the country and present his vision to replicate the same in other states.

The coming year will determine to what extent it will influence national politics but a lot will depend on the outcome of the Assembly elections in Telangana scheduled towards the end of 2023.

If KCR leads the party to a third consecutive term in power and becomes the first leader in South India to score a hat-trick, it is likely to bolster the chances of the BRS establishing itself as a force in some other states ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

From a leader who led the movement and achieved statehood for Telangana to becoming the first chief minister of India's youngest state and winning a second term in power, the 68-year-old is now looking to set a new record and don the mantle of a national leader.

While launching the BRS, KCR gave the slogan of "ab ki baar kisan sarkar", thus hinting that farmers and agriculture will be at the core of his party's strategy as it looks to make inroads in other states.



As part of his efforts to emerge as a national leader, the BRS chief distributed compensation of Rs 3 lakh each to the kin of the farmers killed during the movement against the three farm laws of the Centre. The Telangana cabinet approved Rs 22.50 crore for distribution among the families of the 750 farmers killed during a 13-month-long stir.

On every occasion, the BRS chief highlights the innovative schemes under implementation in Telangana for development of agriculture and the welfare of farmers. He has predicted that a non-BJP government will come to power at the Centre and that it will provide free electricity to farmers across the country.

Claiming that Telangana is the only state in the country supplying 24 hours free electricity to farmers, KCR has already announced that when a non-BJP government comes to power at the Centre, this will

be extended to the entire country.

KCR has also been highlighting two other major schemes - Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Beema. Under Rythu Bandhu, the government is providing investment support of Rs 10,000 per acre every year irrespective of the extent of land owned by a farmer while under Rythu Beema it is providing compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the family of a farmer after his death whatever may be the cause of death.

The BRS leader has also been highlighting how Telangana achieved tremendous progress in eight years.

Telangana's GDP more than doubled to Rs 11.55 lakh crore while the per capita income increased to Rs 2.75 lakh in 2022 from Rs 1.24 lakh in 2014.

Overcoming electricity shortage to ensure round-the-clock electricity to all sectors, massive in-

crease in food production by completing several irrigation projects including Kaleshwaram, considered the world's largest lift irrigation project and the increase in annual IT exports to Rs 1.83 lakh crore from Rs 57,000 crore in 2014 are projected as the other achievements.

"When a new state can achieve this in such a short span of time, why can't the rest of the country achieve this," KCR often poses the question at public meetings.

KCR also claims that no other state can compete with Telangana in terms of the welfare schemes for various sections of people. Last year, it launched another innovative scheme, Dalit Bandhu, for the socio-economic empowerment of Dalits. Under this scheme, every Dalit family will be provided Rs 10 lakh assistance to start any business of its choice.

These schemes are not only attracting national attention but a few villages in neighbouring Karnataka and Maharashtra bordering Telangana have even demanded that they be merged with Telangana so that farmers and other sections of people can reap the benefits of its schemes.

The BRS is primarily looking to expand from these states and also looking at Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

In tune with the priority to the agriculture sector and farmers, BRS launched a kisan cell on the day of the launch. KCR appointed the leader of the National Farmers' Union, Gurnam Singh Charudi of Haryana, as president of the BRS Kisan Cell.

The party has drawn up plans to go aggressive to expand after Christmas. As part of this the BRS Kisan Cell will be launched next week in Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

While KCR has long been aspiring for a role in national politics by bringing together like-minded parties for a third alternative, his plans failed to take-off apparently due to differences with other regional leaders over the composition of the proposed front.

Aware of the fact that with the limited Lok Sabha seats (17) that Telangana has, he will not be able to influence national politics, KCR came out with the idea of BRS. Working with the 2024 Lok Sabha polls as its target, the party will be focusing on 100 Lok Sabha seats.

The BRS hopes to influence the nation with its socio-economic and political agenda by winning at least 50-80 seats. But, it remains to be seen what strategy the party will adopt to achieve this target.

# Telangana builds first KG to PG campus

It was in 2014 that the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (now Bharat Rashtra Samithi) had promised KG to PG free education scheme



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 24: In what is claimed to be a path breaking move in education, Telangana's first KG to PG institution has come up in Rajanna Sircilla district.

The state government has built an integrated campus from Kindergarten to Post Graduation and has come up at Gambhirapet to provide free education to all.

Equipped with modern facilities, the six-acre campus has a built up area of 10,000 square feet and it serves over 3,500 students.

The model campus comprises buildings for Anganwadi kendra, pre-primary school, primary school, high school, junior college and degree college. The KG to PG campus at Gambhirapet has come up as part of Mana Ooru Mana Badi programme of the state government. According to officials, the campus provides English, Telugu and Urdu media of instruction.

Authorities have provided facilities for early childhood education for over 250 children. The sprawling campus has over 90 class rooms including digital classrooms, computer and science labs.

Industries and Information Technology Minister KT Rama Rao Saturday said that the government

aims to create such facilities in all districts across the state. "Let me introduce you to the changing face of education in Telangana," tweeted Rama Rao, who is a MLA from Rajanna Sircilla district. According to a video posted by him, since the emergence of Telangana as a separate state, the government under the leadership of K. Chandrasekhar Rao has advanced the access and quality of education for all through inclusive policies and state-of-the-art facilities.

It was in 2014 that the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (now Bharat Rashtra Samithi) had promised KG to PG free education scheme. The opposition has been criticizing the government for not fulfilling its promise. However, the KCR government had denied that it failed to implement the promise and claimed that it built hundreds of residential schools for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes and Minorities and improved infrastructure in educational institutions over last eight years to take care of the programme in a different way.

Meanwhile, actor politician Prakash Raj took to Twitter to react to Telangana building its first KG to PG campus. "A leader with a vision.. with an intent for a better tomorrow..thank you KCR garu," he tweeted.

# ITBP deployed to guard Badrinath-Kedarnath

AGENCIES

Dehradun, Dec 24: The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has been deployed to keep a vigil around the snowbound Kedarnath and Badrinath temples during winter, a temple official said.

The deployment of ITBP personnel at the two Himalayan temples was necessary from the security point of view, Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) chairman Ajendra Ajay said. The high altitude temples become almost empty during winter as permanent residents move to lower areas because of heavy snow, he said.

The deployment was also made to secure the Kedarnath Temple, the outer walls of which have recently been gold plated.

The renovation and beautifica-



tion work was completed before the temple's closure for winter in October this year. Badrinath temple is also being redeveloped according to a masterplan, Ajay said. "With the recent facelift undertaken at Kedarnath it was more

at risk because there was an incident of theft at the temple some years ago," Ajay said.

The BKTC chairman said he had written to Chief Secretary SS Sandhu to step up security around the temples.

# Dieback disease hits neem trees in Telangana again

THE DIEBACK DISEASE WAS FIRST REPORTED IN THE COUNTRY DURING THE 1990S NEAR DEHRADUN IN UTTARAKHAND, WHILE IT WAS FIRST NOTICED IN TELANGANA IN 2019

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, Dec 24: Neem shows antibacterial, antifungal and other versatile properties, but it does not exempt the neem trees from being attacked by pests and diseases.

It has become a familiar sight in Telangana and also in some other southern states over the last few years that twigs and leaves of neem trees dry up.

The disease posing a threat to the



neem trees has been identified as twig blight and dieback disease in Telangana, and it has reappeared in the state this year on a massive scale. The disease is very widespread in Telangana this season, said Jagadeesh Bathula, Assistant Professor (Plant Protection) in the state-run Forest College and Research Institute in Siddipet district of Telangana.

The dieback disease affects leaves,

twigs and the inflorescence of neem trees of all ages and it causes almost 100 per cent loss of fruit production in severely infected trees, he told PTI. The dieback disease was first reported in the country during the 1990s near Dehradun in Uttarakhand, while it was first noticed in Telangana in 2019, he said.

Since it was first detected three years ago, the disease had waned but resurfaced in Telangana this

time around. The dieback disease is mainly caused by the fungi Phomopsis Azadirachtae, said Jagadeeshwar, Director of Research at the Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University (PJTSAU) here.

Bathula said the appearance of symptoms starts with the onset of the rainy season and becomes progressively severe in the later part of the rainy season and early winter. The dieback is a fungal disease but the neem trees are sometimes hit by insect infestation and the combination of both increases its impact, he said.

Though neem trees are strong enough to combat the damage caused by the disease, measures to control its spread can be undertaken at community level for better results, he said.

Asked as to how the spread of the disease can be contained, he said unlike agricultural crops, spraying of fungicides or insecticides on neem trees is a difficult task.

# Uttarakhand Guv gives assent to stricter anti-conversion law

AGENCIES

Dehradun, Dec 24: Uttarakhand Governor Lt Gen (Retd) Gurmit Singh has given his assent to the Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2022, making unlawful conversions a cognizable and non-bailable offence punishable with a prison term of up to 10 years.

The bill was passed by the state Assembly November 30 this year and the Governor gave his assent to the legislation earlier this week, official sources said here Saturday.

With the Governor's sanction to the bill it has become an Act paving the way for stricter punishment to offenders in such cases, they said.

Apart from a maximum imprisonment of up to ten years, persons indulging in forceful and unlawful conversion in Uttarakhand will now be slapped with a fine of at least ₹50,000.

"No person shall convert, either directly or otherwise, any other person from one religion to another by use or practice of misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means. No person shall abet, convince or conspire such conversion," the Act said.

# The forest is calling, but Van Gujjars cannot return

FOR CENTURIES, VAN GUJJARS HAVE MOVED BETWEEN HILLY AREAS DURING SUMMERS, AND PLAINS DURING WINTERS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Dehradun, Dec 24: "In olden times, the call of the Indian Cuckoo would tell us it is time to go to the mountains to graze animals," says Taukeer Alam, a Van Gujjar resettled at Laldhang from the Rajaji National Park area.

Van Gujjars belong to the OBC in Uttarakhand, and are mainly found in Garhwal division. Their population stands at around 70,000 in the state. The contentious history of the relationship between this animal-rearing nomadic community and the van (forest) is more widely recorded than their ethos, which is intrinsically linked to forest conservation and sustainable use of resources.

For centuries, Van Gujjars have moved between hilly areas during summers, and plains during winters. They depend on natural resources for their survival. Hence, neither their customs nor daily lifestyle harm nature. "Even our deras (houses) are made of biodegradable materials from the forest. Once we leave an area, our houses decompose on their own,"

Alam said. "Before we were resettled here, we used to live in the forest. We could predict changes in weather just by noticing the behaviour of wild animals and the call of birds," Gullo Bibi said. Bibi is a resident of Laldhang Gujjar Basti, one of the colonies where the Uttarakhand government had resettled them from the park.

"Deer and nilgais used to come in search of warmth when we lit fire at night in the middle of our deras. They rest near our settlement and return to the forest only at dawn. That was the kind of relationship we had with the animals," she says.

"Now, you hear stories of wild animals moving towards the plains. Our colonies acted like a boundary between the forest and human settlement. The animals would only come up to our colonies and never move beyond. Now that we have been displaced, this border is getting breached," she says.

Though most of the forests in the hilly districts of Uttarakhand have been notified as wildlife sanctuaries, around 2,000 families living



near Haridwar and Dehradun still migrate during summers to the barrage area built on the Ganga along the Muzaffarnagar-Bijnor district borders in Uttar Pradesh.

The practice of winter migration also continues, though it is not prevalent nowadays. "We still live in our old settlement in Gauri range of Rajaji Tiger Reserve near Rishikesh," says Mir Hamza,

founder, Van Gujjar Tribal Youth Organisation. Notably, the Van Gujjar settlement in Gauri range is the only one remaining in Garhwal as its members have consistently dodged resettlement offers.

"To the east of our settlement is the east Ganga canal, and ahead of it is a dense forest. We come here after the winter migration, and the Gojri buffaloes we rear cross the

canal to enter the forest, where they eat the half-eaten seeds and fruits thrown on the ground by monkeys and langurs. When they excrete on reaching back the settlement, the seeds fall here with the dung, helping in the growth of more trees," he explains.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a forest department official said, "During forest fires, we

work jointly with Van Gujjars. Even when the department has to prune trees to aid in growth, we enlist their help. They are only stopped when they use more than the allowed forest produce." Without official forest rights, what is allowed or not is an arbitrary and unilateral decision by the forest department.

On why they have not made claims under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, Hamza says, "Most of the community members are not aware of it. We never had a formal education. Van Gujjar Tribal Youth Organisation was formed in 2017 to create awareness on such matters. Presently, we have 180 active members working mainly towards educating the community members about forest rights, bio-diversity conservation and preservation of traditional knowledge."

The organisation also processes several applications and puts together documents to prove the historic link between the Van Gujjars and forests. However, only a handful of rights have been attained so far. One such is the granting of forest rights to around 60 families of a small settlement in Uttarkashi.





On this day, we remember the message of compassion and sacrifice given by Jesus Christ. The festival of Christmas inspires us to treat each other with love and kindness. Let us take a pledge to adopt the divine teachings of Jesus Christ in our lives  
DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

TRAGIC INCIDENT

A five-year-old boy died due to delay in the arrival of an ambulance after he was bitten by a snake in this district, sources said



of the day quote

Covid cases are rising in China and Japan. There are long queues outside hospitals, dead bodies are piling up. But you are not bothered about the interests of the country. You are bothered about only one family. Congress has displayed this attitude time and again

Everyone, including the Kashmiri Pandits, has suffered a lot but the government should take into consideration the recent (targeted) killings of the community members

The BJP had announced that it will not contest the mayoral election, but is now fielding an independent candidate, who will be supported by all BJP councillors. It does not suit BJP to contest elections from the backdoor

SHORT TAKES

Large cache of arms, ammunition seized

Srinagar: The J&K Police along with the Army have recovered a large cache of arms and ammunition in a joint operation at Uri in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, officials said Saturday. The police said that the arms and ammunition recovered include eight AK 74 assault rifles with 24 magazines and 560 rounds, 12 pistols (Tokarev type) with 24 magazines and 244 rounds, 14 grenades and 81 balloons with Pakistani flag imprint. The police have launched a probe into the matter after registering a case.

Delhi Metro completes 20 years of operations

New Delhi: From its humble beginning in December 2002 with a corridor of just 8.2 km spanning six stations on the Red Line, the Delhi Metro has grown into a network of over 390 km in 2022, completing an eventful journey of 20 years of operations. A special commemorative ceremony was held at the Welcome metro station which was attended by Japan's Ambassador to India Hiroshi Suzuki, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's Managing Director Vikas Kumar, among others.

Two sanitation workers killed

Sangareddy (Telangana): Two women sanitation workers died and three others were seriously injured when a speeding car ran over them in Medak district of Telangana Saturday, police said. According to a senior police official, the incident happened in Medak town at 5 am when three sanitation workers of Medak Municipality were going to their office when the car ran over the trio and subsequently two women workers of a petrol pump.

AIADMK observes MGR's death anniversary

Chennai: The 35th death anniversary of AIADMK founder and former Chief Minister M G Ramachandran was observed Saturday with the party led by interim general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami taking a pledge to dislodge the DMK government. Fondly hailed as Puratchi Thalaivar, Ramachandran who still holds sway among the party members and public, as well, died December 24, 1987, after a prolonged illness. The AIADMK men clad in black shirts and women functionaries in black sarees, paid floral tributes to the iconic leader at his decorated memorial on the Marina Beach here.

RT-PCR test must for China, 4 more nations

AGENCIES  
New Delhi/Gandhinagar, Dec 24: Ramping up anti-Covid measures, the government Saturday said-PCR test would be made mandatory for passengers from China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand and asked states to ensure adequate availability of medical oxygen and life support equipment such as ventilators in hospitals.

From Saturday, random coronavirus testing of international passengers started at airports including those in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Pune, Indore and Goa under new guidelines that require testing of two per cent of the passengers arriving in each international flight.

With the ordeal faced by the country during the second Covid-19 wave in April 2021 still fresh in the minds, the Centre said oxygen control rooms should be reinvigorated at state and UT levels for prompt resolutions of oxygen-related issues and challenges.

Reintroducing more precautionary measures, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that passengers arriving in India from China and four other countries if found Covid-19 positive or with



Govt asks states to maintain O2 supply

New Delhi: With some countries witnessing a surge in Covid cases, the Centre Saturday urged states and union territories to ensure the availability of Liquid Medical Oxygen, adequate inventory of cylinders and functional life support equipment such as ventilators at hospitals to face any challenge. The health ministry asked them to ensure Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) oxygen generating plants are kept fully functional and regular mock drills are conducted to check them.

fever will be quarantined. "In view of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, passengers from China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Bangkok (Thailand) are required to upload their-PCR reports in advance (for travel to India)." "After landing in India, they will undergo thermal screening and we have issued an order for them to be quarantined if found positive or with fever on their arrival in the country," Mandaviya told reporters in Gandhinagar,

The Union health minister said that filling up the 'Air Suvidha' form to declare their health status will be made mandatory for passengers coming from these countries.

The Air Suvidha portal was launched in August 2020 through which international passengers had to submit details of their journey, Covid vaccination and testing status but it was discontinued in November this year. With the reduction in cases and more widespread vaccination, mandatory-PCR tests were also discontinued for international passengers by November.

Thermal screening will be done for all passengers at the point of entry and those found to be symptomatic will be immediately isolated.

The country has not reported any fresh spurt in infection. There were 201 new coronavirus infections, raising the tally to 4.46 crore, while the active cases increased to 3,397, the Union Health Ministry said Saturday.

The death toll stands at 5,30,691 with one fatality reconciled by Kerala, the data updated at 8 am by the ministry stated.

The daily positivity was recorded at 0.15 per cent and the weekly positivity at 0.14 per cent.

SIA attaches Jel properties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 24: The Jammu and Kashmir State Investigation Agency (SIA) Saturday attached several Jamat-e-Islami (Jel) properties worth over Rs 100 crore including a house here registered in the name of late pro-Pakistan separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, officials said.

"The SIA has unearthed further assets of the banned Jel in Pulwama, Kulgam, Budgam and Srinagar districts. The properties at a dozen locations worth Rs 122.89 crore approximately after being notified by the DMs concerned on the recommendation of SIA J-K, have been barred with restrictions on usage and entry," the officials said. They said the properties notified on Saturday include a residential house registered in Geelani's name.

The officials said the two-storey residential house over 17 marlas and 199 square feet at Barzulla South is in the name of Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Firdous Ahmad Asmi. The property was believed to have been purchased in the late 1990s by Jamat-e-Islami (Jel) and was registered in Geelani's name who used to live there till early 2000 when he shifted to the Hyderpora area of the city. Geelani died in September last year. The property was later used in the house, the ground floor of which has been occupied by one Shahzada Aurangzeb, resident of Moolu Chitragam area of



Shopian since November 2018. The officials said Aurangzeb himself is a permanent 'Rukn' (member) of the Jel and has also served as 'Ameer-e-Zila' Shopian district. A notarized rent deed has also been executed in this regard in September 2020 for a period of five years at a monthly rent of Rs 1,000. However, no rent has till date been paid. From the search carried out, a mobile phone of the tenant with a SIM inserted in it has been recovered and seized, the officials added.

The other properties notified among others include Al-Huda Health Care Centre, Shops and school building over land measuring six kanals 18 marlas in Pulwama, and non-functional 'Darsghah' (religious school) over four marlas of land at Nowbal Kulgam. The officials said the SIA's action is part of the seizure of several properties belonging to the Jel. These properties of Jel are the fourth set of properties to be notified in a series of properties belonging to the banned organisation. The SIA has identified as many as 188 Jel properties across the Union Territory which have either been notified or are under the process of being notified for further legal action, they said.

Tunisha Sharma commits suicide

Mumbai: TV actress Tunisha Sharma, who was on the cast of 'Ali Baba: Dastaan-E-Kabul', is no more. She was found dead on the sets of a TV serial in Vasai, Mumbai, Saturday. According to media reports, she has committed suicide. A police investigation has started but the reason behind this extreme step is still not clear. The 20-year-old actress was active on social media hours before her death. She posted a picture of her with the caption: "Those who are driven by their Passion don't stop." Tunisha started her career with 'Bharat Ka Veer Putra - Maharana Pratap' and later featured in shows such as 'Chakravartin Ashoka Samrat', 'Gabbar Poonchwala', 'Sher-e-Punjab: Maharaja Ranjit Singh', 'Internet Wala Love' and 'Ishq Subhan Allah'. The young actress had featured in films like 'Fitoor', 'Baar Baar Dekho', 'Kahaani 2: Durga Rani Singh', and 'Dabangg 3'. She has also appeared in several music videos, notably 'Pyaar Ho Jaayega', 'Nainon Ka Ye Rona' and 'Tu Baithe Mere Samne'.



BJY ENTERS DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with party President Mallikarjun Kharge, Makkal Needhi Maiam leader Kamal Haasan and other leaders during the Bharat Jodo Yatra, near Red Fort in New Delhi

8 pilgrims killed in road accident

Theni (TN): At least eight people who were returning from Sabarimala were killed after the vehicle they were travelling in plunged into a gorge here, a senior district official said Saturday. The accident occurred late Friday, District Collector K V Muralidharan said. Two injured persons have been admitted to a hospital here. The mishap is suspected to have taken place after the driver lost control of the vehicle while maneuvering a bend in the hilly route. While seven people died on the spot, one succumbed to injuries en route to the hospital, official added. The deceased included a minor boy and they were residents of Andipatti in the district.

Raj cancels teacher recruitment exam after paper leak

Jaipur, Dec 24: The general knowledge test for teachers recruitment in Rajasthan was cancelled on Saturday after the question paper was allegedly leaked just hours before the commencement of the exam, and 44 people have been arrested.

The paper leak gang had allegedly taken Rs 10 lakh from each candidate for illegally providing them the questionnaire for the teachers' recruitment test conducted by the Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC), police said, adding the arrested included the alleged mastermind

of the scam and 37 students. The examination will be re-conducted January 29, officials said. "Today, December 24, from 9 to 11 am, the general knowledge test for teacher recruitment has been cancelled as a precaution so that no injustice is done to the hardworking youths," Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot tweeted. The Chief Minister asserted the government had enacted a strict law for transparency in recruitment examinations even as the opposition BJP attacked the Congress government, claiming it was the ninth incident of paper leak, and demanded strict action against the culprits. Police said 37 students and seven "experts"



were held in Udaipur district. The alleged "mastermind" of the paper leak, Suresh Vishnoi, a resident of Jodhpur, was among those arrested.

Chandrayaan-3, Sun Mission & more: Busy '23 awaits ISRO

The Central government is expected to announce the Space Policy and also enact a law governing the sector next year and the private players will also get ready their satellites and rockets

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Dec 24: The year ahead will be significant for the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in particular and for the space sector, says S. Somanath, chairman of the country's premier space agency, and Secretary, Space, Government of India.

The Indian space agency is looking at couple of major space missions, like the Mission to the Moon (Chandrayaan-3); test flights and unmanned flight of rocket for human

space mission Gaganyaan; launch of Aditya L1 satellite or the Sun Mission; the Indo-US joint NISAR satellite launch; launch of 36 OneWeb satellites for a fee; flying for the second time its small rocket; development of new rocket architecture and others.

"The ISRO will be looking at ways to have better systems. The space agency will focus on development of new generation rockets that are cost effective. The agency will work on developing a new rocket architecture," Somanath



told IANS in an interview. In line with the global trend, the ISRO will also look at having a constellation of satellites for imaging purposes.

According to Somanath, the Space Policy has to come and then the Space Bill. The draft Bill is

under discussions with several Ministries. Speaking of the space missions he told IANS that the launch of 36 satellites belonging to the UK based OneWeb is there. The satellites will be launched by ISRO rocket LVM3 (formerly Geosynchronous Satellite Launch

Vehicle-Mk3). The prestigious Chandrayaan-3 mission is also slated for 2023 and the launch in June/July is critical. ISRO plans to send one navigation satellite, NavIC, next year and try one more, Somanath said.

He said the ISRO is also planning to have its mission to the sun with its satellite Aditya-L1, a coronagraphy spacecraft to study the solar atmosphere, with a PSLV rocket next year.

According to the ISRO, the spacecraft will be placed in a halo orbit around the first Lagrange point, L1, of the Sun-Earth system. A satellite around the L1 point has the major advantage of continuously viewing the Sun without occultation/eclipses.

SIKKIM GORGE ACCIDENT

Bodies of 16 Army men sent home

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bagdogra/Gangtok, Dec 24: The mortal remains of the 16 Army personnel who were killed in a road accident in Sikkim were sent to their respective homes after a solemn wreath-laying ceremony was held at Bagdogra airport in the northern part of West Bengal Saturday.



Post the wreath-laying ceremony, 15 of the bodies were flown by special Air Force aircraft to various airports in the country, from where they will be taken to the victims' towns or villages, the Army said. The body of Naib Subedar Chandan Kumar Mishra, who belonged to Khagaria in Bihar, was taken to his native place by road.

"After the bodies reach the native places of deceased soldiers, local Army authorities will coordinate the handing over of mortal remains to the family members and conduct of funeral with full military honours," an Army official said.

The 16 bravehearts lost their lives when the Army truck they were travelling in skidded down a steep slope at Zema in North Sikkim Friday morning.



# international

## of the day quote

The West should consider how to address Russia's need for security guarantees if President Vladimir Putin agrees to negotiations about ending the war in Ukraine  
**EMMANUEL MACRON** | FRENCH PRESIDENT

A 69-year-old gunman who opened fire at a Kurdish cultural centre and a hairdressing salon in Paris on Friday was deliberately seeking out foreigners  
**GERALD DARMANIN** | FRANCE INTERIOR MINISTER

It's dangerous and threatening, it's really very serious weather and it goes from Oklahoma all the way to Wyoming and Maine. ... So I encourage everyone to please heed local warnings  
**JOE BIDEN** | US PRESIDENT

## SHORT TAKES

### Taliban's latest restrictive move

**Kabul:** The Taliban government in Afghanistan Saturday ordered all foreign and domestic non-governmental groups to suspend employing women, the latest restrictive move by the country's new rulers against women's rights and freedoms. The order came in a letter from Economy Minister Qari Din Mohammed Hanif, which said that any NGO found not complying with the order will have their operating license revoked in Afghanistan.

### Al Qaeda releases Zawahiri video

**Cairo:** Al Qaeda has released a 35-minute recording of the group claims was narrated by its leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was believed to have been killed in a US raid in August 2022. SITE intelligence group said. The recording was undated and the transcript did not clearly point towards a time frame for when it could have been made.

### 9 killed in blast

**Johannesburg:** At least nine people, including two firefighters, were killed and many others injured after a gas tanker which got stuck under a low railway bridge exploded in Boksburg town of South Africa on Saturday, officials said.

### New Fiji PM

**Melbourne:** Sitiveni Rabuka was sworn in as Fiji's Prime Minister Saturday, capping a tense week in a fragile Pacific democracy where the former military commander first held office more than two decades ago. The 74-year-old won the nomination by one vote over incumbent Frank Bainimarama at a sitting of the Fijian Parliament in Suva.

# Taliban use water cannon on women protesting ban

**Kabul, Dec 24:** Taliban security forces used a water cannon to disperse women protesting the ban on university education for women on Saturday, eyewitnesses said, as the decision from the Taliban-led government continues to cause outrage and opposition in Afghanistan and beyond. The development came after Afghanistan's Taliban rulers on Tuesday banned female students from attending universities effective immediately. Afghan women have since demonstrated in major cities against the ban, a rare sign of domestic protest since the Taliban seized power last year. According to eyewitnesses in the western city of Herat, about two dozen women on Saturday were heading to the provincial gover-



South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo clad in Santa Claus costume arrives at a Christmas charity event in Seoul, South Korea

## Shells pummel Kherson; 10 dead

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Kyiv, Dec 24:** Russian shells pummelled the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson Saturday, killing at least 10 people and injuring 55 in the city that Moscow's troops were forced to abandon last month. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, just back from his quick trip to Washington, posted photos of the wreckage on his social media accounts. He noted the destruction came as Ukrainians were beginning Christmas celebrations that for many Orthodox Christians will culminate in the traditional celebration on January 7.

"This is not sensitive content — it's the real life of Kherson,"



Zelenskyy tweeted. The images showed cars on fire, bodies on the street and building windows blown out. Yaroslav Yanushevych, the governor of the Kherson region, said in televised remarks that the number of people killed in the latest shelling of the city has risen from seven to 10. He added that 55 people were wounded, 18 of them in grave condition, including a 6-year-old child. Saturday marks 10 months since the start of the Russian invasion. Ukraine has faced a blistering onslaught of Russian artillery fire, missiles, shelling and drone attacks since early October, much of it targeting the energy infrastructure in a bid to cut electricity and heating services as the freezing winter advances. The shelling has been intense in Kherson since Russian forces withdrew and Ukraine's army reclaimed the city in November.

## Winter storm batters US power, snarling Christmas travel

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Southfield (US): Dec 24:** A battering winter storm left nearly 2 million homes and businesses without power across the United States Saturday, as millions more people were left to worry how the prospect of further outages would affect holiday and travel plans. The blinding blizzards, freezing rain and frigid cold that enveloped much of the country knocked out power to 1.7 million households and businesses, while major electricity grid operator

## China blasts US defence bill while Taiwan welcomes it

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Shanghai/Taipei, Dec 24:** China expressed anger Saturday at a new U.S. defence authorisation law that boosts military assistance for Taiwan, while Taipei cheered it for helping boost the island's security. China, which considers democratically governed Taiwan its own territory, expressed "strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition" regarding the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement. It said the \$858 billion military spending measure, which authorises up to \$10 billion in security assistance and fast-tracked weapons procurement for Taiwan, contained provisions that "cause serious damage to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait". China has never renounced using

## Italy plays a positive role and shows clear support for Iraq in international forums, especially in the war against the Islamic State group

MOHAMMED SHIA' SABBAR AL-SUDANI | IRAQI PM



Chinese State Counsellor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi

## India-American holds top diplomatic position in US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, Dec 24:** US President Joe Biden has nominated Indian-American lawyer diplomat Richard Verma, also a former US ambassador to India, to a top diplomatic position in the State Department, a move hailed by the Indian diaspora here as a "inspired choice". The White House in a statement on Friday said that Biden announced his intent to nominate 54-year-old Verma to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources. If confirmed by the US Senate, Verma would be the highest ranking Indian-American in the State Department. Currently Chief Legal Officer and Head of Global Public Policy at Mastercard, Verma, served as the US' Ambassador to India from January 16, 2015 to January 20, 2017. During the Obama administration, Verma also served as Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs. Earlier in his career, Verma was National Security Advisor to United States Senator Harry Reid.

## Winter storm batters US power, snarling Christmas travel

ASSOCIATED PRESS

are having difficulty operating in the frigid weather and has asked residents to refrain from unnecessary use of electricity. It issued an emergency call for conservation system-wide - asking residents in 13 states to set thermostats lower than usual, to postpone use of major appliances like stoves and dishwashers and to turn off nonessential lights. Commercial and industrial power users have also been asked to cut back. PJM officials said there is increased electricity demand across its system at the same time that

## 22 dead in Russian fire

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Moscow, Dec 24:** A fire on Saturday at a private shelter in the Siberian city of Kemerovo that was operating illegally killed 22 people, Russian officials said. Initial reports described the wooden building in the city 3,000 kilometers (1,900 miles) east of Moscow as a nursing home, but the country's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, later said it was a "temporary residence for persons in a difficult life situation." The committee said a man who rented the building has been arrested and charged with violation of safety regulations resulting in multiple deaths. The committee's statement did not identify him, but news reports said he was a local clergyman. The cause of the fire that broke out before dawn has not been determined, but the investigative committee said residents told the shelter operator on the day before the fire that the building's coal-fired boiler was malfunctioning. Six other people were injured in the blaze that destroyed the two-story building.

## Italy plays a positive role and shows clear support for Iraq in international forums, especially in the war against the Islamic State group

MOHAMMED SHIA' SABBAR AL-SUDANI | IRAQI PM

**Italy plays a positive role and shows clear support for Iraq in international forums, especially in the war against the Islamic State group**

# Covid-19 roils Chinese towns

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Bazhou (China), Dec 24:** Yao Ruyan paced frantically outside the fever clinic of a county hospital in China's industrial Hebei province, 70 kilometres (43 miles) southwest of Beijing. Her mother-in-law had COVID-19 and needed urgent medical care, but all hospitals nearby were full. "They say there's no beds here," she barked into her phone. As China grapples with its first-ever national COVID-19 wave, emergency wards in small cities and towns southwest of Beijing are overwhelmed.

Intensive care units are turning away ambulances, relatives of sick people are searching for open beds, and patients are slumped on benches in hospital corridors and lying on floors for a lack of beds. Yao's elderly mother-in-law had fallen ill a week ago. They went first to a local hospital, where lung scans showed signs of pneumonia. But the hospital couldn't handle COVID-19 cases, Yao was told. She was told to go to hospitals in adjacent counties. As Yao and her husband drove from hospital to hospital, they found all the wards were full. Zhuozhou Hospital, an hour's drive from Yao's hometown, was the latest disappointment. "I'm furious," Yao said, tearing up, as she clutched the lung scans from the local hospital. "I don't have much hope. We've been out for a long time and I'm terrified because she's having difficulty breathing."

Over two days, AP journalists visited five hospitals and two crematoriums in towns and small cities in Baoding and Langfang prefectures, in central Hebei province. The area was the epicentre of one of China's first outbreaks after the state loosened COVID-19 controls in November and December. For weeks, the region went quiet, as people fell ill and stayed home. Many have now recovered. Today, markets are bustling, diners pack restaurants and cars are honking in snarling traffic, even as the virus is spreading in other parts of China.

Experts have forecast between a million and 2 million deaths in China next year, and the World Health Organisation warned that Beijing's way of counting would "underestimate the true death toll."

At Baoding No. 2 Hospital, in Zhuozhou, on Wednesday, patients thronged the hallway of the emergency ward. Patients were breathing with the help of respirators. One woman wailed after doctors told her that a loved one had died.

At the Zhuozhou crematorium, furnaces are burning overtime as workers struggle to cope with a spike in deaths in the past week, according to one employee. A funeral shop worker estimated it is burning 20 to 30 bodies a day, up from three to four before COVID-19 measures were loosened.



## Christmas calls

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak surprised diplomats, military personnel, charity workers and other public servants working across the world this Christmas by calling them to personally thank them for their sacrifice and dedication in an 'extraordinary' year**

## India-American holds top diplomatic position in US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, Dec 24:** US President Joe Biden has nominated Indian-American lawyer diplomat Richard Verma, also a former US ambassador to India, to a top diplomatic position in the State Department, a move hailed by the Indian diaspora here as a "inspired choice". The White House in a statement on Friday said that Biden announced his intent to nominate 54-year-old Verma to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources. If confirmed by the US Senate, Verma would be the highest ranking Indian-American in the State Department. Currently Chief Legal Officer and Head of Global Public Policy at Mastercard, Verma, served as the US' Ambassador to India from January 16, 2015 to January 20, 2017. During the Obama administration, Verma also served as Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs. Earlier in his career, Verma was National Security Advisor to United States Senator Harry Reid.



## of the day quote

Our focus will also be on taking measures to support industry besides finding new markets as the production of steel continues to grow in the country

FAGGAN SINGH KULASTE | UNION MINISTER

We have already sold 315 franchises at pan India level and are confident of opening over 400 stores by the end of the current financial year

SUJEET KUMAR MISHRA | CO-FOUNDER & CEO, WINNI

With roughly half of India's population dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, this is a sector where technological advancements can lead to pervasive benefits

MANISH GUPTA | RESEARCH DIRECTOR, GOOGLE RESEARCH INDIA

## SHORT TAKES

### Air India unveils FogCare initiative

**New Delhi:** To minimise the impact of fog-related flight disruptions, Air India on Saturday said it will proactively reach out to passengers and provide them the option to reschedule or cancel their impacted flights free of cost. The Tata-owned airline has launched the 'FogCare' initiative to mitigate the impact of disruptions due to fog on passengers, and it will be initially for the flights departing from and arriving at Delhi airport. The initiative is to proactively reach out to passengers whose flights have been badly impacted and are likely to be cancelled during periods of fog. Such passengers can decide whether to travel to the airport or not, and avoid the inconvenience of long waits. They will have the option to reschedule or cancel their impacted flights at no extra cost.

### Garuda's Kisan drone gets nod

**Chennai:** The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued the Type Certification for the Kisan or farmer drones made by Garuda Aerospace, the company said. Garuda Aerospace also said it has an order book of 5,000 drones. According to Garuda Aerospace, the DGC Type Certification is provided on the basis of the quality check of the drones and is issued after a rigorous testing process for the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). The Type certification was introduced by the Indian government in August 2021 under Drone Rules.

### HDFC gets \$400mn loan from IFC

**Mumbai:** The International Finance Corporation (IFC) has extended a \$400 million loan to mortgage major HDFC for financing green affordable housing units, as part of their efforts towards supporting climate goals. The companies in separate statements today said this loan will help close the urban housing gap and improve access to climate-smart affordable homes by boosting green housing, which will go some ways in supporting the country's shift towards a more sustainable growth path, creating jobs and ensuring long-term business growth. HDFC said it has earmarked 75 per cent or \$300 million of the IFC funding for financing green affordable housing units. Since 2010, IFC has lent over \$1.7 billion to the domestic housing finance companies for on-lending to retail buyers and also to developers of affordable and green housing.



**To be clear, I am overall very much pro FBI. The agency does a great deal of important work protecting the public. That said, no organisation is perfect and part of the FBI obviously overreached with respect to online censorship**

ELON MUSK | CEO, TWITTER

## BYJU'S ADHERES TO NCPCR

Byju's has announced that the company will check the affordability of its potential customers in order to not sell its courses or provide loans for courses to families with an income of less than 25,000. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) issued the summons following revelations in a two-part reference to Byju's workplace culture and customer service processes



# Kochhar: Fall of banking sector titan

CHANDA KOCHHAR, A REGULAR FEATURE ON FORBES TOP GLOBAL HONCHOS LISTS AND THE FIRST WOMAN TO HEAD A LARGE LENDER IN THE COUNTRY, IS NOW SURROUNDED BY CHEATING AND IRREGULARITIES ALLEGATIONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 24:** Chanda Kochhar, who was arrested for a cash-for-loan scam Friday, was once a powerful banker and instrumental in making ICICI Bank the country's biggest private sector lender.

Kochhar, former ICICI Bank CEO, was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) along with her husband Deepak Kochhar in connection with alleged cheating and irregularities in loans sanctioned by ICICI Bank to Videocon Group companies. Kochhars were called to the agency headquarters and arrested after a brief questioning session.

A special court in Mumbai Saturday sent Chanda and her husband to CBI's custody till Monday. The CBI has alleged that Chanda Kochhar hatched a criminal conspiracy and released loans of ₹1800 crore to six different companies. Kochhar pressurised other banks to pass their loans.

Her chapter at ICICI Bank ended abruptly in 2018 when the board of directors approved a request from Kochhar to seek early retirement following allegation of corruption and quid pro-quo while extending loans to the now bank-



## WHAT HAPPENED?

The reasons for her ouster pertain to a loan to Videocon and the business dalliances between its promoter Venugopal Dhoot and her husband Deepak Kochhar

Dhoot had invested in and subsequently exited a power company promoted by Deepak and Chanda Kochhar did not recuse herself or disclose this when a loan was granted by ICICI Bank to Videocon as part of a consortium

rupt Videocon Industries.

Kochhar, who rose to occupy the corner office at the largest private sector lender, was mired in allegations of conflicts of interest, lack of disclosures and quid pro quo while extending loans to Videocon.

Kochhar, a favourite of the then group chairman K V Kamath, joined ICICI, an infrastructure lender in its earlier avatar, as a management trainee in 1984. She rose to play an important part in its transformation into a retail-focused lender when it turned into a commercial

From a performance perspective, when she took over ICICI Bank, it was the second largest in the system and the largest among its private sector peers. But at the end of her career, it slipped to a distant third spot in the sector and the second largest private sector lender after HDFC Bank

bank in the early 1990s.

In 2009, she was chosen to succeed the larger-than-life Kamath as the managing director and chief executive despite a strong leadership bench. Her elevation

also led to the exit of Shikha Sharma (former Axis Bank chief), who was senior to her in ranking in the group.

Before her elevation to the corner office, she was a key member

of the bank's management, and oversaw the retail business and was also chief financial officer.

When an RBI review in 2015 found high amount of under-reported dud assets with the bank, she announced a new strategy of concentrating only on well-rated borrowers.

She also championed many social causes but it was her inspiring rise to the top that was most admired. Yet, she perplexed many with her contrarian views like girls lack quantitative analytical skills, leading to limited number of women in B-schools.

Over the years, her leadership of the bank became a hyphenated relationship, wherein she came to define ICICI Bank, till the announcement of her formal exit six months after allegations of impropriety first cropped up, though she had been on an indefinite leave after the board was forced to launch an external probe into the entire issue.

In the past few months, shareholders have sought clarity on the issue at annual meetings and also raised concerns over the bank's move to appoint her as the chairman of the group's securities arm. Kochhar, who maintained a huge public profile, had been away from public glare since her forced leave.

## CABINET CLEARS MSP FOR COPRA FOR '23 SEASON



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 24:** The Union Cabinet Friday approved minimum support prices (MSPs) for copra for 2023 season, fixing it at Rs 10,860 per quintal for fair average quality of milling copra and at ₹11,750 per quintal for ball copra.

The approval is based on recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices and views of major coconut-growing states, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur told media persons.

This is an increase of ₹270 per quintal for milling copra and ₹750 per quintal for ball copra over the previous season.

This would ensure a margin of 51.82 per cent for milling copra and 64.26 per cent for ball copra over the all India weighted average cost of production.

The announced MSP of copra for 2023 season is in line with the principle of fixing the MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times all India weighted average cost of production as announced by the government in the budget for 2018-19.

## India will take 20 years to become developed nation: Former-RBI Guv



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 24:** Noting that the achievement of \$5 trillion economy is a short term aspirational goal, former RBI Governor C Rangarajan Saturday said even after that India will still be known as middle income country with per capita income \$3,472.

Rangarajan further said in order to reach the level of an upper middle-income country, it will take another two years and to be classified as a developed country, the per capita income will have to be at a minimum of \$13,205 and that will take more than two decades of strong growth of between 8 to 9 per cent to achieve it.

Speaking at the 12th Convocation of ICFAI Foundation for Higher education here, he said at aggregate output level, India is the fifth largest economy in the world now. That by itself is an impressive achievement. But in terms of per capita income, India's rank according to IMF is 142 out of 197 countries.

The immediate focus of policymakers must be to raise the growth rate of the economy. Achievement of a \$5 trillion economy is a good short term aspirational goal.

"This will take a minimum five years of sustained growth of 9 per cent. Even then, at the end of it, India's per capita income will be only \$3,472 and we will still be classified as a lower middle income country," he noted.

"We have thus to go a long way. This only shows we must certainly need to run fast," the former chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister said.

"Post Covid-19 and post the RussiaUkraine war, there is a need to lay down a clear roadmap for India's future development."

"Initially, there is need to raise the growth rate to seven per cent and then follow it up with a growth rate of eight to nine per cent which is possible and India has showed in the past it can have that kind of growth rate over a sustained period of six to seven years," he said.

## BRACE FOR HEADWINDS

# Hike rates carefully: IMF to India

**RBI HAS RAISED ITS KEY POLICY RATE BY 225 BASIS POINTS SINCE MAY, TAKING THE RATE TO THE HIGHEST IN OVER THREE YEARS**

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Dec 24:** India's future interest rate hikes should be carefully calibrated and its intervention in the foreign exchange market should be limited to managing volatility, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said.

"Inflation pressures have led to an appropriate shift towards policy tightening," IMF said in an annual consultation report. The report is prepared by IMF staff in accordance with its Article IV of Agreement, which requires the fund to hold annual consultations with officials from member states about economic development and policies.

"Additional tightening should be carefully calibrated and com-



IMF projects 6.8% growth  
inflation forecasts at 6.9%  
CAD predicted at 3.5% of GDP

municated," it added.

Last week, minutes of the RBI's monetary policy meeting showed a majority of rate-setters were concerned about elevated inflation and felt the central bank could not afford to prematurely pause its rate tightening cycle.

The IMF projected inflation at 6.9% for the current fiscal year that ends March 31, 2023 and said price gains would moderate gradually.

The world's fifth-largest economy is broadly tipped to outperform its major global peers in the year ahead, supported by pent-up post-pandemic domestic demand, investment and credit growth.

However, the IMF expects India's

economic growth to moderate reflecting a less favourable outlook and tighter financial conditions, projecting 6.8% growth for the current fiscal year and 6.1% for the next fiscal year that starts April 1.

"Uncertainty around the outlook is high, with risks tilted to the downside," the Washington-based fund said.

A sharp global growth slowdown in the near-term would affect India through trade and financial channels. It projected the current account deficit (CAD) to widen to 3.5% of GDP in the current fiscal year as a result of both higher commodity prices and import demand.

The fund said the exchange rate

should act as a "shock absorber" and that the RBI should only intervene to address disorderly market conditions.

India's foreign reserves had fallen around \$100 billion from its peak of October 2021, but have since recovered partially due to the resumption of dollar inflows.

Fiscal consolidation should be more ambitious than the current baseline, targeting additional general government primary consolidation of around 1% of GDP by 2027/28, the report said. The government is targeting a fiscal deficit of 4.5% of GDP by 2025/26. It does not have a 2027/28 target.

It said the government can reverse tax cuts on fuel and phase out support to vulnerable groups through the existing transfer system. India has spent nearly \$47 billion for its food programme since April 2020.

IMF also said other pandemic related schemes such as government credit guarantees for small industries can be unwound.

"In the short-term, fiscal consolidation would also support the RBI's efforts to maintain price stability," the fund said.

## MEDIA MOGUL Bloomberg owner eyes WSJ or Washington Post acquisition

A merger with the Journal or Dow Jones would create a financial data and news giant, strengthening the grip of Bloomberg on the industry while drawing scrutiny from antitrust regulators

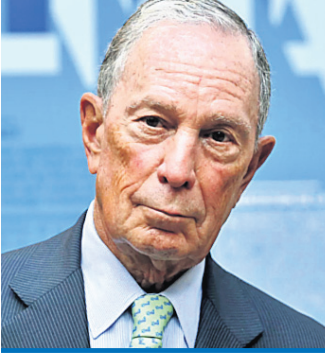
REUTERS

**Los Angeles, Dec 24:** Michael Bloomberg has expressed the desire to own a big-name newspaper over the years but has not reached out to Rupert Murdoch to discuss a possible purchase of Dow Jones and its flagship paper the Wall Street Journal, sources told Reuters.

News website Axios reported earlier Friday the billionaire owner of Bloomberg LP was interested

in acquiring either WSJ parent Dow Jones from Murdoch's News Corp, or the Washington Post from Amazon.com's Jeff Bezos, citing a source familiar with Bloomberg's thinking.

Two people familiar with the matter told Reuters no approach has been made from Bloomberg's side to Murdoch. A spokesperson for the Washington Post, which Bezos bought in 2013 for \$250 million, said it is not for sale.



Acquiring a major newspaper has attracted Bloomberg's interest before, including the New York Times and Financial Times.

**A Bloomberg acquisition of the (Post) is not necessarily just a business decision. Mike B is a policy/political person - mayor, presidential candidate - and such an acquisition would provide a tool to affect Washington public policies**

ELI NOAM | PROFESSOR EMERITUS, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S BUSINESS SCHOOL

Either acquisition would give the 80-year-old billionaire a trophy media property to publicize his political agenda such as ad-

ressing climate change, or promoting tighter gun laws, sources told Reuters.

Bloomberg is a former three-term mayor of New York City who also mounted an unsuccessful presidential bid in 2020, seeking to become the Democratic Party's nominee.

Bloomberg is the world's 12th richest person, with an estimated net worth of \$76.8 billion, according to Forbes' calculations.

According to Axios, Bloomberg sees Dow Jones, also the publisher of Barron's and MarketWatch, as the ideal fit but would by the Post if Bezos was interested in selling.

A Bloomberg LP spokesman dismissed the report as speculation and said, "there is nothing to comment

on." Dow Jones did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment. Michael Bloomberg and Bezos did not immediately respond to requests for comment, and a spokesman for Rupert Murdoch declined to comment.

It is unclear if Murdoch - who is trying to reunite his News Corp and Fox Corp assets - would be open to considering an offer from Bloomberg, one person said.

Antitrust experts agreed that the merger of Bloomberg and Dow Jones' business news divisions would drive significant scrutiny from US regulators, especially as the Biden administration has taken a more muscular approach to enforcing antitrust laws.



# INDIA STARE AT DEFEAT

## One set batter needed to win the match: Siraj

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mirpur, Dec 24:** Bangladesh spinners, led by their talismanic skipper Shakib Al Hasan (1/21) and young Mehidy Hasan Miraz (3/12), forced Indian batters to press the panic button in a tricky chase of 145 as the visitors ended an engaging third day's play, totalling at 45/4 in the second Test here Saturday.

Having dominated for the better part of two and half days, Bangladesh's lower middle-order, led by Litton Das (73, 98b, 7x4) and supported by Nurul Hasan Sohan (31, 29b, 2x4, 1x6) and Taskin Ahmed (31 n o, 46b, 4x4), counter-attacked to take their second innings score to 231, giving their bowlers something to defend.

If India happen to lose this game, the 118 runs scored by the last four Bangladeshi pairs would haunt them as much as not using a third spinner in Kuldeep Yadav on a track that became increasingly venomous as the match progressed.

If they overhaul 145, it will be third highest successful fourth innings chase at this ground as the top three winning scores are 209, 205 and 103.

KL Rahul (2), who had a horrendous game as a skipper as well as batter, would like to forget this game in a hurry while the stodgy Cheteshwar Pujara (6) suffered his downfall because of his anxiousness to negate any turn on offer. Shubman Gill (7) had his worse day on the tour, increasing India's worry.

In case of Rahul, he tentatively poked a Shakib delivery that turned enough to kiss the outside edge of his bat into the keeper's gloves. Pujara, for the second time, came out to play the delivery from Mehidy before it could turn. The ball hit his bat and pad before a crawling Nurul effected a smart stumping.

However, the pitch was showing its true colours and there was turn and bounce with the ball skidding occasionally as well as keeping low, making batting that much more difficult.



**SPLENDID SPELL:** Mehidy Hasan Miraz (R) celebrates with teammate Litton Das after dismissing an Indian batter, Saturday

In fact, India's head coach Rahul Dravid, with his tactic of sending night watchman Axar Patel (26 batting) with more than 15 overs left, made it clear that there was a certain sense of nervousness as to

what happens if Virat Kohli (1) would get dismissed in the third evening itself.

While Gill was stumped off a doosra, becoming Miraz's second victim, Kohli had no choice but to

come out late in the evening as the pitch, at times, was starting to resemble a snake pit with deliveries hissing past the willow.

Just like it happens on turners, the close-in fielders started apply-

ing more pressure on batters as well as umpires with Kohli needing a DRS to save himself from getting adjudged leg before to Tajjul Islam.

But he was just a delivery away from getting dismissed as Miraz bowled a lovely flighted delivery drawing Kohli forward and got a classical bat-pad dismissal for Mominul Haque standing at forward short-leg.

With Kohli not inspiring highest level of confidence, Rishabh Pant, who has shown how to bat on this track, could again play the decisive role and help India manage to log home full points and prevent Bangladesh from winning their first game against India in 22 years of bilateral Test cricket.

At stumps, Axar and night watchman Jaydev Unadkat (3 batting) were at the crease. But in the first two sessions, it was Axar (3/58) along with Mohammed Siraj (2/41) and Ravichandran Ashwin (2/66) who had Bangladesh on the mat at 113/6 before Nurul came out and attacked the spinners in his little cameo.

At the other end, Litton was celebrating his maiden IPL contract with some lusty blows and the 60-odd run stand with Taskin during which India also dropped a few catches which proved costly.

While the Indian team management can claim that the bowlers did their job getting Bangladesh out for 227 and 231 in the two innings but they would be the first to admit that any score in excess of 120 odd on this track would always be a tricky game.

Unadkat (1/17), the third seamer India used as they were "confused" looking at the greenish tinge, was used for only nine overs out of the 70.2 that they bowled.

### BRIEF SCORES

Bangladesh 227 & 231 (Litton Das 73, Zakir Hasan 51; Axar Patel 3/68, Mohammed Siraj 2/41, Ravichandran Ashwin 2/66); India 314 & 45/4 (Axar Patel 26 batting; Mahidy Hasan Miraz 3/12). Match to continue.



Mohammed Siraj reacts after taking a wicket, Saturday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mirpur, Dec 24:** India might have been four wickets down in a tricky chase in the second Test against Bangladesh but pacer Mohammed Siraj said there is nothing to worry about as one set batter can take the team to victory Sunday.

"I feel, we shouldn't think too much now because we have lost just four wickets. We need around 80 (100) or so. We need just one batter to get set, Axar is showing right intent," Siraj said during the press conference.

"Yes, we lost two wickets extra but Axar is set, he is showing good intent. We also have Rishabh (Pant) and Shreyas (Iyer) after that, so we shouldn't think too much."

If India overhaul 145, it will be third highest successful fourth innings chase at this ground as the

top three winning scores are 209, 205 and 103. After India lost KL Rahul (2) and Cheteshwar Pujara (6), head coach Rahul Dravid decided to send night watchman Axar with more than 15 overs left.

"Sending Axar is management's call. I feel if there is a lefty and righty batter, then it will be difficult for the bowlers to adjust. So, I think because of that this call was taken," Siraj said.

The 28-year-old from Hyderabad scalped two wickets - Mominul Haque (5) and Litton Das (73) - on day three as India dismissed Bangladesh for 231.

"In this wicket, there is extra bounce for fast bowlers, so I was trying to hit the area as hard as possible as we were getting extra bounce, so our plan was to hit that area hard and as you can see we got wickets."

India wasted both their DRS within a span of five deliveries. The first one was in the eighth over when Ravichandran Ashwin seemed to have trapped Najmul Hossain Shanto and skipper KL Rahul referred it to the third umpire.

In the next over, Siraj was convinced that he had got Zakir Hasan after hitting him on the pads. Once again Rahul went upstairs, only to find that the ball had pitched outside leg.

"Whenever the ball hits the pad as a bowler you feel it is out. But it is important for the bowler and keeper to have a conversation before going for review," said Siraj. "Since the batter was in front of me, I had convinced for the review but it didn't happen as I thought."

While Litton Das led Bangladesh's fightback with a 98-ball 73, Siraj felt Nurul Hasan's counter-attacking 29-ball 31 knock changed the momentum. "The wicketkeeper came and started attacking and it changed the momentum and we conceded extra 30 runs but it is not something that we should be too worried," he said.

## Warner slams CA for lack of support



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Melbourne, Dec 24:** David Warner Saturday slammed Cricket Australia (CA) for their lack of support during his leadership ban appeal, adding that the issue affected his mental health ahead of the first Test against South Africa.

Warner had been handed a lifetime leadership ban because of his role in the 2018 ball tempering scandal. The 36-year-old had launched an appeal against the ban earlier this year and both

Warner and CA wanted a closed-door hearing.

However, the board-appointed independent commissioners insisted on it being public, forcing Warner to withdraw his appeal earlier this month.

"Leading into the Perth Test, my mental health probably wasn't where I needed it to be at to be 100 percent. And that was challenging at the time," Warner said ahead of his 100th Test.

"If I had it my way we would have had it all sorted. From the

CA point of view, I didn't really have any support. My teammates and the staff in our team were absolutely amazing, and my family and friends - they really got me through that period," he added.

Warner, who has recently come under fire for his Test form, was out for 0 and 3 in the Perth Test last week. He hasn't scored a Test century since January 2020. The opener said he was unable to understand why the process had taken so much time.

"We reached out in February. So we have no idea how it went on this far and only CA can answer that and they'll probably give you the same thing that they always give everyone else, they don't really give an answer," Warner said.

Despite his struggle in the longest format, Warner backed himself to do well in the Boxing Day Test. "Yeah my back's up against the wall, but it's in my DNA to keep being competitive, come out here with a smile on my face and take on whatever opposition we're going to face," he said.

He added that he will have a conversation with the board after the South Africa series. "I'll have that conversation once that series is done. For me, it's about staying in the right frame of mind to take on the South Africans. I'm pumped to play another Boxing Day Test and more importantly we've got a series that's on the line."

## AITA announces 5-member team for Davis Cup tie

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 24:** The All India Tennis Association (AITA) Saturday announced a five-member team for the Davis Cup World Group 1 play-off away tie against Denmark to be played at Royal Stage Stadium in Hillerod February 3 and 4.

Sasikumar Mukund, Prajnesh Gunneswaran, Ramkumar Ramanathan, Rohan Bopanna and Yuki Bhambri were picked for the tie while Sumit Nagal was named as the reserve. Rohit Rajpal will be the non-playing captain.



The AITA said the players were selected on the basis of their availability and performance. The team was named after a virtual selection committee meeting under the chairmanship of Nandan Ban.

India had defeated Denmark 4-0 in the Davis Cup 2022 World Group 1 play-off tie in March. Later, the Indian team lost to Norway 1-3 in the away tie of World Group I.

## Look forward to playing under Hardik, says Little

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dublin, Dec 24:** Pacer Josh Little, who has become the first cricketer from Ireland to land an IPL deal, termed it as an "incredible opportunity" to play in the lucrative league where he will get to work with India all-rounder Hardik Pandya and head coach Ashish Nehra.

Defending champions Gujarat Titans availed the services of the 23-year-old for Rs 4.4 crore at the IPL auction in Kochi Friday. The Titans, led by Hardik and coached by former India pacer Nehra, won the league in their debut season.

"I'm delighted to have been signed by the defending champions, the Gujarat Titans, and look forward to playing under Hardik Pandya within such a high quality squad," Little said in Cricket Ireland statement. "I am also looking forward to working with coach Ashish Nehra and would like to thank the management team at the Titans for believing in me," he added.

The left-arm seamer made his international debut in 2016 and has since played 22 ODIs and 53 T20Is.

"I have loved playing international cricket for Ireland - and that will



always remain my priority, but to be able to learn and play in the IPL will be an incredible opportunity and thanks to Cricket Ireland for supporting me in this."

Little had served as a net bowler for Chennai Super Kings last year. He had claimed a memorable hat-trick against New Zealand in Ireland's T20 World Cup loss in Adelaide earlier this year. He had dismissed skipper Kane Williamson, James Neesham and Mitchell Santner in the 19th over.

"We are delighted for Josh and wish him well in the IPL next year.

Josh is a hard-working and dedicated athlete who has come up through the Irish system," Cricket Ireland's High Performance Director Richard Holdsworth said.

"He has been an essential part of the Irish set-up for several years now and we believe his development will only accelerate further through involvement in the IPL."

Little has plied his trade in several franchise leagues such as England's The Hundred and Lanka Premier League. He was also picked up in the Pakistan Super League draft recently.

## RAINA ADVISES YOUNGSTERS TO INVEST MONEY IN THEMSELVES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 24:** Apart from overseas players getting big fat paychecks at the IPL 2023 mini-auction in Kochi Friday, there were some uncapped cricketers who got huge monetary deals from various franchises.

Defending champions Gujarat Titans rewarded pacer Shivam Mavi's IPL and domestic experience by signing him for ₹6 crores, making him the most expensive uncapped Indian player Friday. They also signed wicketkeeper-batter KS Bharat for ₹1.2 crore and Gujarat cricketer Urvil Patel for ₹20 lakh.

Bengal pacer Mukesh Kumar's consistency with Bengal as well as India 'A' and the call-up for India's ODI team against South Africa this October was well-noted by Delhi Capitals as they snapped him for ₹5.5 crore.

Former India and Chennai Super Kings cricketer Suresh Raina was

delighted in seeing many uncapped players get IPL deals, and advised them to use the money as an investment in themselves for cricketing development. "It is so good to see players coming from a small town and making it big in the IPL. That's what the IPL is meant to do for Indians."

"This is a springboard for them to grow personally and professionally. These players can go on and play for India, buy houses for their families, and spend the money on looking after their bodies, so much so that the teams don't think of starting without them and are retained not just for the coming season but for a long period," said Raina on Mastercard Match Centre Live show on JioCinema.

All-rounder Vivrant Sharma, hailing from Jammu & Kashmir, made his Ranji Trophy debut this season, and Friday, he was picking himself up after the side's big loss to Gujarat in Ahmedabad.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 24:** They were expected to dominate the field at the Commonwealth Games and they did but the tougher World Championships served a reality check for the established Indian stars even as the rise of Greco Roman wrestlers and exceptional show by the juniors made it an eventful 2022 for Indian wrestling.

India won 12 medals at Birmingham CWG, where Sakshi Malik tried to resurrect her career by winning a gold but only Bajrang Punia and Vinesh Phogat returned with medals from the World Championships in Belgrade.

The Greco Roman style, a poor cousin of free-style wrestling in India, had a lot cheer with historic three-medal performance at the U-23 World Championships through Sajjan Bhanwala, Nitesh and Vikas.

The juniors, both boys and girls, emerged serious medal contenders



Antim Panghal's U-20 Worlds gold was the highlight of wrestling this year

in age group competitions across globe, something which Indian wrestling witnessed for the first time.

The rise of Antim Panghal, who became U-20 World Champion in Sofia, is very heartening as she could be India's best bet in 53kg when Vinesh would not be around.

Ravi Dahiya became an overnight

star after his Olympic silver in 2021 but he remained a bit subdued this year, though he began by winning a gold and a silver on the circuit and later added a gold to his kitty at the Asian Championships.

At the start of the season, he competed in the 61kg as he preferred

not to go through the energy-sapping and painful process of weight cut.

After an expected gold at CWG, crashing out of the Worlds was a big shock not for Ravi himself but his legion of fans, given his tremendous grip in the 57kg competition.

Despite possessing exceptional strength, stamina, technique which combines well with his big heart for fight, Ravi could not win a medal at the big stage.

Interestingly this year, he trained with Indian coaches at Chhatrasal stadium and also during the national camp in Sonapat after WFI decided not to have foreign coaches for the country's elite wrestlers.

While Ravi struggled, Aman Sehrawat made a steady progress in Ravi's 57kg category in 2022. He became U-23 World Champion after winning a gold at the Bolat Turlykhanov Cup in Almaty.

Sarita Mor, who won a Worlds bronze in 2021 in women's 57kg, has already decided that she will

compete in this Olympic weight category as she will try to qualify for the Paris Games.

It means that Anshu Malik, who rose through the junior ranks and also competed at the Tokyo Games, will not have an easy season ahead. Elbow and knee issues kept her silent in 2022 but the woman from Nidani is a true fighter and should be ready for next season in a better way.

Bajrang remains India's best in 65kg category till now as no wrestler has come close to pose a serious threat to his place in this weight class. He struggled with a mental block this year but overcame it before closing the season with a bronze at the Worlds.

Since her shock medal-less show in Tokyo, Vinesh has looked a pale shadow of her usual dominating self. Although, it was good that she won a gold at the CWG where competition was weak and she took that confidence to win a bronze at the Worlds.