



## ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ମାନ୍ୟବର ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ନବୀନ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକଙ୍କ

ଦ୍ୱାରା

ଦେଈନାଳ ଜିଲ୍ଲାର ଯୋରନ୍ଦାସ୍ଥିତ

ମହିମାଗାଦି ଚତୁଃପାର୍ଶ୍ୱର ଉନ୍ନତିକରଣ,

ଭବ୍ୟ ମହିମାଗାଦି ଶୂନ୍ୟ ମଣ୍ଡପ

ଏବଂ

ଉପାସନା ପୀଠ ଓ ବତୀ ମଣ୍ଡପ

ନିର୍ମାଣ ପ୍ରକଳ୍ପର

**ଭୂମିପୂଜନ**

୨୨ ଡିସେମ୍ବର ୨୦୨୩

ମହିମାଗାଦି, ଯୋରନ୍ଦା, ଦେଈନାଳ



OIPR-3416113/0093/2324



# leisure



## CLIFF RICHARD WANTS TO WORK WITH TAYLOR SWIFT

Veteran British singer Cliff Richard wants to try out new things for his career such as eyeing duets with major American artistes such as Taylor Swift. However, he seems to be waiting for 34-year-old Taylor to call him rather than him calling her.

## AGEING IN HOLLYWOOD IS REALLY HARD: JENNIFER LOVE HEWITT

The *Tuxedo* actress Jennifer Love Hewitt recently spoke about the difficulties of ageing. "Ageing in Hollywood is really hard. It's really hard because you can't do anything right," she said. She opened up about her feelings while speaking on a podcast.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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

**ARIES**  
Some decisions are hard to take, but a firm resolve will help you stay committed. Sentimentality may shake your purpose, but once decided, you must stick to it. Also, learn to take heartbreak in your stride, says Ganesh.

**TAURUS**  
Definitely not a day when you plan to get your feet dirty (maybe a pedicure, though). You might delay the start of a new project. Perhaps, a romantic escape with your sweetheart or a day in the spa grooming yourself with a lavish makeover will validate your lethargy today.

**GEMINI**  
You will try very hard to strike a balance between logic and emotions. Though you may succeed in doing so in front of the world, you may not be so discreet with your friends. You will have an excellent time with your sweetheart, but your physical appearance will be a cause of concern to you, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
A string of domestic responsibilities awaits you; today, you are about to realise that it is a long, long string. Chances are that this sudden rise in work pressure may also lead to blood pressure problems.

**LEO**  
Nothing will overshadow your love for your kids today, and they will be the number one priority for you. It seems like a good day to take time out and monitor their progress in school; so, do not skip that PTA meeting. Remember, there are various ways to teach children, so consider taking them out on a small picnic or a field trip to help educate them better.

**VIRGO**  
You will begin your journey on the long, hard road to success, predicts Ganesh. Hard work will be the key to any progress that you make. Avoid short cuts, and all the toil and trouble will pay off with rich returns as recognition and rewards will come your way.

**LIBRA**  
Today promises a definite sense of pride and joy from children who bring home glory, says Ganesh. Fiscal gains are also on the cards, and you may consider it worthwhile to put your money into lucrative businesses. Money-lenders and stock brokers are likely to make handsome earnings on this charming and enchanting day.

**SCORPIO**  
It is more than likely that you will be in high spirits today, says Ganesh. All your energy and exuberance may not yield expected results. That is no reason to lose heart though. Keep up the effort from your end and you will eventually taste success in the days to come.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You will find yourself rubbing shoulders with Lady Luck today. Sharpen your multi-tasking skills as you will keep busy and have only occasional moments of respite. Good will and green print, you might find them both with ease and in abundance, predicts Ganesh.

**CAPRICORN**  
You have sacrificed a lot on enjoyment with friends and family, done some back-breaking work and kept your focus to reach where you are right now. Ganesh gives you a pat on your back for all the hard work you've put in. Now, it is time to watch the tree bear fruits. With some additional responsibilities, promotion in terms of salary or position is on the cards for you.

**AQUARIUS**  
You blessed with a very high level of patience and practicality, and you can easily untangle any problem. But, it gives an excuse to the people around you to wash their hands of any responsibility.

**PISCES**  
You could swing both ways today! Fortunately, this alludes to nothing more sinister than the mix of the introvert and the extrovert that you are. So, between a quiet evening out by yourself at a classical music concert, or performing on the dance floor at the local disc — take your pick, says Ganesh.

## Ankita seeks divorce!

**Mumbai:** In the latest episode of *Big Boss 17*, a fight between Vicky Jain and Ankita Lokhande caught the eyeballs of many.  
The two got into a fight after Vicky and wild card entrant Ayesha Khan were seen joking about how 'married people suffer a lot'. This conversation made Ankita angry, and she asked if Vicky wanted a divorce.  
The fight began when Ayesha questioned Vicky about married life. Vicky replied with a joke and said that married men can never really reveal how much they suffer.  
Vicky said, "I can never really say how I feel. This is what married people, especially men, go through. They can't really tell what they really go through and what they suffer."  
Replying to Vicky, Ankita said, "If you suffer so much, then why are you with me? Let's take a divorce; I don't want to go back home with you."  
"Vicky loves me, but he isn't offering me what I really want. I feel dominated by him at times," she added while talking to Ayesha.

**Mumbai:** Actress Ananya Panday, in a recent interview, talked about starting her acting career early and her desperation for validation.  
Reflecting on her journey in the film industry, the *Liger* actress disclosed that in the early stages of her career, which began with the film *Student of the Year 2* in 2019, she grappled with a strong desire for validation. She delved into this phase, revealing that she shared a 'people-pleaser' trait with her father, Chunky Panday. She candidly admitted to the initial confusion she faced, wondering why everyone didn't love her; as she believed herself to be a nice person with the affection of friends and family.  
However, the actress highlighted a pivotal shift in her mindset this year. She con-

## Ananya on her changing priorities

veyed that her current outlook on life and goals has transformed. Ananya now places greater importance on personal evolution and experiences a daily sense of satisfaction. Her priorities have shifted, reflecting a deeper focus on personal growth rather than seeking external validation.  
On the work front, Ananya is eagerly waiting for the release of her upcoming film, *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*.  
AGENCIES

## Struggle is similar for everyone: Ajay

**Mumbai:** Actor Ajay Devgn and filmmaker Rohit Shetty recently graced the couch of *Koffee With Karan*, where they opened up about the nepotism debate and shared their struggles to make a living in the film industry.  
Ajay mentioned the popularity of the word 'nepotism' these days and said, "Today you go on social media and read so many things like nepotism, etc., but people don't realise that the generations have worked very, very hard to reach here. It's not an easy story."  
"I have seen people getting ruined," said Ajay as he went on to describe how people like his father and others would come to Mumbai, give themselves a year's time, and if the project didn't work, they would visit production houses every six months to ask for work.  
He went on to add, "You belong to the industry or not; the struggle is similar for everyone; you have to work hard. We are still working hard. When Rohit (Shetty) came as an assistant, he literally didn't have money to have proper food. Both my ankles are broken; people don't see that hard work."  
AGENCIES



## ARBAAZ SET TO MARRY AGAIN

**Mumbai:** Actor-producer Arbaaz Khan, who was most recently seen in the streaming series *Tanaav*, is set to marry again.  
Arbaaz, who has been reportedly dating make-up artiste Shura Khan, is set to take the plunge and take their story forward.  
As per a media report, Arbaaz and Shura will take the wedding vows in an intimate ceremony December 24.  
The couple reportedly met on the sets of Arbaaz's upcoming film *Patna Shukla*. However, both Arbaaz and Shura have remained tight-lipped about their relationship and have not shared any official statements about their wedding.  
The actor was earlier married to Malaika Arora before the two officially parted ways in May 2017. Malaika went on to date Bollywood actor Arjun Kapoor and continues to go strong. Despite their separation, Malaika and Arbaaz remain co-parents to their son, Arhaan.  
Arbaaz also dated actress Giorgia Andriani for several years after his divorce. The two parted ways as was confirmed by Giorgia Andriani a few days ago.

**Mumbai:** Actor Arbaaz Khan, who was most recently seen in the streaming series *Tanaav*, is set to marry again. (Text continues from previous block)



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

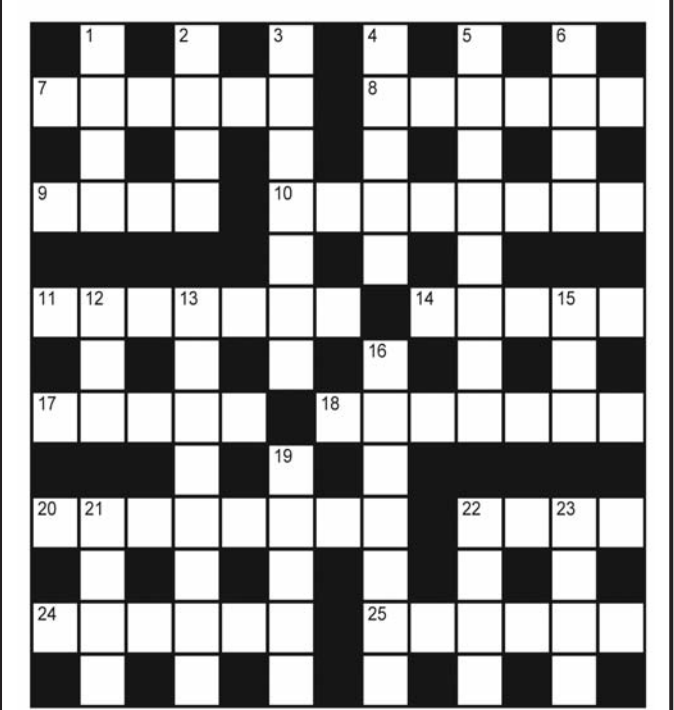


### BREVITY



### FUN post

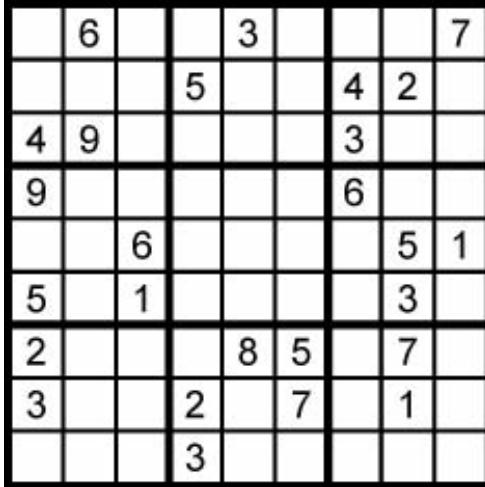
### CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2023 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 7 Gully
  - 8 Skeleton's place?
  - 9 Lowly worker
  - 10 Reserved for a rainy day (3-5)
  - 11 Common pet
  - 14 Lollygag
  - 17 Incentive program
  - 18 Equilibrium
  - 20 Small intestine part
  - 22 Minor setback
  - 24 Serbian province
  - 25 Instructed
  - Down**
  - 1 Highlands
  - 2 Flub
  - 3 Gang member
  - 4 Critical
  - 5 Aubergine and ground lamb dish
  - 6 Pinochle move
  - 12 Big deal
  - 13 Naval unit
  - 15 Mythical bird
  - 16 Gigantic
  - 19 Emissary
  - 21 ET rides
  - 22 Insult
  - 23 Distress signal

### 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





**Free tea for drivers**  
In a bid to curb road mishaps during night, Odisha government decides to offer tea to drivers of heavy vehicles on NHs free of cost  
DOWNTOWN | P2



**15 shot dead**  
A mass shooting in downtown Prague kills 15 people, Czech police and the city's rescue service say  
INTERNATIONAL | P8



**Stocks rebound**  
Sensex and Nifty recover by more than half cent Thursday following buying in index majors HDFC Bank and RIL  
BUSINESS | P9



**Super League revived**  
The European Union's top court rules UEFA and FIFA defied competition law by blocking the Super League  
SPORTS | BACK PAGE

**SHORT TAKES**

**5 soldiers martyred**

**Poonch/Jammu:** Five soldiers were killed and two injured when armed terrorists ambushed two Army vehicles in Poonch of Jammu and Kashmir, Thursday. The vehicles, carrying the personnel to the site of a cordon-and-search operation, came under attack at a blind curve at Dhatyar Morh between Dhera Ki Gali and Buzliaz under Surankote police limits at 3.45 pm. P7

**Couple held for fraud**

**Bhubaneswar:** A couple, allegedly involved in duping several people to the tune of around ₹100 crore on the pretext of supplying cars at subsidised prices, was arrested by the police here, Thursday. The accused, Akshay Gouda and Usharani Gouda, hailing from Aska town under Ganjam, have been arrested by Nayapalli police. P2

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**



If you want to impress the top leaders with your speech, do some research... check speeches from N Korea, Germany



**PLAYFUL MOOD:** Twin 7-month-old cubs of tigress 'Siddhi' after they were released in the visitor display area at the National Zoological Park, in New Delhi, Thursday  
PTI PHOTO

**HC ALLOWS ANUBHAV, VARSHA TO PART WAYS**

**Cuttack, Dec 21:** The Orissa High Court Thursday granted divorce to actor-turned-politician Anubhav Mohanty from his wife Varsha Priyadarshini. A division bench of the HC comprising justices Arindam Sinha and Sibho Sankar Mishra also quashed an earlier ruling of a local family court, which in September this year had rejected Mohanty's appeal for divorce. "The HC clearly established that the petitioner, Mohanty, was treated with cruelty by his spouse

as she was afraid of intimacy after the marriage in 2014. On this ground, the HC declared the marriage to be dissolved by a decree of divorce under Section 13(1)(B) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955," Mohanty's counsel Lalitendu Mishra said. Mohanty had filed a divorce lawsuit before a New Delhi court in 2019, which was transferred to the Cuttack family court in 2020 by the Supreme Court on a plea of Priyadarshini. Both filed several complaints and suits against each other with police and magisterial courts.

**Bill on appointment of CEC, ECs cleared**

**New Delhi, Dec 21:** The Parliament Thursday gave its nod to a Bill that seeks to establish a mechanism to appoint the chief election commissioner (CEC) and election commissioners (ECs), with Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal asserting that it's in line with the SC directions. The Lok Sabha passed the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023 by a voice vote. The Rajya Sabha had cleared it December 12. MORE: P7

**BJP MP BRIJ BHUSHAN LOYALIST SANJAY SINGH ELECTED NEW WFI PRESIDENT**

**SAKSHI QUILTS IN PROTEST**

**New Delhi, Dec 21:** Leaving the country in shock, 2016 Rio Olympics bronze medalist Sakshi Malik announced her retirement from the sport, protesting against BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's loyalist Sanjay Singh winning the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) cap, Thursday - an outcome that triggered outrage among wrestlers who have long been fighting for justice. Sanjay, a close associate of outgoing WFI chief Brij Bhushan, became the new President with his panel winning 13 out of the 15 posts in the election - a result that expectedly brought disappointment for the top three wrestlers - Malik, Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia - who had aggressively pushed for a change of guard at WFI. The top wrestlers had early this year launched an agitation against Brij Bhushan who they had accused of sexually exploiting women wrestlers. The matter is in court. "We slept on roads for 40 days [during protest against Brij Bhushan]. We fought with all our heart. But if the WFI president is like Brij Bhushan - his close aide and business partner [Sanjay Singh] - then I sacrifice my wrestling career. From today onwards, you will not see me on the mat," a teary-eyed Malik said and kept her shoes on the table.



**WFI chief, I don't think women wrestlers will get justice because back door politics is still on to break their resolve. About 15-20 girls met the Sports minister and told him about the exploitation. And today they are down to just six and they too are being coerced to pull out,"** alleged Punia. Phogat alleged that women wrestlers could face more exploitation under Sanjay. "Making Sanjay Singh WFI president means the coming generation of women could well suffer exploitation. What happened behind the curtain will now happen in the open. I don't know how we will get justice in our country. The future of wrestling in this country looks dark," Phogat added. MORE | BACK PAGE

**nexus ESPLANADE**

**NEXUS PURPLE Weekend**  
22<sup>nd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> Dec

**FLAT 50% OFF**

Only at Nexus Esplanade Mall.

END OF SEASON SALE

**SHOP & WIN** | SHOP FOR ₹10,000 & GET AN ASSURED GIFT VOUCHER\* | SHOP FOR ₹80,000 & GET A DINNER SET\* | SHOP FROM ELECTRONICS OR JEWELLERY BRANDS WORTH ₹1,20,000 & GET A FOREST ESSENTIALS GIFT BOX\*

lifestyle | max | TRENDS | iconic | MARKS & SPENCER | Levi's | SKECHERS | VAN HEUSEN | CRIMSOUNE CLUB | FLYING MACHINE

PUMA | NYKAA | METRO | FOREST ESSENTIALS | HIDE SIGN | KWC | Qeign human | U.S. POLO ASSN. | MOCHI | Bata



Free tea for drivers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 21: In a bid to curb road mishaps during night, the state government has decided to offer tea to drivers of heavy vehicles on National Highways (NHs) free of cost. Transport Minister Tukuni Sahu said, Thursday.

According to Sahu, the drivers can avail tea free of cost from hotels and dhabas on NHs. "Besides, they can also take rest there. District Collectors will identify the hotels and dhabas for the purpose," the Transport Minister said.

"Most of the accidents take place on NHs during night or in the wee hours as the drivers fall asleep. Providing them (drivers) refreshment in the form of tea will definitely reduce drowsiness-related accidents at night," Sahu added.

Regional Transport Offices have been urged to start arrangements in this regard during observation of Road Safety Week from January 1 to 7, 2024.

# CBDT confirms unaccounted sales by Boudh Distillery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 21: Preliminary analysis of seized evidence during the searches at places related to Boudh Distillery Private Ltd (BDPL) reveals records of unaccounted sales of country liquor; systematic details of undisclosed cash receipts and references for movement of unaccounted cash, said the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Thursday.

Unaccounted cash of ₹351 crore and jewellery worth more than ₹2.80 crore were seized after the Income Tax (I-T) department conducted searches against the distillery group and its promoters.

The business of the group is "controlled" by a family based in Ranchi in Jharkhand and one of the family members is a "politically exposed person", the Board said in a statement, without taking any name.

Official sources confirmed that the action was linked to the December 6 searches launched at more than 30 premises in 10 districts of Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal against Boudh Distillery Private Ltd (BDPL), promoted by the family of Congress Rajya Sabha MP Dhiraj Prasad Sahu.

Sahu's family house in Ranchi was also raided by the I-T department during the 10-day-long search. Some recent media reports quoted Sahu, 64, as saying that the cash had nothing to do with the Congress party and that he would give an account of everything. "Preliminary analysis of seized evidence reveals records of unaccounted sales



The cash haul of ₹351 crore has been the highest-ever seizure of currency by an agency in a single operation

of country liquor, systematic details of undisclosed cash receipts and references for movement of unaccounted cash. The facts unearthed during the search operation indicate that the group has been indulging in huge suppression of income earned from the liquor business," the CBDT said.

It said "undisclosed" cash amounting to more than ₹351 crore and unaccounted jewellery exceeding ₹2.80 crore was seized by the department.

"A substantial part of the cash, to the tune of ₹329 crore, was unearthed and seized from obscure and dilapidated buildings, hidden chambers and hidden safe-house camouflaged as an unoccupied/nondescript residence located in small towns of Odisha including Sudapada and Titlagarh in Bolangir district and Khetrajpur in Sambalpur district," the statement said.

This cash haul has been the highest-ever seizure of currency by an agency in a single operation, officials earlier told PTI. The CBDT, which frames pol-

icy for the I-T department, also shared pictures of wads of currency stashed in almira and a battery of currency machines being used to count the cash along with the press statement.

The main employees looking after the business activities of the group "admitted" that the cash seized during the search operation represents the "unaccounted" income of the group, generated through its multiple business concerns, the Board claimed. This was also "corroborated" by one of the family members who is actively involved in the business, it said.

The CBDT said the business group is engaged in the business of manufacture and sale of country liquor, grain-based alcohol, bottling of foreign liquor, running hospitals and educational institutions.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke about the searches December 8, noting the money looted from the public will be returned as he posted a Hindi newspaper report where the cash recovered by the I-T department was shown stacked.



TAKING STOCK: ST and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian reviewing various transformative initiatives at SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, Thursday

# CM launches irrigation projects worth ₹3,160cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 21: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday launched four irrigation projects worth ₹3,160 crore in Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Balasore districts.

While Patnaik inaugurated two projects worth ₹822 crore in Keonjhar district, he laid foundation stones for two other projects worth ₹2,337.5 crore in Mayurbhanj district through virtual mode. The projects will facilitate irrigation in about 1.5 lakh hectares, officials said.

He inaugurated the left canal of Baitarani river under Anandpur barrage in Keonjhar district. The 28-km canal connecting Baitarani and Salandi rivers will facilitate irrigation to 2,221 ha of agricul-

tural land in Hatadihi and Anandpur blocks of the district. Besides, 56,550 ha in seven blocks of Balasore district will be irrigated by the canal in Kharif season and 50,000 ha in Rabi season.

The Chief Minister also dedicated the Haladia dam of Subarnarekha irrigation project. The dam will help irrigate an additional 5,520 ha. Currently, 62,480 ha is being irrigated by the project, it said.

Patnaik also laid the foundation stone for the second phase work of Subarnarekha project. On completion, it will irrigate 39,694 ha in Mayurbhanj and Balasore districts, the statement said, adding that the CM also laid the stone of a barrage over Khairi Bhandhan river at Anlabani vilage in Mayurbhanj district.

# SAI residential school observes Founder's Day

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Cuttack, Dec 21: SAI International Residential School (SIRS) observed the 6th Founder's Day here December 20 and 21 organising events centered on the theme of 'Dashavatar'.

The festivities commenced with an athletic meet, inaugurated by Brijesh Kumar Rai, DIG and Additional Commissioner of Police, Bhubaneswar.



"The athletic event featured track and field events, aerobics, and yoga drills at the grand sports stadium. Events like the 110 meters hurdles, boys' and girls' 100 meters races, relay races for both boys and girls, and the final 400 meters races added fervor to the day," informed a school official.

Houda El Aisati, a renowned basketball player from Morocco, joined the sports event to inspire the participating athletes, urging them to nurture a spirit of sportsmanship and camaraderie.

Second day of celebrations included a parents-teachers meeting and an exhibition of English and science projects amidst distribution of the Founder's Trophy and Academic Excellence Awards. On the occasion, SAI International Education Group chairperson Silpi Sahoo said, "SAI International provides a nurturing environment for tomorrow's leaders by empowering children to showcase their greatest talents. Our founder, Bijaya Kumar Sahoo, set the path for children's holistic development in all spheres. We keep up his inspirational work, seeing our pupils achieve academic and athletic success. I wish the children of SAI International the very best in all their future undertakings since they are well known for their academic excellence and moral principles."

| MARKET WATCH |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| INDEX        | VARIATION         |
| SENSEX       | 70865.10 ↑ 358.79 |
| NIFTY        | 21255 ↑ 104.80    |
| DOLLAR       | 83.27 ↑ ₹0.06     |
| EURO         | 91.24 ↑ ₹0.20     |
| GOLD         | ₹62,515 ↑ ₹100    |
| SILVER       | ₹75,550 ↑ ₹64     |

| WEATHER  |                   |        |
|----------|-------------------|--------|
|          | BHUB              | CTK    |
| TEMP     | 26.6°C            | 25.2°C |
| MIN      | 12.4°C            | 12.8°C |
| Humidity | 78%               | 73%    |
| Rainfall | Nil               | Nil    |
| Forecast | PARTLY CLOUDY SKY |        |

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By Virtue of an affidavit before the Notary Malkangiri, I Abudul Zamir Khan, S/o. Abudul Hamid Khan, 164, Sibasagarsahi, Mathili, Dist-Malkangiri, Odisha-764044. Declare by this affidavit No.K199721, dated 22.01.2020 that now onwards I shall be known as ABDUL ZAMEER KHAN, S/O- Abdul Hamid Khan for all future purpose.

## LOST

I, Sri Uttam Kumar Sahoo, aged 22 years, S/O.- Nakula Sahoo, At-Chakradharpur, P.O.-Parbatipur, P.S.-Simulia, Balikhand, Dist-Balasore That, the property under Mouza- Murtunga, Khata No.128/54, Plot No.135 Ac 0.32 decs stands recorded in my name. That, at the time of purchase of the above property, I have obtained Original link RSD No.425, dtd. 16.04.2002 and Original Khatian Khata No.95, Mouza.-Murtunga from my vendor. Lost Date: 15.12.2023 in this regard I lodged FIR Copy lost Service Request No. 24482053230011, Date of FIR is on 20.12.2023, if any person or concern having any claim and objection over the aforesaid property may contact: Balasore Advocate: Subodhakanta Panigrahi, Mob.9861110353, Sri Uttam Kumar Sahoo, Mob. 6371768136 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

# Poll plans: BJP MLAs meet Modi, Nadda in New Delhi

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 21: Ahead of 2024 elections, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLAs from Odisha Thursday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi here and discussed the current political scenario in the state.

The BJP legislators met the Prime Minister at the Parliament House and took his guidance for strengthening the party for 2024 elections.

Earlier in the day, the MLAs along with Union Education and Skill Development Minister Dharmendra Pradhan also met party president JP Nadda. During the meeting with the party president, the state leaders discussed strengthening the party for upcoming elections.

Following the meeting with the Prime Minister, Odisha opposition leader Jayanarayan Mishra said all the MLAs are very happy and excited. He said that the BJP will extensively work and start programmes in the state for ensuring victory in the upcoming elections.

"We are going to Odisha with the blessings of the Prime Minister. Soon, the central lead-



ership will make visits to Odisha," Mishra said.

The BJP leader said that Prime Minister Modi, Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari and Amit Shah, and party president JP Nadda will visit Odisha in coming days.

The BJP MLAs congratulated the party's central leadership on the astounding victory in three Hindi-heartland states.

Earlier Wednesday, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former president Rahul Gandhi had held a crucial meeting with the Odisha Congress leaders to prepare strategy for the 2024 Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

Following the meeting, Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Sarat Pattanayak had said that the Congress party is aiming to win 10-12 Lok Sabha seats in 2024 elections from Odisha.

# Cops unearth massive car fraud; Ganjam couple held

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 21: A couple, allegedly involved in duping several people to the tune of around ₹100 crore on the pretext of supplying cars at subsidized prices, was arrested by the Commissionerate Police here, Thursday.

The accused, Akshay Gouda and Usharani Gouda, hailing from Aska town under Ganjam district, posed as middlemen before several prospective buyers claiming that they were in contacts with dealers of branded car makers, said an officer from Nayapalli police station where a case under IPC Sections 420, 34 has been registered against them.

The arrested couple runs a showroom, 'Pattakhandha Automobiles', in the Capital City, in partnership with their relative, Sibananda Gouda, who is also an accomplice in the crime, the officer added.

Reportedly, scores of complaints had earlier been registered against the couple at Pahala, Capital, Badagada,



Khandagiri and Lakshmi Sagar Police stations, alleging fraud and cheating.

Giving more details about the modus operandi of the accused, the officer said the duo used social media to advertise 50 percent discount offer on brand new cars. When potential buyers contacted them, the couple would entice them into a trap by displaying bogus images where they were seen delivering new cars to people, he added.

In several instances, the accused couple produced fake documents that mentioned agreements with car dealers for clearance sale, the officer stated.

The initial probe by Nayapalli Police station has revealed that the couple targeted affluent individuals in the city.

A woman, who owns a car showroom under the city limits, claimed that the husband-wife duo swindled ₹3 crore from her, with fake promises to deliver cars from manufacturer.

Another complainant, who lodged a case at Nayapalli police station, stated that he paid an advance amount to the couple for a SUV. However, the fraudsters stopped answering his calls when the deadline arrived for delivery. It was then he realized he had been duped.

# All 10 melanistic tigers in Similipal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 21: There are a total of 10 black tigers in India, all exclusively found in Odisha's Similipal, the government informed the Parliament Thursday.

Union Minister of State for Environment Ashwini Kumar Choubey told the Rajya Sabha that melanistic tigers have been documented only in the Similipal Tiger Reserve in Odisha.

As per the 2022 cycle of the pan-India tiger estimation exercise, the Similipal Tiger Reserve has 16 tigers, out of which 10 exhibit melanism, he said.

The minister said that the Similipal Tiger Reserve has been identified as a distinct conser-



vation cluster due to its genetic composition.

Over the last five years, the Similipal Tiger Reserve has received a financial support of ₹32.75 crore for wildlife conservation, habitat management, human resource, and infrastructure development under the centrally sponsored scheme

of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-IDWH).

A study led by ecologist Uma Ramakrishnan and her student Vinay Sagar from the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bangalore, in 2021, revealed that the coat colouration and patterning causing the wild cats to appear dark stem from a single mutation in the Transmembrane Aminopeptidase Q (Taappq) gene.

Published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in September 2021, their study noted that tigers in the Similipal Tiger Reserve form an isolated population in eastern India, with very limited gene flow between them and other tiger populations.

## POLITICKLE BY MANJUL



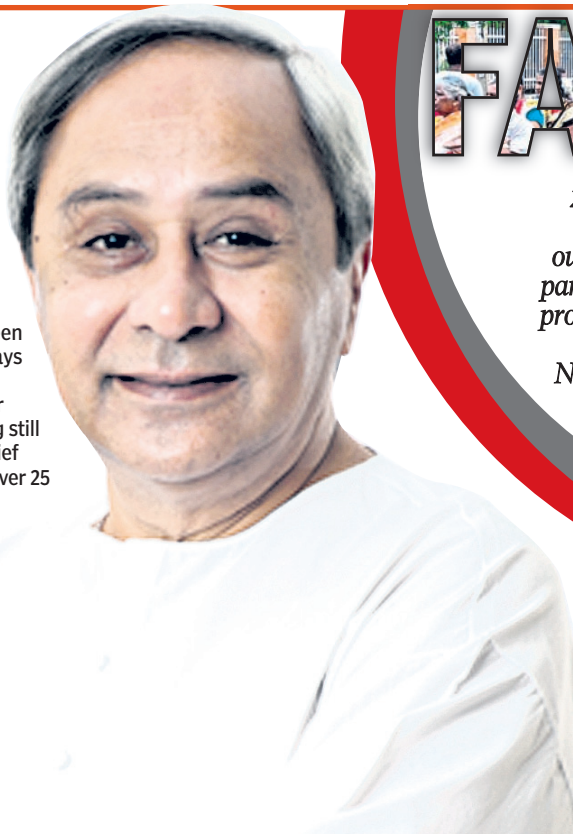
## FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookieman-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.



**NAVEEN, SECOND LONGEST SERVING CHIEF MINISTER**

The 77-year old Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik achieved a milestone in his political career July 21 by breaking the record of former West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu as the second longest-serving chief minister of a state in India with a tenure of 23 years and 139 days. Patnaik, the five-time Chief Minister, took charge March 5, 2000, and has been holding the post for the last 23 years and 139 days while Basu held the office for 23 years 137 days from June 21, 1977, to November 5, 2000. Former Chief Minister of Sikkim, Pawan Kumar Chamling still holds the record of being the longest-serving Chief Minister in the country. He served the state for over 25 years from December 12, 1994, to May 26, 2019. Naveen Patnaik started his political journey in 1997 after the demise of his father Biju Patnaik. He formed a new party December 26, 1997 in the name of his father as a breakaway faction from Janta Dal. Patnaik also served as Union Minister of Steel and Mines from 1998 to 2000, and he was a member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) from Aska from 1997 to 2000.



**FACES 2023**

*2023 will be remembered as the year when milestones were set, success found new meaning, while merit outweighed other considerations. With the shadow of the pandemic long gone from public memory, the juggernaut of progress was propelled by new vigour as innovation played catalyst to realize transformation in various sectors. Nevertheless, there were moments of grief and solemnity as the state lost many of its bravehearts and gifted sons and daughters that left a void which could never be filled*

**PANDIAN: RISE AND ASCENT**

On a dim pre-dawn morning, officials huddled up on the Srimandir premises for the impending visit of Kartik Pandian, the ex-bureaucrat who was just appointed as the chairman of 5T and Nabin Odisha initiatives, with the rank of a Cabinet minister. The '4 am Officer', as Pandian is popularly known for his wee-hour site tours that made

him the force behind the quick implementation of a slew of projects across the state, was on a visit to take stock of the progress of Odisha's flagship Srimandir Heritage Corridor project. The Tamil Nadu-born 2000-batch IAS officer of Odisha cadre resigned from his job to plunge in the service of Chief Minister and BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik in October this year. 49-year-old Pandian has an Odia connection; his wife, Sujata R Karthikeyan hails from the Kendrapara district. She is the first Odia woman IAS officer in the Odisha cadre from the state. Pandian's influence is visible in the various strides the state has made in recent years. From hosting of the Asian Athletics Championships, to two back-to-back Hockey Men's World Cups, Pandian played a key role in pitchforking Odisha into a global sports hub. His influence reached beyond the sports arena to the corridors of healthcare with the revitalization of SCB Medical College, the state's premier health facility. The industrial, startup and agricultural sectors' meteoric progress in recent years and transformation of the education sector bear testimony to Pandian's midas touch to growth in every nook and cranny of the state.



**PRAMILA 1ST WOMAN SPEAKER**

A new chapter was added to the history of Odisha Assembly this year with the election of senior BJD leader and Binjharpur MLA Pramila Mallik as the first woman Speaker of the House. Mallik was elected unopposed to the coveted post September 22. Mallik, a six-time MLA from the reserved (SC) Assembly segment in Jajpur district, had resigned as Revenue and Disaster Management Minister September 21, 2023, and filed her nomination as a BJD candidate for the Speaker's post. Speaker in-charge Rajanikant Singh announced Mallik's election as the first woman Speaker of the Assembly at a special session held before the commencement of the Monsoon Session of the House. The Opposition BJP and Congress did not field any candidate for the election to the post.



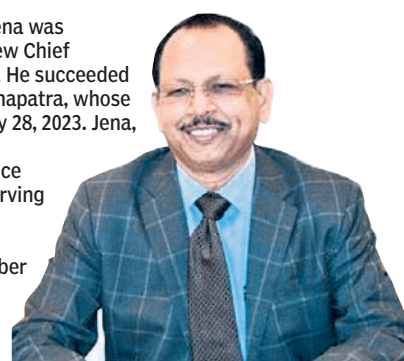
**MANMOHAN AT THE HELM**

Ahead of the crucial 2024 general and Assembly elections, senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former minister Manmohan Samal was appointed the Odisha BJP president March 23. BJP national president JP Nadda appointed him as the state BJP chief. Samal thanked the central leadership for reposing faith on him and giving him the crucial responsibility. The party appointed Samal in the top post after completion of three-year tenure of Samir Mohanty. "The people of Odisha are waiting for an alternative government. We will all work hard with a collective effort, collective leadership and collective decision to fulfil the desire of the people," Samal had said.



**PK JENA NEW CHIEF SECY**

Pradeep Kumar Jena was appointed the new Chief Secretary of Odisha. He succeeded Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, whose term ended February 28, 2023. Jena, a 1989-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, was serving as the development commissioner, considered the number two position in the state's bureaucratic hierarchy.



**AKADEMI HONOUR FOR POET PARIDA**

Eminent poet Ashutosh Parida was declared one of the 24 recipients of the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Awards for 2023. Parida, known for his poetry collections like 'Chandala,' will receive the literary award for his poetry collection 'Aprastuta Mrutyu'. Notably, he has eleven collections of poems and one book of essays to his credit. For his literary contribution, he has previously been conferred with several awards and honours, including the Odisha Sahitya Academy Award, Bhanuji Rao Memorial Award, Sachi Routray Kabita Samman, and Satyabadi Sahitya Samman among others. His poems have been translated widely into English and many other Indian languages. Parida received his PhD from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur and has worked as a scientist at CSIR-IMMT, Bhubaneswar. He has established himself as a prolific writer in Odia and now lives with his family in the Capital city.



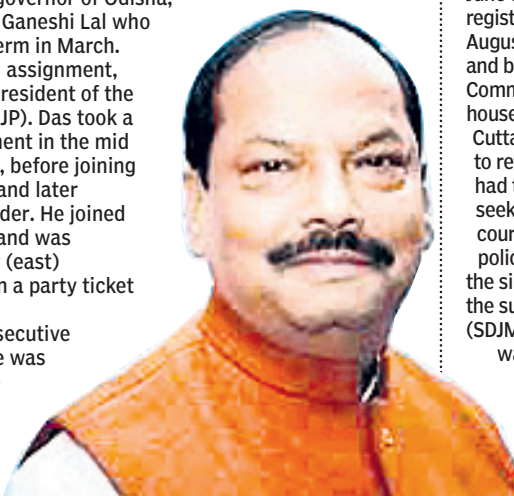
**SUSHIL IN MOON MISSION**

This year, 38-year-old Sushil Kumar Nayak of Balia village under Chandannagar gram panchayat in Kendrapara district was in news for his contributions to Chandrayaan-3 that landed successfully on moon August 23. Sushil has been working as a scientist at Indian Space Research Organisation's Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota of Andhra Pradesh since 2009 and was involved in programming and launching the Chandrayaan-3 mission. At present, he is working as the deputy head of the Gaganyaan project of ISRO.



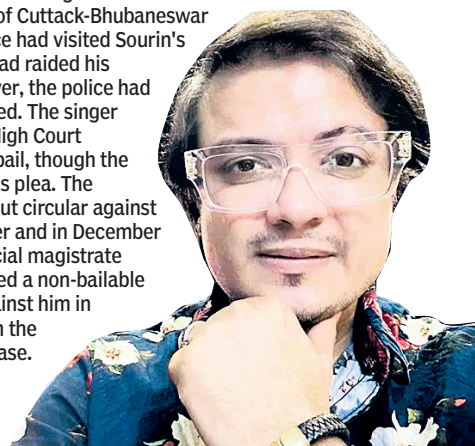
**RAGHUBAR DAS TAKES CHARGE AS 26TH GUV**

Former Jharkhand chief minister Raghubar Das took oath as the 26th governor of Odisha, October 31. Das replaced Ganeshi Lal who completed his five year term in March. Prior to the gubernatorial assignment, Das was a national vice-president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Das took a plunge into the JP movement in the mid 1970s as a student leader, before joining the Janata Party in 1977, and later became a trade union leader. He joined the saffron party in 1980 and was elected from Jamshedpur (east) Assembly constituency on a party ticket in 1995. He won from the constituency for five consecutive terms till 2014. In 2004, he was appointed the party state president. He became the first non-tribal CM of the state in 2014.



**SINGER SOURIN BHATT IN SOUP**

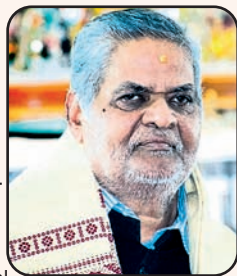
The popular playback singer Sourin Bhatt found himself in trouble after a woman lodged a complaint at the Mahila Police Station in Cuttack in June this year alleging Bhatt of harassment and exploitation. A case was registered against him and late he deposed before the Mahila police in August while claiming the allegations to be 'false and baseless.' A team of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar Commissionerate Police had visited Sourin's house in Kolkata and had raided his Cuttack house. However, the police had to return empty-handed. The singer had then moved the High Court seeking anticipatory bail, though the court later rejected his plea. The police issued a look-out circular against the singer in September and in December the sub-divisional judicial magistrate (SDJM) in Cuttack issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against him in connection with the harassment case.



**PADMA SHRI**

**ANTARYAMI MISHRA**

The prestigious Padma Shri was bestowed upon eminent litterateur Antaryami Mishra in recognition of his profound contributions to the realms of Odia language and Jagannath culture. Mishra has portrayed Odia language's history and culture through moralistic, ethical and principle-oriented literary works. He is also the recipient of Presidential Certificate of Honour (2019) for his contribution towards Classical Odia.



**PATAYAT SAHU**

Ayurveda practitioner and traditional healer Patayat Sahu of Nandol village in Kalahandi district received Padma Shri award from President Droupadi Murmu in March this year for his contribution towards agriculture. 66-year-old Sahu has grown more than 3,000 medicinal plants in his village without the help of fertilisers, chemicals and pesticides. Sahu said that he had learnt traditional healing practices from his grandfather, who was a 'vaidya' (traditional healer) and that he does not charge anything from his patients.



**KRISHNA PATEL**

Renowned musician and vocalist Krishna Patel was conferred with Padma Shri for her song Rangabati this year. It is also the first Indian song to win three Padma awards in the span of six years. The 71-year-old veteran vocalist has made outstanding contributions to Sambalpur folk music. The award recognises her tireless efforts in preserving and promoting the rich musical heritage of Odisha. She started learning folk music at a very young age and continued to perform for over four decades. The song's lyricist Mitrabhanu Gountia was awarded the Padma Shri in 2017. Jitendra Haripal, a Dalit singer and the song's male vocalist, received the Padma Shri three years later.



**MAGUNI CHARAN KUARN**

Eminent puppeteer from Keonjhar Maguni Charan Kuanr was awarded Padma Shri by President Droupadi Murmu for the year 2023 at the Civil Investiture Ceremony-I held at Rashtrapati Bhavan March 22. Eighty-five-year-old Kuanr received the highest civilian award for his lifelong contribution to the promotion and propagation of the traditional rod puppet dance form of Odisha. Kuanr has also received Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja Award - the highest award of Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi for 2012 - and Sahitya Akademi Award for 2004.



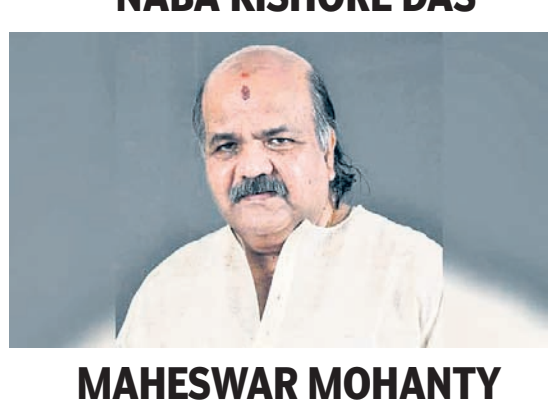
**MARTYRS**

**Debasish Biswal**

**Pratap R Parida**

**Sushant Khuntia**

**Saroj Das**



**ADIEU**





Let us keep flaming in our heart the fire of progress.

THE MOTHER



## Flawed Policy

As the Israel-Hamas war rages, the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza is grabbing headlines – as well it should. But another armed conflict, in Myanmar, is also causing mass suffering, with more than two million people internally displaced and over a million more streaming into neighbouring Bangladesh, India, and Thailand. And it is attracting far less international attention.

This is not to say that outside forces are not engaged in the conflict in Myanmar. On the contrary, the United States seems to view supporting the rebel and pro-democracy groups attempting to overthrow the military junta – which returned to power in a February 2021 coup – as a kind of moral test. But its approach is doing Myanmar little good.

After the military overthrew Myanmar's nascent civilian government – to which it had begun ceding power barely six years earlier – US President Joe Biden's administration re-imposed wide-ranging sanctions, which it has since ratcheted up. But, so far, the sanctions have left Myanmar's military elites relatively unscathed, even as they have unravelled the economic progress made over the last decade and inflicted misery on ordinary citizens.

The Biden administration has also deepened engagement with the so-called National Unity Government that was formed as an alternative to the junta. Though the US, like the rest of the world, has refrained from formally recognising the shadow government, this has not stopped the Biden administration from providing "non-lethal aid" to its notional army, the People's Defence Force, as well as to ethnic insurgent organisations and pro-democracy groups, under the BURMA Act. And the US has a history of interpreting "non-lethal" rather loosely. Non-lethal support for Syrian rebels, for example, included enhancing their operational capabilities on the battlefield.

The groups the Biden administration supports in Myanmar do not share a common cause, let alone a single political strategy. The shadow government has failed to win the support of all major ethnic groups, and its armed wing lacks a unified military command. The ethnic insurgent groups – some of which have records of brutality – are often more interested in securing autonomy for their communities than in building an inclusive federal democratic system, and some are willing to collaborate with the junta to get it. Complicating matters further, these groups' territorial claims sometimes overlap.

It is impossible to say for certain whether growing US aid flows have fuelled more violence in Myanmar. But there is no doubt that rebel attacks have lately intensified, with serious consequences not only for civilians, who often are caught in the crossfire, but also for neighbouring states. Just last month, a major offensive – which enabled the rebels to gain control of several border towns and dozens of military outposts – drove at least 72 government soldiers to flee to India in just one week. The junta responded by intensifying its own lethal force, including punitive air strikes and artillery barrages.

Meanwhile, more than 32,000 ethnic Chin from Myanmar have taken refuge in India's Chin-majority Mizoram, where they live mostly in refugee camps. Thousands more have fled to another Indian border state, Manipur, fuelling an increasingly violent conflict between the local population's two main ethnic groups.

US aid to armed groups around the world has often fuelled disorder and suffering, undercutting the quest for democracy. Judging by Myanmar's deteriorating humanitarian situation, it seems that this may well be happening again. And Myanmar's neighbours are being affected in much the same way the US would be affected if faraway powers sought to punish Mexico and aid rebel groups there. Yet, far from letting the neighbouring countries take the lead in setting policy toward Myanmar, the Biden administration has insisted they toe the US line.

America's uncompromisingly punitive approach to Myanmar's military junta has hopelessly divided the ten-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations, preventing it from playing a constructive role in the conflict. Paradoxically, the US has sought to co-opt ASEAN to promote democracy in Myanmar, even though the majority of the group's members remain under authoritarian rule.

India, the world's most populous democracy, is increasingly concerned that the US approach is pushing resource-rich Myanmar into China's arms. India not only shares long land and sea borders with Myanmar, but also views the country as a strategic corridor to Southeast Asia. Given the cross-border movement of people and guerrillas – some trained and armed by China – close counter-insurgency cooperation with Myanmar is vital for India's security.

Biden's misguided Myanmar policy seems to align with his public rhetoric about a "global battle between democracy and autocracy." But elsewhere, his administration has adopted a more pragmatic foreign-policy approach, deepening strategic relations with non-democracies in order to counter China's growing influence. For example, during the G20 summit in New Delhi this past September, Biden sought to mend ties with Saudi Arabia. He then visited Vietnam, calling it a "critical Indo-Pacific partner."

Such realism should be welcomed: if the promotion of democracy and human rights overrode all other considerations, US diplomacy would have very few partners outside the West. But this approach needs to be extended to Myanmar. The US would stand a better chance of helping to end direct military rule there by opening up lines of communication with the junta and offering it incentives to reverse course.

It was the abandonment of a failed sanctions policy in favour of calibrated US engagement that helped bring about the formal end of Myanmar's military dictatorship in 2015. If Myanmar is to avoid becoming a failed state, the Biden administration must adopt a similar strategy today.

The writer is Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Brahma Chellaney

Myanmar's neighbours are being affected in much the same way the US would be affected if faraway powers sought to punish Mexico and aid rebel groups there



DK Giri

KASHMIR IS A PERFECT CASE FOR BLENDING SECURITY WITH THE ECONOMY, TRADE AND DIPLOMACY, AND FOR SHIFTING THE FOCUS FROM POLITICS TO ECONOMY

A day-long conference with an instructive theme "Strengthening international investment in Kashmir," was held 19 December in New Delhi. It was co-hosted by Indian Economic Trade Organisation (IETO) and Kashmir Central. There were two major panel discussions; one on the political conditions prevailing in the state after abrogation of Article 370 and the second was rebuilding the economy by "strengthening international investments." The latter which I happened to chair is the focus of this piece.

A couple of words about the organisers - IETO is a private entrepreneurial agency in promoting Indian trade abroad and facilitating international investment into India from across the world. It is indeed a dynamic and vibrant organisation engaged in almost all the economic zones of the world - South Asia, Africa, Latin America, West Asia, Europe and the Pacific. It has taken up the cause of Kashmir in terms of raising awareness of the business community in India and abroad on the immense potential of the state in absorbing huge investment in multiple sectors.

Kashmir Central is a weekly magazine from the Valley which has been working for laying out a genuine and authentic narrative in the state. In the recently published book, "Kashmir: The War of Narratives" the author, who is the editor of the journal, talks about how false narratives have harmed the people in the Valley and India as a country.

The conference sought to eliminate the mismatch between politics and economy in India's foreign policy. I have talked about it for years since it came out glaringly in my research on the European Union in India 30 years ago. The research has resulted in a book titled 'The European Union and India: A Study in North-South Relations'. India's trade deficit was more than 60% with the European

FOCUS NATION

# THE KASHMIR NARRATIVE



From the security point of view, presence of foreign companies in the Valley should draw in international support for the stability of the region

Union, yet India did not have a robust policy towards Europe. India's foreign policy was centred on Pakistan, Soviet Union (Russia) and China, all because of a tenuous security situation in Kashmir.

Quite a few Kashmiris also suffered from an overriding mindset of confusion over its affiliation to India or Pakistan, at the heavy cost of their economic growth and development. Let me illustrate it with an anecdote. A few years ago, I escorted a delegation of companies led by Scandinavian consulting agency Rud Pedersen Public Affairs Company. It is fairly a big agency which has just employed the former Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Loven as its consultant.

At the end of the Kashmir visit, a press-meet was organised in the Press Club in Srinagar. As the head of the delegation, Morten Pedersen was sharing his ideas of possible investment by companies in the state. A journalist stood up to ask about the opinion of Pedersen on Kashmir's geographical location, whether it should be a part of India or Pakistan! As it was an irrelevant question to an inappropriate person, Pedersen hesitated to answer. I stepped in to snub the journalist, "the delegation is here to explore investment and job creation etc, the status of Kashmir was not their concern."

Having said that, the conference in its two sessions on politics and economy sought to solve the dichotomy by ad-

ressing both the sectors. In the politics session addressed by eminent and experienced panelists, the overwhelming opinion was that Parliament endorsed by the Supreme Court has completed the process of integration of Kashmir into India. Any doubt on its belongingness was laid to rest forever. The Kashmiris, even those with a separatist mindset, have reconciled to the reality. Now it was time to build a new narrative in the country and abroad.

The ruling BJP's narrative is that Kashmir was ruled by three families - Indira Gandhi's, Sheikh Abdullah's and Mufti's. These families used Kashmir for their own vested interests. Internationally, the 'Islam in danger' narrative and Pakistan-Turkey connivance fed the mindset of militants, mullahs and extremist Islamists subscribing to revivalism. It was also recalled that the Kashmir issue had weighed heavily on India's foreign policy because of its geopolitical and religious importance.

The economy of the state was discussed in great depth by speakers from the bureaucracy, business, academia and civil society. The focus was on building infrastructure for IT, tourism and other traditional sectors of the economy. Tourism, as is well known has the greatest potential. A tourism expert as well as a practitioner from Nepal presented a new tourist map connecting the beautiful spots in the Himalayan corridor spread-

ing from Nepal to Ladakh and Sikkim and Srinagar, and emphasised that tourism creates grassroots economy by catering to all sections of society from the state bodies down to the 'ton-gawalla' and street shopkeepers.

On innovative tourism, he quoted Dr. Karan Singh, the scion of the royal family that was at the helm when Kashmir acceded to India. Home Minister Amit Shah said in Parliament that in 2022, 1 crore 80 lakh tourists visited the Valley. On law and order, the violence has conspicuously reduced. A stable law and order is a pre-condition for any big investment.

On global investment in Kashmir, Indian foreign policy should make it a top priority. It has so far dealt with Kashmir as a security issue. Now that the dust has settled in, it should promote Kashmir as an economic imperative. The Valley has immense potential. Foreign companies would like to invest in the state for its cold climate, natural beauty and a large segment of youth population. Kashmiris are good with their hands. If resources and infrastructure are made available, they would create wonders.

From the security point of view, presence of foreign companies in the Valley should draw in international support for the stability of the region. The investing countries would naturally protect their business interests. Trouble-mongering countries like Pakistan would not dare sponsor terrorism anymore. Let us not forget that Pakistan was using military resources provided by other countries against India.

Kashmir is a perfect case for blending security with the economy, trade and diplomacy, and for shifting the focus from politics to economy. At the end of the day, as James Carville, the strategist of Bill Clinton said in 1992: "It is the economy, stupid."

The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism. ©INFA

SPECTRUM DEFENCE

## India's military modernisation



Satya Narayan Misra

THE WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA'S MILITARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX TO GAIN GLOBAL RESPECTABILITY WOULD BE TO IMPROVE OUR SKILLING QUOTIENT AND FACTOR PRODUCTIVITY

November 25, PM Modi took a sortie over Bangalore in an Indian-designed Tejas aircraft. This embodies his push for India to make more of its weapons. The jet is 20 years behind schedule and powered by an American GE F 404 engine. DRDO describes Tejas as a 'spectacular aviation triumph.' Yet most Indian pilots would kneel laughing over this. Indian services tend to prefer foreign weapons - European and increasingly American - to those produced by defence PSUs and ordnance factories that have traditionally dominated India's military industrial complex. The Arjun, an Indian-designed tank, first appeared in the 90s. More than 100 early variants were delivered to the Army. But they were rejected by its would-be users, as overweight and obsolete. Yet a close look at India's defence efforts shows several areas of significant and underappreciated progress. These include a shift in focus, a massive reorganisation of the military command structure.

Indian leaders have been talking about China as the main enemy for the last 25 years. But deployment told a different story.

Only 12 of the Indian Army's 38 divisions historically faced China. Terrorist attacks emanating from Pakistan and domestic insurgencies absorbed most of the Army's attention. The trigger for change came in June 2020 when after years of tensions, Indian and Chinese troops clashed violently in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh. After that skirmish, India swiftly moved 68,000 troops and a bevy of tanks to the area, where a lone infantry division previously covered 800 km of frontline. Jets and helicopters were sent to northern bases. A push for new roads, tunnels, and bridges was accelerated; 60% of border roads built in the past three years have been in states bordering China. The allocation to Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has been substantially upped to ₹5000 crore out of the capital expenditure budget. The most important change was that units that were once 'dual tasked' (keeping an eye on both China and Pakistan) were told to focus on China.

When Modi took office in 2014, India's defence budget was 23% of China's. It is now 28%. But in many areas the shortfalls are stark. India's Air Force has a

shortfall of 11 squadrons (200, with creaking Mig 21s. Indian Air Force officers acknowledge privately that they are technologically at least a decade behind the PLA in the air domain. The Navy, with 150 ships and submarines is behind China's 370. Admiral Karambir Singh, previously CNS, notes that China's newest destroyers can carry 112 missiles in their vertical launch systems. India's can carry only 8 or 16. The Army has serious constraints, with 45% of equipment obsolete, as per data provided to the Defence Parliamentary Committee. Its war stocks are supposed to last for 40 days of intense fighting on two fronts.

The major reason for the asymmetry is that China has a very large manufacturing hub and is part of the global supply chain, unlike India where manufacturing as a share of GDP remains as low as 16% as against China's 32%. India was a decade behind in economic reforms and the SMEs continue to languish due to a lack of technology, economy of scale, and most importantly capital at a reasonable cost from formal banking channels. The military industrial com-

plex is a subset of India's overall manufacturing mosaic. Instead of remaining aloof from the manufacturing mainstream, the Krishnamurthy Committee strongly recommended collaborating in dual-use sectors like aviation, shipbuilding, sensors, and electronics. Besides there is considerable scope for privatising many defence products like helicopters, surveillance vessels, and small arms which are being produced in DPSUs and ordnance factories. The way forward for India's military industrial complex to gain global respectability would be to improve our skilling quotient and factor productivity. Forging viable partnerships between Indian industry (transcending public sector favouritism) and Original Equipment Manufacturers and reputed design houses, improve our quality of education and skill quotient. The world respects countries that have strong manufacturing bases, are globally connected, and create enabling environment for the investment of MNCs and design houses.

The writer is a former Joint Secretary (Aerospace), Ministry of Defence. Views are personal.

WISDOM CORNER

- If you begin to understand what you are without trying to change it, then what you are undergoes a transformation. JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI
- Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were. But without it we go nowhere. CARL SAGAN
- The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved; loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves. VICTOR HUGO

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1891: First asteroid discovered through astrophotography. 323 Brucia was discovered by Max Wolf and was named after Catherine Wolfe Bruce, an American patron of astronomy.
- 1941: US President Franklin D Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met in Washington, DC, to discuss World War II.

Word of the year

Sir, American dictionary organisation Merriam-Webster has recently announced that its word of the year for 2023 is "authentic." The word is in gestulation of the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and spread of misinformation on social media platforms. Every year the dictionary company publishes its word of the year, highlighting the top-searched terms, and this year's word "authentic" was a decision that it said was driven by "stories of conversations about AI, celebrity culture, identity, and social media." Although the importance of authenticity transcends all kinds of industries and all walks of life, it is a term that resonates with those of us working within the cyber-security industry in particular. Interestingly, Merriam-Webster's word of the year for 2022 was "gaslighting," which is a commonly misused therapy buzzword, and in a way this word is opposite to "authentic."

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Caste card

Sir, The INDIA bloc played the Dalit card by proposing Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge as its Prime Minister candidate for the 2024 general elections. Trinamool supreme Mamata Banerjee and Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal - both nursing Prime Ministerial ambitions - surprised others by proposing Kharge's name. JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar, another PM aspirant, clarified that he was not in the race. However, one wonders whether the proposal will find favour with the Gandhis.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Silent killer

Sir, We yearn to live our lives with excitement and passion. Our daily activities keep us mobile and self-revitalising. We like running around, performing well at work, shouting at the top of our lungs and feeling the adrenaline course through our veins. However, the bad habits we create for ourselves while living it up will catch up with us in due time. High blood pressure develops from a combination of factors such as smoking, alcohol consumption, eating fatty foods and lack of appropriate physical activities. Family history and aging also causes our bodies to perform in sub-optimal conditions as compared to the years of our vigorous youth. If left unattended, high blood pressure can damage blood vessels and gravitate to life-threatening conditions such as heart problems, stroke and cardiac arrest.

CK Subramaniam, CHENNAI

### 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

Orissa POST  
B-15, Russagarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010



# 'Chillai Kalan' arrives with full fury Mayawati targets SP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Dec 21:** Kashmir's harshest winter period, 'Chillai Kalan', began Thursday with the mercury dropping several notches below the freezing point at many places, officials said.

Srinagar city -- the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir -- recorded a low of minus 4.3 degrees Celsius Tuesday night, down from the previous night's minus 3.7 degrees Celsius, they said.

Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, which serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra, recorded a minimum temperature of minus 5.8 degrees Celsius, they said.

The famous ski resort of Gulmarg in Baramulla district recorded a low of minus 3.0 degrees Celsius, the officials said. Qazigund recorded a low



of minus 4.0 degrees Celsius, Kokernag town saw the mercury settle at minus 3.0 degrees Celsius and Kupwara recorded a low of minus 4.0 degrees Celsius.

The weatherman has forecast generally dry weather over the

next few days in Kashmir. The drop in temperature has resulted in the freezing of many slow-moving water bodies. It has also resulted in the freezing of water supply pipes in some areas.

The intense cold wave has forced people in the city to put

The drop in temperature has resulted in the freezing of many slow-moving water bodies

The drop in temperature has also resulted in an increase in respiratory problems among children and elderly

on extra layers of clothes to stay warm. With electricity supply erratic in many areas of Kashmir, people have resorted to the use of Kangri, an earthen firepot, to beat the chill.

The drop in temperature has resulted in an increase in respiratory problems among children and elderly. 'Chillai-Kalan' is the 40-day harshest winter period when a cold wave grips the region and the temperature drops considerably leading to the freezing of water bodies, including the famous Dal Lake here, as well as the water supply lines in sev-

eral parts of the valley.

The chances of snowfall are the most frequent and maximum during this period and most areas, especially in the higher reaches, receive heavy snowfall.

People spend more time indoors to avoid catching common ailments like flu, cough and cold. Traditionally, the valley residents used to consume dried vegetables to overcome the scarcity of fresh vegetables during the winter months as the Srinagar-Jammu would often be closed due to heavy snowfall.

While dried vegetables are still consumed as delicacies, the highway to Jammu does not face frequent closures anymore. 'Chillai-Kalan' will end on January 31. The cold wave continues even after that in Kashmir with a 20-day-long 'Chillai-Khurd' (small cold) and a 10-day-long 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold).

The BSP had fought the last general elections with the Samajwadi Party and has 10 Lok Sabha MPs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Dec 21:** BSP chief Mayawati Thursday said it is not appropriate for anyone to make comments against parties that are not part of the opposition INDIA bloc because no one knows when they might need each other in the future.

Such people and parties have to face a lot of embarrassment later, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said in a statement without naming anyone. In August this year, Mayawati had announced that her party would contest the 2024 Lok Sabha elections on its own in Uttar Pradesh as past experience shows that it does not gain anything from entering into an alliance.

"It is not appropriate for anyone to make idle comments about the parties, including the BSP, which are not part of the opposition alliance. My advice to them is that they should avoid this because no one knows when someone might need someone in the interest of the country in the future," the statement quoted Mayawati as saying.

"It is not right... Such people and parties who make comments have to face a lot of embarrassment later. The Samajwadi Party is a living example of this," she said. According to recent media reports, Samajwadi Party president Akhlesh Yadav is not in favour of inclusion of the BSP into the INDIA bloc.

The BSP had fought the last general elections with the Samajwadi Party and has 10 Lok Sabha MPs. Mayawati termed the mimicry of Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar by opposition MPs in the Parliament complex "indecent".

"Incidents of differences, tension and confrontation between the government and the opposition are destroying the country's democracy and parliamentary traditions," she said.



The political row broke out after TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee derisively mimicked Dhankhar during the opposition's protest on the stairs of Parliament on Tuesday against the suspension of MPs, drawing strong condemnation from the ruling BJP. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was seen making a video of the performance by Banerjee.

On the Parliament security breach, Mayawati said it is a matter of serious concern. Instead of accusing each other, everyone should work together in this matter. It is very important to take strict legal action against those involved, she said.

On December 13, two men jumped inside the Lok Sabha chamber from the visitors' gallery during Zero Hour and released yellow smoke from canisters. They were pinned down by MPs. Six people have been arrested in connection with the incident. On the Ram temple, Mayawati said the BSP is a secular party and respects all religions but politics being done in the name of the temple is a matter of concern.

"The politics that is being done in the name of this (Ram temple) for the last few years is extremely sad and also a matter of concern. It will only weaken our country. It creates hatred among people, which is not appropriate at all," she said.

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has sent invitations to 7,000 people, including 3,000 VVIPs, for the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple on January 22.

## J&K cops seek victims' help to solve fraud case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Dec 21:** The Jammu and Kashmir Police's cyber wing Thursday asked the victims of a Rs 59 crore online financial fraud to share information to aid the investigation into the case.

Several people, including social media influencers, have been questioned in the case, officials said and added that multiple locations in the Kashmir Valley were raided Tuesday and Wednesday as part of the probe and electronic gadgets and documents seized.

"If you've been affected by the recent online financial scam or have info related to it, your contribution is crucial! Share details with us to aid our investigation. Your information matters! Together, we can combat cyber fraud. Your input can make a difference!" the Cyber Police, Kashmir, said in a post on X.

The cyber police have reg-

istered a case against unknown persons in connection with the online investment fraud that came to light earlier this week. Inspired by Bollywood film 'Phir Hera Pheri', the fraudsters set up a company named 'Curative Survey' in the Karan Nagar area and duped several people of at least Rs 59 crore under the pretext of doubling their investment within two weeks, the officials said.

The officials said the amount might increase as the investigation is still in progress. Initially, the company made good on its promise which brought in more investors and the scheme was promoted by at least two local YouTubers adding to its popularity.

Soon after, the owners of the company disappeared, the officials said, adding that they found the Karan Nagar office locked. The company had opened branches in several district headquarters and towns of Jammu and Kashmir.



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inspects the construction work of Ram temple in Ayodhya, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

## Special traffic plan for Ayodhya on January 22

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Ayodhya (UP), Dec 21:** The UP Police department is making elaborate plans to ensure smooth traffic movement in the holy city during the consecration ceremony on January 22.

To guide tourists and devotees to the temple, police department authorities plan to install signage and direction boards on roads across the holy city. Additional Director General (ADG) Lucknow Zone Piyush Mordia said that directional signs will be placed on roads in Ayodhya to guide devotees to the temples.

For the convenience of devotees coming from various parts

of the country to Ayodhya, signboards will be installed in different languages, including those spoken on a large-scale, such as Tamil and Telugu in the south, he said.

ADG Mordia said that plans have been made to mark the routes leading to the main temples and create arrangements for the movement of devotees on these routes as needed.

Since devotees will be walking, the movement of vehicles will be restricted on the main roads. It is also being determined where vehicle access is necessary to ensure that their arrival does not hinder the movement of others, the ADG said. Furthermore, plans are



being prepared according to the requirements of the routes. E-rickshaws might be banned

on some routes, he said. Prime Minister Modi is set to attend the installation of the idol of

To guide tourists and devotees to the temple, police department authorities plan to install signage and direction boards on roads across the holy city

Since devotees will be walking, the movement of vehicles will be restricted on the main roads

For the convenience of devotees coming from various parts of the country to Ayodhya, signboards will be installed in different languages

Ram Lalla at the grand temple on January 22. Preparations are underway in full swing for the event, which will draw dignitaries and people from all walks of life.

## UP teacher develops tool to deal with dyslexia

THE INNOVATION WILL HELP CHILDREN FACING DIFFICULTY IN READING, WRITING AND SPELLING OUT WORDS DUE TO DYSLLEXIA



**Gorakhpur (UP), Dec 21:** Alpa Nigam, 39, a Fulbright fellow and a government teacher in Titauli village in Gorakhpur district, has developed a web-based tool for early identification and intervention for dyslexia.

The innovation will help children facing difficulty in reading, writing and spelling out words due to dyslexia. Alpa, one among four government teachers from India to complete Fulbright Fellowship at the University of Rochester, was awarded for her tool -- 'Unlocking literacy' -- that comprehensively assessed reading skills on 11 literacy areas such as reading, comprehen-

sion, phonological awareness, to pinpoint specific areas of difficulty.

"Dyslexia affects 10-15 per cent of children in India and poses significant challenges in reading, encompassing decoding, fluency, and comprehension. If we identify such children between classes 2 and 5, timely intervention can thwart potential lifelong academic and social difficulties," said Alpa.

She is credited with setting up a language lab, first in any primary school, where students improve pronunciation and linguistic skills. Alpa added that research had shown that around

5-15 per cent children in rural schools suffer from dyslexia. "Proper diagnosis available for dyslexia in India is expensive. Our tool helps teachers to screen children on the basis of questions and get total score based on which they can mark a child into three categories -- below threshold with low risk, at threshold with moderate risk, and above threshold with high risk," said Alpa, who has already tested this tool during her stay at Rochester.

The web tool was developed with support from another government teacher from Rajasthan, Imran Khan, another Fulbright fellow.

"Teachers like her (Alpa) are a beacon of change and empowerment for dyslexic kids because most people (teachers and parents) don't see it as a problem due to lack of awareness and knowledge. While working on our projects in the university, I found her work exemplary, and offered help in coding and developing the web version of her pen and paper dyslexia tool," Imran said.

## DASHBOARD CAMERAS INSTALLED IN COMMERCIAL VEHICLES IN DODA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Dec 21:** In a move to enhance road safety, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has launched a drive to equip commercial passenger vehicles with dashboard cameras to ensure the safety of travellers.

The direction to install dashboard cameras was passed by the Union Territory administration following the deaths of at least 39 people when a bus veered off a mountain road and rolled 300 feet into a gorge in the Assar area of Doda district in November.

Doda Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh and Senior Superintendent of Police Abdul Qayoom conducted an inspection to oversee the installation of cameras in commercial passenger vehicles in the district, officials said.

The installation of dash cameras is part of a strict measure taken by the administration to address the issue of rash and careless driving by commercial passenger vehicle drivers, they said.

During the installation event, officials from the Motor Vehicles Department were present to witness and support the implementation of the measure.

### EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. : 59/ET/SBP/ENGG/2023-24. Dtd. 16.12.2023

(1) e-Tender No. : 34-eT-DENS-SBP-23

Name of the work: SUPPLY AND STACKING OF 1,00,000 CUM MACHINE CRUSHED TRACK BALLAST AS PER RAILWAY'S SPECIFICATION AT BADMAL DEPOT FROM OUTSIDE RAILWAY LAND/QUARRY AND LOADING INTO RAILWAY'S WAGONS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/TITLAGARH OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION (PERIOD OF COMPLETION : 18 MONTHS EXCLUDING MONSOON PERIOD).

Approx. cost of the work : ₹ 14,40,40,000.00, Bid Security: ₹ 8,70,200.00.

(2) e-Tender No. : 54-eT-DENE-SBP-23

Name of the work: IMPROVEMENT TO VARIOUS STAFF AMENITIES LIKE WATER SUPPLY ARRANGEMENTS, IMPROVEMENT TO STAFF QUARTERS ETC. AT VARIOUS STATIONS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/EAST IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approx. cost of the work : ₹ 4,68,10,188.88, Bid Security: ₹ 3,84,100.00.

Completion period of the work: 18 (Eighteen) Months (for sl. no. 1) and 12 (Twelve) Months (for sl. no. 2).

Tender closing Date & Time: At 1500 hrs. on 12.01.2024 (for both tenders).

No manual offers sent by post/courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : www.reps.gov.in

Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigendum issued for this tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) Sambalpur PR-907/O/23-24

### IFFCO-TOKIO GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

Notice for Change of Address

Notice is hereby given to all the Policyholders serviced by Angul Branch of IFFCO-Tokio General Insurance Co. Ltd., that for servicing our Policyholders in much better manner, we are moving our current office from 5<sup>th</sup> Lane, Amalapada, Angul, Odisha - 759122 to the new location 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Kausalya Complex, 1<sup>st</sup> Lane, Amalapada, Angul, Odisha - 759122.

Our new contact details and phone numbers will be as under  
IFFCO-TOKIO GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Kausalya Complex, 1<sup>st</sup> Lane, Amalapada, Angul, Odisha - 759122

Manmohan Rout Ph: +91-8882408294

Soliciting your kind cooperation and support

\*Note - Till relocation, all services/requests related to your policies shall be provided/ accepted at our Old Address.

Corporate Office: IFFCO TOWER - II, Plot No. 3, Sector-29, Gurugram (Haryana) - 122001

IRDAI Regd. No.: 106 | CIN: U74899DL2000PLC107621

### fincare

Registered Office: 301-306, 3rd Floor, ABHJEET-V, Opp. Mayor's Bungalow, Law Garden Road, Mithakhali, Ahmedabad - 380006, Gujarat. www.fincarebank.com

### LOAN AGAINST GOLD - AUCTION NOTICE ON "AS IS WHERE IS" BASIS

The below mentioned borrower/s have been issued notices to pay their outstanding amounts towards the loan against gold facilities availed from Fincare Small Finance Bank Ltd ("Bank"). Since the borrower/s has/have failed to repay his/their dues, we are constrained to conduct an auction of pledged gold items/articles on 28 December 2023 between 11:00 AM - 03:00 PM (Time) at below mentioned branches according to the mode specified therein. In case of deceased borrowers, all conditions will be applicable to legal heirs. Please note that in the event of failure of the above auction, the bank reserves its right to conduct another auction without prior intimation.

E-Auction Branch Details (E-auction will be conducted by using Weblink https://egold.auctiontiger.net/)

BHADRAK - 23660001413455 | CUTTACK - 23660000315937  
23660000411466 23660001051415 | HINJILICUT - 23660001408365 |  
JAJPUR - 23660000923783 | KUAKHIA - 23660001435803 |

Note: The auction is subject to certain terms and conditions mentioned in the bid form, which is made available before the commencement of auction.

Sd/-  
Manager  
Fincare Small Finance Bank





'Shikara-wallas' row their boats through partially frozen Dal Lake in Srinagar. The 40-day harshest winter period in Kashmir, known as Chillai Kalan, began from Thursday



Supporters of Democratic Republic of the Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi cheer for him, after he cast his vote at a polling station, during the Presidential election in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo



BJP workers stage a protest against the alleged 'disrespect' shown to the office of the Rajya Sabha Chairman by some opposition members in Jammu



Students visit the Indian Navy warship 'INS Sumitra' anchored at Khidderpore Dock for exhibition in Kolkata, West Bengal



School students wearing masks in precaution against Covid visit the Vidhana Soudha in Bangalore, Karnataka



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar meets spiritual leader the Dalai Lama at Tibetan temple in Bodhi Gaya



Police use water cannon to disperse KSU activists during their protest march to the Police Headquarters against alleged attacks by the police on activists of the Youth Congress and the Kerala Students Union in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala PTI/REUTERS PHOTOS



# national

## of the day quote

All schemes from Ladli Laxmi to others being run by the previous government will continue and funds will be transferred to beneficiaries' accounts on the due date

**MOHAN YADAV** | MP CM

Now even Parliament in which the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) himself sits is no longer safe, but about 150 MPs were suspended after asking questions

**PRİYANKA GANDHI VADRA** | CONGRESS LEADER

They (Centre) raided Manish Sisodia's (former deputy CM) residence, offices and other places but couldn't find anything, yet they arrested him. They are targeting Arvind Kejriwal now

**ATISHI MARLENA** | DELHI MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Kejriwal skips ED questioning again

**New Delhi:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Thursday skipped the second summons issued by the ED, alleging they were issued at the behest of political rivals who wish to silence the voice of the opposition in the run up to the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Kejriwal was summoned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning in a Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case Thursday. The chief minister left for an undisclosed location for a 10-day Vipassana meditation course Wednesday.

### Woman, 2 kids found dead

**Thane:** A 24-year-old woman and her two minor children were found dead at a house in Thane city of Maharashtra Thursday, following which a case of murder was registered against her estranged husband, police said. The bodies of the three deceased were recovered from the house of the woman's brother-in-law in Kasarvadavali area of the city, they said.

### Ch'garh cabinet expansion today

**Raipur:** The Chhattisgarh cabinet will be expanded Friday with the induction of nine ministers, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said here. It will take the strength of the Sai-led cabinet to 12. Nine MLAs will be sworn in as ministers at the Raj Bhavan at 11:45am, Sai told reporters Thursday.

### Massive fire breaks out

**New Delhi:** A fire broke out in the Gopaladas Bhawan building, which houses offices of several private firms, on Barakhamba Road here Thursday afternoon, sending its occupants scurrying for safety. The fire started on the eighth floor of the 17-storey building due to a short circuit and spread to the ninth, tenth and eleventh floors, fire officials said.

### Student stripped

**Jhansi (UP):** A Class 10 student in UP's Jhansi was allegedly beaten up, stripped naked, and forced to consume liquor by his classmates, police said Thursday. The student, along with his friends, was taken to a deserted area in the city, where he was badly bruised, and the group recorded a video of him, which they later shared online. The footage shows a group beating up the student with sticks while he pleads with them to stop the assault.



I announce that all 14 lakh state government employees, teaching and non-teaching staff of all schools, colleges and universities, and employees of all statutory undertakings and parastatals and pensioners would be getting another instalment of 4 per cent DA from January 1, 2024

**MAMATA BANERJEE** | BENGAL CM

## 164 PLANES LYING IDLE AT 15 AIRPORTS

As many as 164 planes are lying idle at 15 airports in the country, the government said. Most of the aircraft are grounded due to Pratt & Whitney (P&W) engine issues and there are also planes of non-operational airlines, including Go First and Jet Airways. The P&W engine issues have significantly impacted the fleet of IndiGo, the country's largest airline



# Parliament passes Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 21:** Parliament Thursday passed a Bill to replace a British-era law governing the publishing industry and simplify the process of registration of periodicals, amid demands by members in the Lok Sabha to also extend the regulation to YouTube channels.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023, which was passed by voice vote in the Lok Sabha, will make the registration of periodicals a one-step process as against the eight-step process in the archaic law.

"The Bill reflects yet another step of the Modi government towards jettisoning the mentality of slavery and bringing new laws for 'new India'," Thakur said. The minister slammed the previous Congress governments for continuing with the colonial-era law enacted by the British to curb freedom fighters from starting newspapers. Thakur said the new Bill seeks to decriminalise six provisions of the previous law barring one that pertains to a six-month jail term for publishing newspapers or periodicals without registration with the government. The minister said in cases of publishing a newspaper without registra-

tion the provision of jail term comes into force if the publisher fails to comply with the direction of the Press Registrar to stop publication within six months. The Bill empowers the Press Registrar General to impose penalties of up to ₹5 lakh for publishing periodicals without registration and up to ₹20,000 for first penalty for failing to furnish annual statement within the specified time.

"The priority of the government is to end criminality, improve ease of doing business and ease of living through new laws and accordingly, efforts have been made to substantially decriminalise the colonial-era statute," Thakur said. He said the previous Congress-led government had made attempts to amend the PRB Act of 1867 but the legislation proposed was "equally harsh as the colonial-era law" with government permission required even to publish a college newsletter.

Thakur dismissed as baseless the apprehensions voiced by AIMIM member Imtiaz Jaleel about a provision in the Bill that seeks to empower the Press Registrar to enter the premises of a periodical and "inspect or take copies of the relevant records or documents or ask any questions necessary for obtaining any information required to be furnished".

## Parliament passes Telecommunications Bill

Parliament Thursday passed a Bill that seeks to allow the government to temporarily take control of telecom services in the interest of national security and also provide a non-auction route for the allocation of satellite spectrum. The Telecommunications Bill, 2023, was approved by the Rajya Sabha through a voice vote. It was passed by the Lok Sabha Wednesday after a short debate.

with government permission required even to publish a college newsletter.

Thakur dismissed as baseless the apprehensions voiced by AIMIM member Imtiaz Jaleel about a provision in the Bill that seeks to empower the Press Registrar to enter the premises of a periodical and "inspect or take copies of the relevant records or documents or ask any questions necessary for obtaining any information required to be furnished".

"The apprehensions of Jaleel sahab are baseless. You can criticise the government as much as you like. No action has been taken, but if you work against national interest then the law will take its own course," Thakur said. Earlier, participating in the debate on Bill, BJP member Nishikant Dubey wanted the government to appoint a nodal officer to curb malpractices where in YouTube channel operators seek to indulge in blackmail, or small newspapers crop up during elections to avail of advertisements.

# Bill on appointment of CEC, ECs okayed

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 21:** The Parliament Thursday gave its nod to a Bill which seeks to establish a mechanism to appoint the chief election commissioner and election commissioners with Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal asserting that it's in line with the Supreme Court's directions.

The Lok Sabha passed the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023 by a voice vote after a brief discussion.

## SNIPPETS

### CISF to take over Parliament security

**New Delhi:** The government has decided to hand over "comprehensive" security of the Parliament building complex to the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) in the wake of the recent breach of the safety ring, official sources said Thursday. The CISF will render access control to the new and old Parliament complex in an airport security-like fashion where body frisking of persons will be done through hand-held detectors and their belongings will be checked through X-ray machines, with a provision to even scan shoes, heavy jackets and belts by putting them on a tray and passing them through the scanner, the sources said. Earlier, frisking of visitors to Parliament complex was done by Delhi Police personnel.

### HC sentences Ponmudy to 3 yrs imprisonment

**Chennai:** In a disproportionate assets case, the Madras High Court Thursday sentenced Tamil Nadu Higher Education Minister K Ponmudy to three years in prison under the Prevention of Corruption Act and also slapped a fine of ₹50 lakh on him. Consequent to his conviction and the prison sentence awarded by the court, Ponmudy, a senior leader of the ruling DMK stands disqualified as a legislator and as a result ceases to be a Minister.

### Cong gets into poll mode

**New Delhi:** The Congress Thursday said its candidates for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls will be decided "very soon" and asserted that it would take all necessary steps to make the INDIA bloc an effective bulwark against the ruling BJP and its allies. During a four-hour meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) here at the AICC headquarters, former party chief Rahul Gandhi was requested to undertake Bharat Jodo Yatra 2.0 from east to west and the proposal is being "considered with positive intent", a senior leader said.

### Winter Session concludes

**New Delhi:** The last winter session of Modi 2.0, which concluded Thursday, was an historic session with as many as 146 MPs were suspended in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for protesting over the major security breach in the Lok Sabha and demanding Union Home Minister Amit Shah's statement on the incident. The session, commenced December 4 in the new Parliament building, witnessed a major security breach in the lower house when two intruders jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery with canisters emitting smoke December 13.

# 5 soldiers martyred

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Poonch/Jammu, Dec 21:** Five soldiers were killed and two injured when heavily-armed terrorists ambushed two Army vehicles in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district Thursday, officials said.

The bodies of two of the slain soldiers were mutilated, they said. The vehicles carrying the personnel to the site of a cordon-and-search operation came under attack at a blind curve at Dharyar Morh between Dhera Ki Gali and Bufliaz under the jurisdiction of the Surankote police station around 3.45 pm, according to the officials. Two former chief ministers of Jammu and Kashmir -- Ghulam Nabi Azad and Mehbooba Mufti -- strongly condemned the attack.

The People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF), an offshoot of Pakistan-based terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), claimed responsibility for the ambush.

Jammu-based defence PRO Lieutenant Colonel Suneel Bartwal said a joint search operation was launched in the general area of Dhera Ki Gali in the Thanamandi-Surankote



region of Poonch Wednesday night on the basis of "hard intelligence" about the presence of terrorists. As additional forces were moving to the site, the ultras fired upon the Army vehicles -- a truck and a Maruti Gypsy. The troops swiftly responded to the attack, the defence spokesperson said. In the ongoing operation, five soldiers were killed and two injured, the officials said. The injured have been admitted to a hospital. The operation is in progress and further details are being ascertained, the officials said. Disturbing images and videos emerging from the site showed blood on the street, broken helmets of soldiers and shattered windscreens of the two Army vehicles. The officials have not ruled out the possibility of the soldiers engaging in hand-to-hand combat with the terrorists during the intense confrontation.

**Government of Odisha No.O-1973**  
**"e" Procurement Notice**  
**Bid Identification No.16 of 2023-24**

|   |                                                            |                                                                             |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Number of Works                                            | 28 Nos. of Building & Road Works                                            |
| 2 | Estimated Cost (Approx.)                                   | Rs. 2.13 to Rs. 37.19 lakh (Approx.)                                        |
| 3 | Period of Completion                                       | Mentioned against NIT Table Col.06                                          |
| 4 | Date & Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal | 18.01.2024 at 11.00 Hrs.                                                    |
| 5 | Last date & time for receipt of Bids in the Portal         | 29.01.2024 at 15.00 Hrs.                                                    |
| 6 | Date of Opening of Tender                                  | 30.01.2024 at 16.00 Hrs.                                                    |
| 7 | Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid               | Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Jagatsinghpur, Jagatsinghpur |

Further details can be seen from the Government website: [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

**Sd./ Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Jagatsinghpur OIPR-25056/11/0030/2324**

**No.C-2174:**  
**OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER, WATCO PROJECT DIVISION**  
Email: gmprojectsbp@gmail.com, Tel.No.0663-2411911  
**e-Procurement Notice**  
**Bid Identification No.24/Project/WATCO/SBP/2023-24, Dated.15.12.2023**

|    |                                                           |                                                                                                                  |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Name of the Work                                          | Civil Sewerage Work                                                                                              |
| 2. | Estimated Cost                                            | Rs. 88.49 Lakhs                                                                                                  |
| 3. | Period of Completion                                      | Referred to DTCN                                                                                                 |
| 4. | No. of Works                                              | 1 No.                                                                                                            |
| 5. | Tender Paper Cost                                         | Referred to DTCN                                                                                                 |
| 6. | Class of Contractor                                       | B Class                                                                                                          |
| 7. | Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal | 11.00 Hrs. of 21.12.2023 to 17.00 Hrs. of 31.12.2023.                                                            |
| 8. | Date of Opening of Bid                                    | 12.30 Hrs. on dtd.01.01.2024                                                                                     |
| 9. | Name and Address of the O.I.T.                            | General Manager, WATCO Project Division, Sambalpur, At-40 MLD STP Campus, Bhatra, Dhanupalli, Sambalpur, 768005. |

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal "https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in."

**Sd./ General Manager OIPR-13236/11/0013/2324 WATCO Project Division, Sambalpur**

**PANCHAYAT SAMITI OFFICE, ATHMALLIK**  
Letter No. 4507 Dt.18.12.2023  
**TENDER CALL NOTICE**  
No. i-543: Sealed Bids as detailed below are invited from the intending reputed firms to the undersigned for Establishment of 04 (Four) Nos. of 10MT Capacity Solar Cold Room under MDH for the Financial Year 2023-24 in 4 Nos. of GPs., i.e. Sanahula, Thakurgarh, Tapdhol and Pedipathar. The intending firms are to submit the sealed Bids for each GP separately with the price of each item/unit to the undersigned by 12.00 A.M. of dated 04.01.2024 by Registered Post/Speed Post which will be opened by the Tender Committee Member at 12.30 P.M. on the same day in the presence of Bidders. The undersigned will place the order after finalization of the rate by the tender committee which will be installed by the supplier within 30 (Thirty) days from the date of issue of supply order.

| Sl. No. | Name of Works                                   | Name of the GP in which the Solar Cold Room to be Established | Maximum Project Cost of the each 10 MT Solar Cold Room with all taxes as admissible by the Govt. of Odisha and Central Govt. (Rs. in lakhs) | Period of Completion                                           |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1       | Establishment of 10 MT capacity Solar Cold Room | Sanahula, Thakurgarh, Tapdhol, Pedipathar                     | 15.00                                                                                                                                       | Within 30 (Thirty) days from the date of issue of supply order |

**Terms and Conditions**

- The bidder shall submit his price in the following format as given in Annexure-I separately for each GP.
- The separate Annexure-I for one and above GPs may be inserted in one Envelope.
- The bidder should have got the valid GST licence IT licence.
- The bidder shall have to submit the Xerox copy of the GST licence along with GST Clearance Certificate and that of PAN Card.
- The maximum price of the each 10 MT Solar Cold Room along with installation and demonstration including GST and other taxes as admissible is Rs. 15.00 lakhs.
- The successful bidder is to supply the 10 MT Solar Cold Room with establishment thereof within 30 (Thirty) days from the issue of supply order.
- Payment will be made after successful establishment, demonstration of the Solar Cold Room by the supplier which will be successfully verified by our Technical team.
- The TDS as admissible by the Government will be deducted from the bill of the supplier.
- The undersigned reserves all rights to reject/cancel any quotation without assigning any reason thereof.

**Sd./ Block Development Officer, Athmallik OIPR-19091/11/0001/2324**

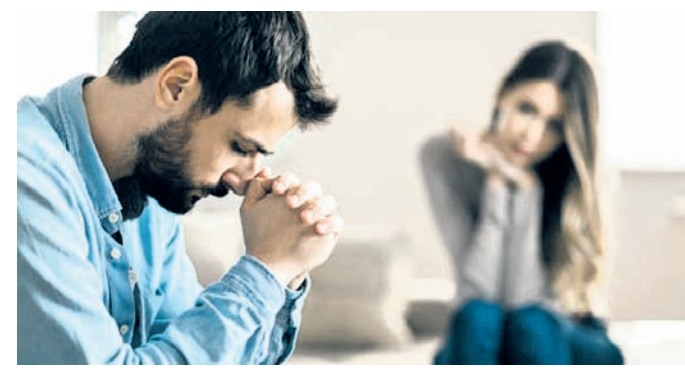
# Nothing more harrowing for man than to see wife act as widow: HC

A marriage cannot survive if a spouse deprives the other of conjugal relationship and doing so is also an act of cruelty, the court said

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 21:** No experience can be a more harrowing for a husband than to see his wife act as a widow while he is alive, and such a conduct amounts to "extreme cruelty", the Delhi High Court has said.

It said a marriage cannot survive if a spouse deprives the other of conjugal relationship and doing so is also an act of cruelty. "Nothing can be a more harrowing experience for a husband than to see his wife act as a widow during his lifetime, that too in a situation where he was seriously injured and expected nothing more than care and compassion from his significant other half. Undeniably, such conduct of the appellant/ wife can only be termed



as an act of extreme cruelty towards the respondent/ husband," a bench of Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Neena Bansal Krishna said.

The high court's judgment came while dismissing a woman's appeal challenging a family court's decision granting a divorce decree in her husband's favour, holding that she acted with cruelty towards him. "The marital discord between the parties has pinnaled to complete loss of faith, trust, understanding, love and affection between the parties. This dead relationship has become infested with acrimony, ir-

## New criminal laws get Parliament nod

**New Delhi:** Three new bills that seek to overhaul the colonial-era criminal laws, making punishments more stringent for crimes such as terrorism, lynching, and offences endangering national security, were approved by Parliament Thursday. The bills were passed in the Rajya Sabha by voice vote. The Lok Sabha had approved these Wednesday.

headed by the prime minister and comprising the leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha and the

Chief Justice of India, will select the CEC and ECs. Meghwal said the bill is in consonance with the SC ruling and not against it. He said the committee mentioned in the judgement was a "stop-gap" arrangement. Before the SC ruling, the CEC and ECs were appointed by the President on the recommendation of the government. Referring to points raised by some members during the course of the debate, the minister said as per the doctrine of separation of powers, appointments to the poll panel come under the domain of the Executive and the prime minister has to be a part of it.

reconcilable differences and protracted litigations; any insistence to continue this relationship would only be perpetuating further cruelty upon both the parties," the bench said. It said the bedrock of any matrimonial relationship is cohabitation and conjugal relationship.

The couple had got married in April 2009 and a daughter was born to them in October 2011. The woman had left her matrimonial home a few days before she delivered the child.

The man filed a divorce petition in the family court claiming since the beginning of their married life

his wife was indifferent to him and had no interest in discharging her matrimonial obligations. He alleged after she refused to do household chores, the man's father was compelled to take care of routine tasks like cooking meals.

The woman denied the allegations levelled by the man and claimed it was her husband who had encouraged her to go to her parental home from where she returned after 2-3 days. She also rejected the allegation that she stayed away from the matrimonial home for 147 days.

The man claimed his wife used to get annoyed on petty issues and would quarrel with his family, and once she refused to keep fast on 'Karwachauth' as the husband had not got her mobile phone recharged. Married Hindu women fast for their husband's long life and well-being during the festival.

Referring to another incident, the man said in April 2011, when he had a slipped disc, his wife, instead of taking care of him, removed the vermilion mark from her forehead, broke her bangles and wore a white suit, declaring that she has become a widow.



# international



The US has deepened its partnership with India in 2023 and elevated cooperation with it through the Quad along with Japan and Australia  
ANTONY BLINKEN | US SECRETARY OF STATE

## SHANGHAI SHIVERS

China's financial hub Shanghai was set to record its chilliest period in December in four decades, spurring authorities to issue warnings for low temperatures and wind, while northern cities battled icy conditions forecast to ease only next week



## of the day quote

A contentious immigration bill backed by the far right is imperfect and needs some fixes but is what the French wanted and is not a victory for the far right

EMMANUEL MACRON | FRENCH PRESIDENT

Our common and immediate priorities include providing humanitarian assistance for the Afghan people, formation of an inclusive and representative government structure, combating terrorism and drug trafficking, and preserving the rights of women, children, and minorities

RUCHIRA KAMBOJ | INDIA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AT THE UN

Let us remain vigilant against rigid ideological positions that often, under the guise of good intentions, separate us from reality and prevent us from moving forward

POPE FRANCIS



Fiamur Noka, lawmaker of the Democratic Party points a smoke flare into the face of a bodyguard during a Parliament meeting in Tirana, Albania, Thursday. Albania's Parliament has voted to lift the legal immunity of former Prime Minister Sali Berisha, who leads the opposition Democratic Party and is accused of corruption

## Kim warns of 'nuclear attack'

The top diplomats of the United States, South Korea and Japan Wednesday issued a joint statement condemning North Korea's recent ballistic missile launches and urged Pyongyang to engage in "substantive dialogue without preconditions"

REUTERS

Seoul, Dec 21: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Pyongyang would not hesitate to launch a nuclear attack if an enemy provokes it with nuclear weapons, state media reported Thursday.

Kim made the remark as he met with soldiers working for the military's missile bureau and congratulated them over Pyongyang's recent launching drill of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), KCNA news agency said.

He said the test demonstrated the loyalty and strong stand of the armed forces and was "a clear explanation of the offensive counteraction mode and the evolution of the nuclear strategy and doctrine of the DPRK not to hesitate even a nuclear attack when the enemy provoke it with nukes", KCNA reported.

DPRK is the abbreviation for the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of



Korea. North Korea said this week it had tested its newest ICBM on Monday to gauge the war readiness of its nuclear forces against mounting U.S. hostility.

The top diplomats of the United States, South Korea and Japan Wednesday issued a joint statement condemning North Korea's recent ballistic missile launches and urged Pyongyang to engage in "substantive dialogue without preconditions".

Kim said Monday's launch showed the military's high mo-

bility and rapid attack capability, and called for efforts to further strengthen its combat efficiency, KCNA reported.

In a separate statement, Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, condemned the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for holding a meeting over the ICBM launch, saying it was an exercise of the country's right to self-defence.

"The UNSC should place heavy responsibility on the irresponsible behaviour and act of the U.S. and the ROK, which have aggravated the tension on the Korean peninsula through all sorts of military provocations all year round," she said. ROK stands for South Korea's official name, the Republic of Korea.

The United States, South Korea and Japan staged a joint air drill involving a U.S. strategic bomber near the Korean peninsula on Wednesday, the latest U.S. strategic asset to be deployed as part of Washington's pledge with Seoul to boost defence readiness.

## PAK GENERAL ELECTIONS

### Parties seek time to file papers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Dec 21: Major Pakistani political parties, including the PML-N led by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, sought extensions Thursday to file nomination papers for the upcoming February 8 general elections, saying they need more time to complete the "time-consuming exercise."



According to the schedule issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), potential candidates are required to file nomination papers from December 20 to 22. The top election body began accepting nomination papers from prospective candidates on Wednesday.

Three-time former premier Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party sought a two-day extension on Thursday for the filing of nomination papers, Geo News reported. In a letter written to the ECP, the Chairman of the party's election cell, Ishaq Dar, said, "To facilitate thousands of candidates desirous of taking part in elections, it would be appreciated if only a two-day extension is granted in filing nomination papers by amending the schedule issued on December 15, 2023, without changing the polling day, i.e., February 8, 2024."

"That perusal of the schedule reveals that only 03 days have been allocated for filing nomination papers, whereas 07 days have been allocated for the scrutiny of the same," the letter pointed out.

## War intensifies amid truce talks

REUTERS

Cairo/Gaza/Jerusalem, Dec 21: Fighting in the Gaza Strip escalated Thursday with some of the most intense Israeli bombardment of the war and Hamas demonstrated its ability to rocket Tel Aviv, even as the enemies held their most serious talks for weeks on a new truce.

Israeli bombing was at its most intense over the northern part of the Gaza Strip where orange flashes of explosions and black smoke could be seen as morning broke from across the fence in Israel. Planes roared overhead and the booms of air strikes thundered every few seconds, punctuated by rattling gunfire.

In Israel's commercial capital Tel Aviv, sirens wailed and rockets exploded overhead, intercepted by Israeli defences. Israel's Magen David Alom ambulance service said there were several impact points but no initial word on casualties.

The armed wing of Hamas said it had fired the salvo in response to Israeli killing of civilians. But with the group's leader in Cairo for truce talks, the attack seemed clearly timed to send a diplomatic message that

Residents in Jabalia in the north of the Strip close to the Israeli border said the area was completely cut off with Israeli snipers now firing on anyone trying to escape



Planes roared overhead and the booms of air strikes thundered every few seconds, punctuated by rattling gunfire

10 weeks of war that has laid waste to much of Gaza had failed to destroy the militants' strike capability.

Residents in Jabalia in the north of the Strip close to the Israeli border said the area was completely cut off with Israeli snipers now firing on anyone trying to escape. "It was one of the worst nights in terms of the occupation bombings. Also we could hear heavy fighting despite that," said one Jabalia resident who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisal.

With Gaza's communications links shut down for a second day, the resident spoke to Reuters by phone using an electronic SIM card to access the Israeli mobile network across the fence. Gazans say such cuts to communication links have typically heralded Israeli assaults.

In a social media post, the Palestinian Red Crescent said ambulances were now unable to reach large numbers of casualties inside Jabalia. "We have received several appeals regarding continuous shelling on

## Court rejects Imran's appeal against conviction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Dec 21: A high court in Pakistan Thursday dismissed Imran Khan's plea seeking suspension of the trial court's verdict in the Toshakhana corruption case, in a fresh setback to the jailed former prime minister whose participation in the February 8 general elections became uncertain.

On August 5, the 71-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician was convicted by the trial court in Islamabad in the Toshakhana

corruption case filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan and arrested.

The verdict meant the founding chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party was disqualified from contesting elections for five years. Khan moved the Islamabad High Court (IHC) for rectification of its August 28 order, by way of suspension of the judgment on August 5 passed by the trial court.

The IHC, however, on August 28, suspended his sentence in

the Toshakhana case but his conviction and disqualification remain intact until the court decides on the main appeal. His conviction has not been set aside so far, making him ineligible for any public office.

The PTI chief moved the IHC seeking complete suspension of the trial court's verdict in the case. On Thursday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) dismissed his plea seeking suspension of the trial court's verdict in the Toshakhana case, Geo News reported.

## 15 killed in mass shooting

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Prague, Dec 21: An armed man opened fire in a university building in downtown Prague Thursday, killing 15 people and sowing widespread panic with one of the Czech Republic's worst mass shootings of its kind, police and the city's rescue service said.

The bloodshed took place in the philosophy department building of Charles University, where the shooter was a student, Prague Police Chief Martin Vondrasek said. He has not been named publicly.

Police gave no details about the victims or a possible motive for the shooting at the building located near the Vltava River in Jan Palach Square. Czech Interior Minister Vít Rakusian said investigators do not suspect a link to any extremist ideology or groups.

Pavel Nedoma, the director of the nearby Rudolfinum Gallery, said he saw from a window a person standing on a balcony of the building and shooting a gun. Police said they were still searching the area, including the balcony, for possible explosives. The building was evacuated, Prague Mayor Bohuslav Svoboda said.

## US AIMS TO WARM TIES WITH BEIJING

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Dec 21: Gen. CQ Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke with his Chinese counterpart Thursday, in the first of what officials said will be renewed talks between the two nation's senior military leaders, as the Biden administration works to thaw relations with Beijing.

The video call between Brown and Gen. Liu Zhenli is the first senior military communications between the US and China since August 2022, when Beijing suspended all such contacts after former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.

It comes on the heels of similar conversations between top US and Chinese diplomats, all triggered by the meeting last month between US President Joe Biden and China's President Xi Jinping. Biden's meeting with Xi, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco, was aimed in part at restoring the military talks amid escalating concerns about frequent unsafe or unprofessional incidents between the two nations' ships and aircraft in the Pacific region.

The US has consistently viewed military communications with China as critical to avoiding any missteps between their armed forces and to maintaining a peaceful Indo-Pacific region. Brown's call is the first Cabinet-level communication



with China since Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke on December 6 with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

While few details about Brown's call were released, a senior US defence official and a senior military official said it was an important first step. These are the kinds of discussions that the US needs to have with China, they said, in order to avoid misunderstandings or miscalculations as the two militaries interact. The two officials spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity to provide information before the call.

They said the US is talking with China at various levels to work out a series of calls and meetings in the coming weeks and months. They include plans to hold the bilateral Defence Policy Coordination Talks early next year and the possible resumption of the China-US Military Maritime Consultative Agreement talks in the spring.

## Russia has fired 7,400 missiles so far: Kyiv

REUTERS

Kyiv, Dec 21: Russia has launched about 7,400 missiles and 3,700 Shahed attack drones at targets in Ukraine during its 22-month-old invasion, Kyiv said Thursday, illustrating the vast scale of Moscow's aerial assaults.

Ukrainian air defences were able to shoot down 1,600 of the missiles and 2,900 of the drones, air force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat said in televised comments. "We are faced with an enormous aggressor, and we are fighting back," he said.

He said the lower missile downing rate was due to the use of supersonic ballistic missiles, which are much harder to hit, as well as the fact that the West supplied Ukraine with advanced Patriot air defence systems only well into the war. Ukraine has received advanced



every night," Ihnat said. Russia says it only fires on military targets though Moscow has also admitted to targeting

Ukraine has received advanced air defence systems, including several Patriots, from Western allies throughout the invasion, allowing it to shoot down more missiles

Russia says it only fires on military targets though Moscow has also admitted to targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure

Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Russia says it does not target civilians, despite thousands of documented civilian deaths throughout the war.

Russia began launching the drones at infrastructure facilities in September 2022. They initially confused Ukraine's air defences, as they were harder for

air defence systems, including several Patriots, from Western allies throughout the invasion, allowing it to shoot down more missiles.

Meanwhile the cheaply-produced, Iranian-made Shahed drones, known in Ukraine for

their noisy petrol engines, have been used more and more frequently in Russia's aerial assaults on Ukrainian infrastructure far behind the war's front lines in the east and south of the country. "Ten to 15 regions are involved in shooting down Shaheds





**I don't believe any good tech company in the US can even exist without having a top-notch development centre in India and Israel. It's an existential thing now, you can't really exist in the US (alone)**  
**HARVINDER BHELA** | CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, NETAPP

## ZEE-SONY MERGER: 30-DAY GRACE PERIOD

Sony Group Corp and Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd have a one-month grace period starting Thursday to close the merger of their India operations that will create a \$10 billion media behemoth, according to sources



## of the day quote

The demand for Indian spirits is increasing. It is expected to go beyond \$1 billion in the next few years. Indian beverages market is growing very fast and slowly demand for these brands across the world is also picking up



**RAJESH AGRAWAL** | ADDITIONAL SECRETARY, COMMERCE MINISTRY

Though Oman is a small market but has immense potential to grow once tariff on RMG (readymade garments) is eliminated post-FTA and will be another doorway to GCC countries



**MITHLESHWAR THAKUR** | SECRETARY GENERAL, AEPCC

In 2023, residential sales are expected to surpass 2,60,000 units and launches 2,80,000 units to reach a historic high post-2008



**SAMANTAK DAS** | CHIEF ECONOMIST AND HEAD OF RESEARCH, JLL

## SHORT TAKES

### SBI, EIB sign pact

**New Delhi:** State Bank of India (SBI) Thursday said it will sign a 200 million euro (about Rs 1,800 crore) Line of Credit (LoC) with the European Investment Bank (EIB) for supporting climate action projects in the country. The agreement will be signed December 21 at the bank's IFSC Gift City Branch in Ahmedabad, SBI said in a regulatory filing. The loan document will become operational, subject to necessary approvals, it said. Earlier this month, SBI signed a 70 million euro (about Rs 630 crore) LoC with German Development Bank KfW for promoting solar projects in the country.

### INOX stellar debut

**New Delhi:** Shares of cryogenic tank maker INOX India Ltd Thursday made a remarkable market debut and ended with a premium of over 42 per cent against the issue price of Rs 660. The stock made its debut at Rs 933.15, up 41.38 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. During the day, it jumped 50 per cent to Rs 990. Shares of the company ended at Rs 939.90 apiece, up 42.40 per cent. On the NSE, the stock listed at Rs 949.65, rallying 43.88 per cent. It ended at Rs 934 per share, a jump of 41.51 per cent.

## BOOMING MARKET

# India healthcare giants think small to expand

*Though healthcare facilities are still in short supply in most parts of India, and especially so in its towns and smaller cities, patients in the world's most populous nation are showing a greater preference for specialised-but-accessible amenities in the post-Covid pandemic era*



- Indian healthcare market expected to grow 3-fold over 8 years to \$458bn in 2030
- India needs additional 2bn sq/ft of healthcare space to cater to its 1.42bn people

lion in 2030. "We don't build facilities with 600-700 beds anymore as you have to be catering to a micro market," Temasek-owned Manipal's Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Dilip Jose said, highlighting how India's second-largest hospital chain plans to focus on units with 250-325 beds.

The change is also reflective of infrastructure issues. "Metro Indian cities are too large and the traffic at these cities is making it difficult for people for travel to one large hospital," said a spokesperson at children's-hospital chain Rainbow. That is forcing hospitals to evaluate "micro markets" within the cities and build smaller hospitals to cater to them. India has 1.3 beds per 1000 people, well below the World Health Organization recommended ratio of 3 per 1000, indicating it needs 2.4 million additional beds, a study by property

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Dec 21:** India's prominent hospital chains are shifting their focus to smaller centres and facilities as they chase growth in the booming healthcare market while coping with higher real estate costs and a dearth of land space in its cities. Though healthcare facilities are still in short supply in most parts of India, and especially so in its towns and smaller cities, patients in the world's most populous nation are showing a greater preference for specialised-but-accessible amenities in the post-Covid pandemic era. That trend is expected to form the bedrock of demand in the Indian healthcare market, which, according to forecasts by global consulting firms Boston Consulting Group and B Capital, is expected to grow near three-fold over eight years to \$458 bil-

## INDIAN TRADE CURBS TO CUT EXPORTS BY \$4BN

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Dec 21:** India's exports face a shortfall of about \$4 billion to \$5 billion this year after it clamped curbs on trade in wheat, rice and sugar, a person familiar with the matter said Thursday, adding that Red Sea attacks may also hit basmati rice shipments. The world's second-largest producer of wheat, rice and sugar, India has restricted exports of these commodities to rein in rising domestic prices. New Delhi may consider an alternate route along Africa for shipments of basmati rice if attacks by Yemen's Houthis group persist, which could lift prices by about 15% to 20%, he added. The alternate route may also

affect India's exports of the long-grain rice to Egypt and Europe, said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, as he was not authorised to speak on the matter. However, India expects growth in exports of other farm commodities to offset the export deficit this year, said Rajesh Agarwal, an additional secretary in the trade ministry. "If we remove agricultural commodities whose exports are controlled, like wheat and rice, exports are growing by over 4%," Agarwal told reporters. "So, despite the shortfall of about \$4 billion to \$5 billion that we face because of restrictions on sugar, wheat, rice, we should be able to meet last year's export levels," he said.

## CHANGING TACK

Healthcare providers are also looking to get more bang for their buck. "Bringing the services closer to the customers is to a large extent also driven by the economies of scale, which best works up to a sizing of 300-350 beds," said Saurabh Mehrotra, executive director, valuation and advisory at Knight Frank India. Some hospital chains such as Fortis Healthcare, partly owned by Malaysia's IHH Healthcare, are shifting gears to cope with volatile real estate prices. Fortis is relying mostly on "brownfield" sites, or land that has previously been built on, rather than land that has yet to be developed, while expanding. "This approach allows us to efficiently advance our expansion plans without the burden of fluctuating land prices," Fortis MD and CEO Ashutosh Raghuvanshi said.

## One-time exemption to LIC to achieve 25% MPS in 10 years

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 21:** The government has granted a one-time exemption to Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) to achieve 25 per cent Minimum Public Shareholding (MPS) within 10 years, the state-owned insurer said Thursday.

The country's largest insurer LIC was listed in May 2022. The government had sold over 22.13 crore shares, or a 3.5 per cent stake in LIC, through an Initial Public Offering (IPO). The government currently holds 96.5 per cent stake in the company. In a stock exchange filing, the state-owned insurer said the Department of Economic Affairs has decided to grant a "one-time exemption to LIC to achieve 25 per cent MPS within 10 years from the date of listing i.e., till May 2032".

Earlier this year, the government had amended the regulation so that listed state-run companies, including banks, will not need to comply with the rule requiring an MPS of 25 per cent even after their privatisation, if the government decides so "in public interest". The exemption to the MPS rule was earlier available only to government-controlled companies. The amendment, notified in January -- extending it to even after the sale of government stake -- is expected to make it more attractive for investors to acquire state-run companies. In July 2021, the government had notified that all listed public sector units would be exempted from MPS.



# Retail inflation for farm workers, rural labourers increases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 21:** Retail inflation for farm workers rose to 7.37 per cent and that for rural labourers climbed to 7.13 per cent in November, mainly due to higher prices of certain food items.

Retail inflation in October was 7.08 per cent and 6.92 per cent for farm workers and rural labourers, respectively, according to an official statement. Food inflation stood at 9.38 per cent and 9.14 per cent for agricultural and rural workers, respectively, in November compared to the respective figures of 8.42 per cent and 8.18 per cent in October 2023, and 6.19 per cent and 6.05 per cent recorded in the corresponding month of previous year (November 2022), a labour ministry statement said.

According to the statement, point-to-point rate of inflation based on the CPI-AL (Consumer Price Index - Agricultural Labourers) and CPI-RL (rural labourers) stood at 7.37 per cent and 7.13 per cent in November this year as compared to 7.08 per cent and 6.92 per cent, respectively, in October 2023. The two comparable numbers were 6.87 per cent and 6.99 per cent in November last year, the ministry said. All-India Consumer Price Index for agricultural labourers in November this year increased 12 points to 1,253, while the index for rural workers advanced 11 points to 1,262. The two indices were 1,241 points



RETAIL INFLATION FOR FARM WORKERS ROSE TO 7.37% IN NOV AGAINST 7.08% MOM

RETAIL INFLATION FOR RURAL LABOURERS CLIMBED TO 7.13% AGAINST 6.92% MOM

and 1,251 points, respectively, in October this year. Major contribution towards the rise in general index of agricultural labourers and rural labourers came from the group of food items to the extent of 10.85 and 10.50 points, respectively, driven by a rise in prices of rice, wheat, pulses, onion, turmeric, whole, garlic, mixed spices, etc. There has been an upward trend in the index across all the states except West Bengal (both CPI-AL and CPI-RL indices decreased) and Himachal Pradesh (CPI-AL index decreased). In case of agricultural labourers, the index increased 1 to 10 points in 11 states, rose 11 to 20 points in four states and went up more than 20 points in three states. With 1,453 points, Tamil Nadu topped the index table whereas Himachal Pradesh stood at the bottom with 958 points.

# Energy stocks aid benchmarks' rebound

The Nifty 50 is up 5.57% so far in Dec, on course to log its best monthly performance in 2023

REUTERS

**Bangalore, Dec 21:** India's stock benchmarks bounced back from early losses, aided by a recovery in energy and financials, after booking profits at record high levels in the previous session even as the global market rally lost steam. The blue-chip NSE Nifty rose 0.50% to 21,255.05, while the S&P BSE Sensex advanced 0.51% to 70,865.10. "We think there is still room on the upside for Indian markets," said Sanjiv Bhasin, director at IIFL Securities, citing rising foreign inflows on India's demographic premium, consumption growth, easing global rate outlook and robust domes-



tic growth momentum. The Nifty 50 is up 5.57% so far in December, on course to log its best monthly performance in 2023, despite profit-taking Wednesday.

High-weightage energy and financial stocks, gained 1.77% and 0.59%, respectively, on the day leading the index gains. They had dropped 2.68% and 1.09%, respectively, in the previous session. Reliance Industries, the second heaviest stock in Nifty 50, gained 1.4% on multiple block deals. The small-caps and mid-caps gained about 2% and 1.7%, respectively, after a sharp slide in the previous session. "The prevailing expensive valuations in the small- and mid-cap segments of the market can make these stocks particularly sensitive to changes in market trajectory, sentiment and external factors," said Rahul Sharma, managing partner at Equity 99.

The small- and mid-caps have gained 51% and 42% in 2023 so far, respectively, compared to a 17.4% rise in the Nifty 50. Media surged 2.49%, powered by a 4.07% rise in top constituent Zee Entertainment Enterprises after the company said it is in talks with Sony Group's India unit to extend a merger deadline. Cochin Shipyard and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders gained 6.19% and 3.65%, respectively, after signing contracts with India's Ministry of Defence. Asian shares fell after a drop in Wall Street equities overnight as the focus in the United States turned to third-quarter growth data Thursday and a key inflation reading Friday.

# Russia splashes \$12bn to keep aviation sector in the air

**THE IMPORTANCE OF A RELIABLE AIR INDUSTRY IS PARTICULARLY CRUCIAL FOR RUSSIA TO BOLSTER ITS NARRATIVE THAT GLOBAL SANCTIONS HAVE HAD BUT A MINIMAL IMPACT**

REUTERS

**Moscow, Dec 21:** Russia has handed out more than \$12 billion in state subsidies and loans to keep its aviation sector afloat since Western sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine cut off supplies of key parts and maintenance services, a Reuters analysis shows. Dependent on foreign-made aircraft, Russia faces the daunting task of developing its aviation industry alone with domestically sourced parts, while buying aircraft from foreign lessors to avoid more of its fleet being seized. Western planemakers Airbus and Boeing halted supplies of services and spare parts in March 2022 and dropped regular main-

tenance support for flag carrier Aeroflot and other Russian airlines. Since then, Russia has spent 1.09 trillion roubles (\$12.07 billion) supporting the civil aviation industry, including aircraft manufacturing and financial assistance for airlines, Reuters calculations show, based on data from the Ministry of Finance and the Accounts Chamber, which oversees budget execution. The spending is almost twice as much as \$47 billion roubles in payments made in 2020-21, when the Covid-19 pandemic caused a drastic reduction in air travel, and highlights the scale of the Kremlin's effort to wrest control of a crucial industry. According to Swiss aviation intelligence provider ch-aviation, Russian airlines currently operate 991 aircraft, including 405 made in Russia. But just 133 are Superjets made by state-owned producer United Aircraft Corporation. Other Russian-produced aircraft - Tupolev, Yakovlev and Ilyushin - are rarely used for commercial flights. Support for aircraft manufacturing, a key industry, will be maintained for years to come, the industry and trade ministry said in response to Reuters' findings.



Western aviation analysts say the investments will at best keep the fleet flying but doubt its aircraft will return to Western markets any time soon, even if the conflict in Ukraine ends. That's because of the cost and bureaucracy involved in rebuilding a fleet with a clean and traceable safety record and approved parts.

## RAINY DAY FUNDS

Russia has dipped into reserve funds, the data showed, spending 110 billion roubles in 2022 on compensating airlines for losses from a sharp rise in jet fuel costs. This year, the National Wealth Fund (NWF) has played a bigger funding role with Moscow

- Russia has dipped into rainy day fund to support aviation sector
- Airbus, Boeing halted services, key parts supplies in 2022
- Moscow faces daunting task to reduce foreign dependency

drawing almost 400 billion roubles for aviation spending so far in 2023. The scale of spending in 2022-23 is equivalent to just under 1% of projected gross domestic product (GDP) for 2023. Russia has spent an additional 2.3 trillion roubles in 2022-23 on developing transport outside the aviation sector.

## ELECTRIC INVESTMENT

### Mahindra arm ties up with Attero

**New Delhi:** Mahindra Last Mile Mobility Ltd (MLMML) Thursday said it has tied up with lithium-ion battery recycling as well as e-waste management firm Attero. The strategic collaboration, focused on effective EV battery recycling, represents a proactive effort to tackle the environmental concerns linked to safe electric vehicle battery disposal, the company, a unit of Mahindra & Mahindra, said in a statement. MLMML sells various electric three-wheelers such as Treo, Treo Plus, Treo Zor, Treo Yaari, and Zor Grand. The partnership between MLMML and Attero is specifically focused on the sustainability and recycling/reuse of lithium-ion batteries, the company said. "Teaming up with Attero as a preferred partner for Li-ion battery disposal underscores our commitment to provide pollution-free transportation and drive towards a greener future," MLMML Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Suman Mishra said.



### Nexzu to invest ₹5K-cr for smart EV park

**Mumbai:** Atulya Mittal-founded electric mobility firm Nexzu Mobility has proposed to set up a smart EV Park in Gujarat and plans to invest Rs 5,000 crore in the project over the next 10 years, the company said Thursday. Nexzu Mobility said it has signed an initial pact (MoU) with the state government for this purpose. It also said the work on the proposed project is set to begin next year once land has been allotted to the company. "Nexzu Mobility will invest Rs 5,000 crore over the next 10 years to set up the smart EV park in Gujarat, which is expected to generate employment for over 5,000 people," the company said in a statement. The proposed park will serve as hub, provide comprehensive solutions for Electric Vehicle (EV) companies, professionals, owners, and users by enabling an ecosystem in a concentrated area and infrastructure sharing, among others, it said.





BIRJ BHUSHAN LOYALIST SANJAY SINGH BECOMES NEW WFI PRESIDENT, PROTESTING WRESTLERS UNHAPPY

# NEW CHIEF, OLD LINK



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 21:** Birj Bhushan loyalist Sanjay Singh Thursday became the new President of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) with his panel comfortably winning 13 of the 15 posts in the delayed polls, an outcome that triggered outrage among protesting wrestlers with Sakshi Malik announcing her retirement from the sport.

Sanjay, who is UP Wrestling Association Vice President and hails from Varanasi, secured 40 votes as against seven that his rival and 2010 CWG gold medalist Anita Sheoran got. Given the tremendous interest the outgoing chief has in the sport, it is expected that RSS-affiliate Sanjay, who runs a construction business, will consult him in policy decisions.

"It's a triumph for thousands of wrestlers in the country who suffered in the past 7-8 months," Sanjay Singh told reporters after his huge win. "We will respond to politics with politics and wrestling with wrestling," Sanjay replied when asked about politics being played within federation. The panel of Sheoran, a CWG

## AD-HOC PANEL DECISIONS CANCELLED

**NEW DELHI:** The newly-elected body of the WFI Thursday cancelled all the decisions taken by the Bhpender Singh Bajwa-led ad-hoc panel, that had recently changed the Olympic selection criteria and announced hosting of senior National Championship in Jaipur. Hours after winning the WFI polls, 13 of the 15 elected members met at a city hotel here and discussed the way forward. Secretary general Prem Chand Lochab and senior vice-president Devender Singh Kadian did not attend the meeting. "The ad-hoc panel had announced that senior nationals will be held in Jaipur in January but this decision has been cancelled. In fact, all the decisions taken by the ad-hoc panel have been cancelled," a WFI source told PTI. "The Olympic selection trial criteria which was announced by the ad-hoc panel does not stand. We will host the U-15 and junior Nationals in Gonda from December 28 to 30," added the source. The Bajwa-chaired ad-hoc body had announced that the Olympic quotas won by the wrestlers will not belong to individuals but to the country and the quota-winning wrestler will also have to undergo selection trials to book his or her place in the national team for the 2024 Paris Games.

gold medallist, though managed to win the key post of secretary general with Prem Chand Lochab, a former RSPB secretary, defeating Darshan Lal 27-19.

Devender Singh Kadian, who runs a chain of food joints on National Highways and is considered to be close to protesting wrestlers, claimed the senior vice president's post, beating ID Nanavati 32-15.

The victory of these two candidates from the Sheoran camp suggests that a compromise formula must have been worked out since Sanjay won by a huge

margin while votes were split in the elections for these two posts.

The WFI office expectedly wore a festive look with Birj Bhushan supporters shouting victory slogans. Slogans like 'Sanjay bhaiya kya le ke chale, Birj Bhushan ki khadau le ke chale' (What did Sanjay carry with him, Birj Bhushan's wooden slippers) also reverberated inside the BJP MP's bungalow that houses the WFI office.

The Birj Bhushan camp swept all the four vice-president posts with Delhi's Jai Prakash (37),

West Bengal's Asit Kumar Saha (42), Punjab's Kartar Singh (44) and Manipur's N Phoni (38) winning the elections.

Uttarakhand's Satyapal Singh Deshwal, who is also from Birj Bhushan camp, is the new treasurer. He beat Jammu and Kashmir's Dushyant Sharma 34-12. All five executive committee members were also from the outgoing chief's camp.

The new Madhya Pradesh chief minister Mohan Yadav, who did not turn up for the polls, got only five votes in the VP election.

### NO MORE VENDETTA

Birj Bhushan assured that no vendetta politics will be played and even if the protesting wrestlers want to continue wrestling, they will be treated with all fairness.

"There will be no partiality. All will get support from WFI," Birj Bhushan told PTI when asked if the federation will support the wrestlers who had launched protest against him. "We have to look after the game and not the mistakes of the wrestlers. If they will suffer due to their mistakes, then the federation will not be impartial," he assured.

The wrestlers had officially called off their protest June 7 when the Sports Minister assured them that none of the family members or close associates of Birj Bhushan will be allowed to enter the WFI election fray.

"It's unfortunate that government did not stand by its word that no Birj Bhushan loyalist will contest WFI election," Bajrang said adding that he is also not sure if he wants to continue his career.

### LIFTING OF UWW BAN

The WFI elections will also pave the way for lifting the UWW ban on it. The world governing body of the game had banned WFI for not conducting election on time, forcing Indian wrestlers to compete as neutral athletes at the 2023 World Championships.

# Samson helps India seal series



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Paarl (South Africa), Dec 21:** Sanju Samson carved a well-measured maiden ODI hundred before Arshdeep Singh's brilliant show with the ball helped India seal the three-match series with a 78-run win in the third and final ODI here, Thursday.

Samson's knock (108, 114b, 6x4, 3x6) guided India to a challenging 296/8 before the Indian bowlers bundled the home team out for 218 with more than four overs to spare.

Chasing a challenging 297, the Proteas were off to a flying start with the in-form Tony de Zorzi (81, 87b, 6x4, 3x6) and Reeza Hendricks (19) stitched 59 runs for the opening wicket before Arshdeep (4/30) dismissed the latter in the ninth over.

Axar Patel then ended Rassie van der Dussen's 17-ball struggle to reduce the hosts to 76/2 in the 15th over. However, the wickets didn't stop De Zorzi from playing strokes at will and he was ably supported by his skipper Aiden Markram (36, 41b, 2x4, 1x6).

The duo added 65 runs for the third wicket before Washington



Sundar (2/38) got rid of Markram in the 26th over and it went downhill for the Proteas in the chase. Arshdeep came back to dismiss De Zorzi following a review reducing the home team to 161/4. From then on, South Africa kept losing wickets to be eventually bowled out for 218.

Earlier, Samson found a perfect sidekick in the patient Tilak Varma, who struck his first ODI fifty (52, 77b, 5x4, 1x6), as they milked 116 precious runs for the fourth-wicket to place India in a position to win this series.

Samson and Varma came together when India were slightly wobbling at 101/3 after being asked to bat first. But the pair showed excellent situational awareness. Their partnership was all about pragmatism without letting go of any opportunity to unfurl any big shot.

Usually a free-flowing hitter, Samson shelved his macho intentions for a large part of his innings, concentrating on singles and twos as the Boland Park pitch also had this slight bite on it.

But the right-hander intermittently brought out his T20 avatar into play like when he smashed pacer Nandre Burger for a big six over mid-wicket or while executing an exquisite inside-out loft over cover off left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj for a four. His fifty came off 66 balls.

But at the other end, Varma generally struggled for flow as he could find a boundary only in his 39th ball, a scratchy pull off Hendricks. However, the left-hander gave company to Samson to take India out of the woods.

Finally, Varma fell in his venture to accelerate, a miss-timed sweep off Maharaj ending in the hands of Wiaan Mulder in the deep. But Samson carried on and was not to be denied a hundred this time.

The landmark moment for him came when he pushed Maharaj to long-off for a single as the dressing room went on its feet to applaud a fine dig. Samson was dismissed as he tried to put the ante as a skier off pacer Lizaad Williams was snafled by Reeza Hendricks inside the rings.

However, a good cameo by Rinku Singh (38, 27b, 3x4, 2x6) helped India motor on in the end phase of the innings. But before India made that good fightback, the Proteas bowlers had them on the ropes taking three wickets.

Debutant Rajat Patidar, who stepped in for an injured opener Rituraj Gaikwad was a treat to watch during his 16-ball 22, exhibiting wonderful eye-hand coordination. KL Rahul also helped Samson add 52 runs for the third wicket.

**BRIEF SCORES:** India 296/8 (Sanju Samson 108, Tilak Varma 52, Rinku Singh 38; Beuran Hendricks 3/63, Nandre Burger 2/64) beat South Africa 218 (Tony de Zorzi 81, Aiden Markram 36; Arshdeep Singh 4/30, Washington Sundar 2/38, Avesh Khan 2/45) by 78 runs.

## SHORT TAKES

### Barca beat Almeria

**MADRID:** It was yet another lackluster performance by Barcelona, drawing jeers from the home fans upset with the team's struggles against the only winless team in the Spanish league so far. Some of the jeers came even after Barcelona found a way to beat last-place Almeria 3-2.

Wednesday, Roberto scored twice and Raphinha once for Barcelona, which moved three points ahead of fourth-place Atletico Madrid. Raphinha opened the scoring in the 33rd and Leo Baptista restored parity in the 41st. In the second half, Roberto put the hosts ahead again in the 60th before Edgar Gonzalez evened the match in the 71st. Roberto then found the winner.

### Messi to join late

**NEW YORK:** Lionel Messi's first full season with Major League Soccer's Inter Miami starts February 21 at home against Real Salt Lake in a matchup three days ahead of other openers, and the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner could miss at least six games while with Argentina's national team. MLS released its schedule Wednesday, with each team playing 34 matches. Because of the June FIFA window and the Copa America, Messi also could be with defending champions Argentina when Miami plays at Philadelphia (June 15), vs. Columbus (June 19), at Nashville (June 29), at Charlotte (July 3) and at Cincinnati (July 6). Following the Copa America final July 14, Miami also has home matches against Toronto (July 17) and Chicago (July 20).

### Team bus crashes

**ALGIERS (ALGERIA):** The Algerian Football Federation said that a bus crash has killed two members of its Ligue 1 side Mouloudia El Bayadh and that it would postpone all games scheduled for this week. The federation late Wednesday said the accident killed El Bayadh reserve goalkeeper Zakaria Bouziani, 27, and assistant coach Khalid Muftah. Bouziani made two league appearances this season. Local media said the bus carrying the team overturned in the town of Sougueur in northwestern Algeria on the way to Tizi Ouzou to play JSK Kabylie in a league game Friday. The club said on social media that other injured team members were in stable condition.

# Vastrakar, Rana pack a punch to Oz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 21:** Seamer Pooja Vastrakar and off-spinner Sneha Rana showed enough craft to exploit a pitch offering variable bounce to bundle out Australia for a modest 219 in their first innings on the opening day of the one-off Test here Thursday.

In their first essay, India raced to 98/1 at stumps as openers Smriti Mandhana (43 batting, 49b, 8x4) and Shafali Verma (40, 59b, 8x4) added 90 runs.

But India's march to ascendancy began through Vastrakar (4/53) who teamed up with Sneha Rana (3/56) and Deepti Sharma (2/45) to snap Aussies' innings in 77.4 overs despite an even fifty by Tahlia McGrath (50, 56b, 8x4).

However, Australia made a poor start as they lost opener Phoebe Litchfield in the first over itself after a mix-up with her partner Beth Mooney at the Wankhede Stadium.



Four deliveries later, Vastrakar produced a jaffa to remove Ellyse Perry (4) and reduced Australia to 7/2 inside the first two overs. But McGrath, who was dropped twice - on 24 and 45 - came out firing on all cylinders to put pressure back on India, making most of the errors in line and in the field.

Mooney (40) batted well despite her struggles early on, but Vastrakar surprised the left-hander with a sharp bouncer that shot off the surface. The resultant edge lobbed towards Rana at first slip after deflecting off the gloves of Yastika Bhatia.

Having lost a chunk of batting to reach 103/4 at lunch, both

Alyssa Healy (38) and Annabel Sutherland (16) showed impressive footwork during their 40-run association which ended abruptly. Australia's tail produced a good fightback to take them past 200.

A stubborn 30-run association between Jess Jonassen (19) and Kim Garth (28 n o) did frustrate India, who were made to work hard for the breakthrough on either side of the tea break.

But when India batted, there were no such struggles. The Shafali-Mandhana alliance ended on 90 when Jonassen trapped Verma in front of the wicket.

### BRIEF SCORES

**Australia Women 219** (Tahlia McGrath 50, Beth Mooney 40, Alyssa Healy 38; Pooja Vastrakar 4/53, Sneha Rana 3/56, Deepti Sharma 2/45); **India Women 98/1** (Smriti Mandhana 43 batting, Shafali Verma 40). Match to continue.

# India eves beat Ireland 2-1 in 5-Nations tourney

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Valencia (Spain), Dec 21:** Indian women wrapped up their campaign in the 5-Nation hockey tournament with a feisty 2-1 win over Ireland here Thursday. Deepika (4th) and Sangita Kumari (22th) were on target for India, while captain Kathryn Mullan (12th) scored the only goal for Ireland.

India started the game on the front foot, with Deepika slotting the ball into the back of the net to give India the lead early in the first quarter. But Ireland did not sit back as they pressed hard and equalised through Mullan in the eight minutes later.

In the second quarter, Ireland looked to claim the lead, earning two penalty corners in quick succession but the Indians remained resolute in their defence. India earned a penalty corner



soon and Sangita stepped in to put her team in the lead again before the halftime.

The third quarter saw both the teams earn a penalty corner each but they failed to capitalise on them and the scoreline remained 2-1 in India's favour. Ireland pushed for an equaliser in the last quarter, pegging India back into their half and earning three penalty corners.

But the Indian defence rose to the occasion, saving all the attempts and ensuring that they walked away as the winners

# European Union court rules in favour of Super League

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Brussels, Dec 21:** Super League was revived Thursday after the European Union's top court ruled UEFA and FIFA defied competition law by blocking the break-away project.

The ruling was welcomed by Real Madrid which, along with Barcelona, is leading the fight to form a rival competition to the Champions League.

"It has been fully recognized that the clubs have the right to propose and promote European competitions that modernize our sport and attract fans from all over the world," Madrid president Florentino Perez said. "Today, a Europe of freedoms has triumphed, and also football and its fans have triumphed."

The case was heard last year at the European Court of Justice after Super League failed at launch in April 2021. UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin called the club leaders then "snakes" and "liars."

The company formed by 12 rebel clubs - now led by only Real Madrid and Barcelona after

Juventus withdrew this year - started legal action and the court was asked to rule on points of EU law by a Madrid tribunal.

"We have won the right to compete. The UEFA monopoly is over. Football is free," said Bernd Reichart, the CEO of A22 Sports Management that promotes Super League. "Clubs are now free from the threat of sanctions and free to determine their own futures."

Madrid-based A22 immediately announced new proposed competitions for men and women, saying young fans are "turning away" from soccer.

In a presentation streamed on YouTube, Reichart said there would be no permanent members of the new competition and they would remain committed to their domestic leagues. The league and knockout competition would also be played midweek so as not to impact domestic leagues.

The clubs accused UEFA of breaching European law by allegedly abusing its market dominance of football competitions.

"The FIFA and UEFA rules making any new interclub foot-



ball project subject to their prior approval, such as the Super League, and prohibiting clubs and players from playing in those competitions, are unlawful," the court said. "There is no framework for the FIFA and UEFA rules ensuring that they are transparent, objective, non-discriminatory and proportionate."

The court acknowledged FIFA and UEFA were abusing a dominant position and their rules on approval, control and sanctions "must be held to be unjustified restrictions on the freedom to provide services."

While clearing the way for Super League, the court also said it "does not mean that a competition such as the Super League project must necessarily be approved."

UEFA said it addressed last

year "a historical shortfall within UEFA's pre-authorization framework" and pledged to continue defending the central role of governing bodies in the European sports model.

Two years after the original idea collapsed, Super League promoters presented in February a new proposal for a multi-division competition involving up to 80 European teams and operating outside of UEFA's authority. The latest plans announced Thursday would involve 64 men's teams and 32 women's clubs.

The European Club Association, which represents Europe's top football clubs, reiterated its staunch opposition to Super League.

English clubs are still unlikely to join a revived plan. The Premier League's international appeal and financial power has grown in the past two years, and a UK Government bill announced last month by King Charles proposed powers to block English teams from trying to join a break-away league.

The Spanish league said Thursday "that the Super League

is a selfish and elitist model. Anything that is not fully open, with direct access only through the domestic leagues, season by season, is a closed format."

The court also noted that rules giving FIFA and UEFA exclusive control over the commercial exploitation of the media rights related to their competitions are "such as to be harmful to European football clubs, all companies operating in media markets and, ultimately, consumers and television viewers, by preventing them from enjoying new and potentially innovative or interesting competitions."

Reichart of A22 said he will offer to fans "free viewing of all Super League matches," and sent a message to clubs that "revenues and solidarity spending will be guaranteed" in Super League.

The original announcement of Super League sparked vehement protests from fans, and Football Supporters Europe said Thursday there was "no place in European football for a break-away super league."