

Sobhita's philosophy
 Actor Sobhita Dhulipala shares that she enjoys small joys and prefers to live in moments

LEISURE | P2

Relief for Imran
 Pakistan's Supreme Court grants bail to jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan and close aide in cipher case

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Ola Electric files IPO
 Ola Electric files preliminary papers with SEBI to raise funds through an initial public offering -- the first issue by an automaker in India in more than 20 yrs

BUSINESS | P11

In complete control
 India Women batters put up a solid show to guide the team to 376/7 on Day 2 of their one-off Test against Australia

SPORTS | P12

Karnataka lifts ban on hijab

AGENCIES

Mysore, Dec 22: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah Friday said the restrictions on wearing hijab (head scarf) in educational institutions in the state will be lifted from December 23 and observed that choice of dress and food is personal. Speaking at the inauguration of three police stations in Nanjangud in Mysore district, the Chief Minister said no one should indulge in vote bank politics. Lashing out at the BJP, Siddaramaiah said, "They say 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas' (co-operation of all, development of all) but sideline those wearing caps, burqa and sporting beard. Is this what they mean?" When someone in the crowd asked about restrictions on wearing hijab, the CM said, "No (restrictions). You can wear Hijab. I have instructed (the officials) that there will be no restriction from tomorrow onwards. You can wear and eat whatever you want. It's up to you." "... Your choices are yours and my choices are mine. It's that simple," Siddaramaiah said amid the cheering crowd.



IRREGULAR by MANJUL
 They don't want to give it to their own party leaders, and you want credit for the poll victory!?

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VAR.
SENSEX	71106.96	↑ 241.86
NIFTY	21349.40	↑ 94.40
DOLLAR	83.17	↓ ₹0.10
EURO	91.65	↑ ₹0.41
GOLD	₹63,103	↑ ₹600
SILVER	₹ 75,850	↑ ₹424

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	27.7°C	26.8°C
Min Temp	13.4°C	13.2°C
Humidity	82%	81%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
 DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY

SHORT TAKES

'Shift officers from home dists'

New Delhi: Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission has directed the state governments to shift out officers posted in their home states as well as those who have served in a particular place for a "considerably long period." The poll panel in a letter to the chief secretaries of all states pointed out that the term of the present Lok Sabha as well as the state Assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh ends on different dates in June next year. In 2014 as well, the Parliamentary polls as well as the Assembly elections in four states were held together. The poll panel issues such directions to the states ahead of the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls to ensure that officials with political leanings do not interfere with the electoral process and do not disturb the level-playing field.

Macron to be R-Day chief guest: MEA

New Delhi: French President Emmanuel Macron will be the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations January 26 that would make him the sixth French leader to grace the prestigious annual event. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Macron will be visiting India at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India had invited US President Joe Biden to be the Republic Day chief guest but he expressed his inability to travel to India in January. The reasons for Biden's decision are believed to be the State of the Union address in late January or early February, Biden's focus on his re-election bid and Washington's increasing focus on the Hamas-Israel conflict. "At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Emmanuel Macron, the President of France, will be visiting India as the chief guest for the 75th Republic Day celebrations," the MEA said in a statement.

NO END TO WRESTLING FEDERATION CONTROVERSY
BAJRANG returns Padma

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: There seems to be no end to controversies in Indian wrestling as Olympic medalist grappler Bajrang Punia Friday returned his Padma Shri award to the government in protest against the election of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh loyalist Sanjay Singh as the president of Wrestling Federation of India (WFI). Thursday, Sanjay Singh was elected as the president of the WFI after the panel led by the close aide of Brij Bhushan won 13 of the 15 posts. The wrestlers had demanded that no close associate of Brij Bhushan should enter the WFI. Bajrang was conferred with the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian honour in the country, in 2019 after a consistent run on the mat that saw him win laurels at top international events. He posted a letter on X after making an attempt to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Parliament but was stopped at Kartavya Path by the Delhi Police. The Tokyo Games bronze winner placed the Padma Shri on the letter he had written to the prime minister, and put it on the pavement. "I had received this honour from the government but I feel

despite this honour I could not protect the honour of the daughters of this country, so I do not deserve to keep this award," Bajrang told reporters. "The administration is right in saying that I have not taken prior permission to meet the PM, so I could not meet him. I have kept the Padma Shri here on top of the letter because I cannot put it on the floor," he said adding that he will not take it back home. Asked what his message to the Prime Minister was, Bajrang said, "If the voice of women wrestlers has not yet reached you and if it reaches you in future please help them in getting justice." Later, Bajrang posted his letter on X with a message, "I am returning my Padma Shri award to the Prime Minister. This is just my statement." The 29-year-old world championship medallist wrote: "Dear PM Ji, hope your health is well. You must be busy in many work but I am writing this to draw your attention to the wrestlers of the country. You must be aware that the women wrestlers of the country started a protest in January this year against Brij Bhushan Singh accusing him of

sexual harassment. I too joined their protest. The protest stopped after the government promised strong action." Expressing his disappointment, the star wrestler added, "But there was no FIR against Brij Bhushan even after three months. We again took to the streets in April so that the police at least file an FIR against him." "There were 19 complainants in January but the number came down to 7 by April. This means Brij Bhushan exerted his influence on 12 women wrestlers."



DEJECTED GRAPPLER: Wrestler Bajrang Punia holds his Padma Shri award near the Kartavya Path in New Delhi, Friday

COLD WAVE GRIPS STATE

Fog warning for 13 dists

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: As the cold wave intensified in Odisha with 16 places recording temperatures below 10 degrees Celsius, the IMD Friday warned of dense fog in 13 districts of the state. The IMD in a yellow warning said that dense fog is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Angul, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Jajpur, Nayagarh, Khurda, Puri, Ganjam, Kandhamal, Kalahandi and Koraput. G Udayagiri in Kandhamal district was the coldest place in the state at 4.6 degree Celsius, the Meteorological Centre, Bhubaneswar said, adding that 16 places in the state recorded temperatures at or below 10 degree Celsius. G Udayagiri was followed by Semiliguda at 5.6 degree Celsius, Phulbani 6, Kirei 7.1, Koraput 7.7, Keonjhar 7.8, Daringbadi 8, Angul and Bhawanipatna 8.6, Rourkela 8.7, Sundargarh and Nabarangpur 9, Sonepur 9.3, Jharsuguda 9.4, Ranital 9.4 and Chipilima 9.8 degree Celsius. The twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack recorded 13.4 and 13.2 degree Celsius, respectively.

MAOISTS BLOW UP RAIL TRACKS

PNN & AGENCIES

Rourkela/Chaibasa, Dec 22: Members of the banned CPI (Maoist) blew up a portion of railway tracks in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, some 30 km away from the Odisha border, disrupting train services on the busy Howrah-Mumbai route for several hours, police said Friday. At least 13 trains were cancelled and one has been diverted due to the incident, a railway official said. The incident occurred late Thursday night in the Chakradharpur division of South Eastern Railway between Mahadevsal and Posoita stations, around 150 km from Ranchi, West Singhbhum Superintendent of Police Ashutosh Sekhar said. "Security has been tightened in the locality. The repair work on the railway tracks has been started from early morning," he said, adding that Maoists also put up banners and posters in the area. Chakradharpur Division Assistant Commercial Manager Vinit Kumar said that train operations in the division have been restored around 9 am Friday. "Around 10:08 pm Thursday, an explosion occurred between Mahadevsal and Posoita stations, which blew up the third line of the section. No casualty has been reported," Kumar said.

Odisha land of God: Naveen
CHIEF MINISTER LAYS FOUNDATION FOR 'MAHIMA PEETH' REVAMP

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Dhenkanal, Dec 22: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday laid the foundation stone for rebuilding and beautification of 'Mahima Peeth' at Joranda in Dhenkanal district. Patnaik, who visited the sacred seat of the Mahima sect of Hinduism, established by Mahima Gosain in the early 19th century, said: "Odisha is the land of God. The 'peeth' has given Odisha a special place on the spiritual map of India." The state government has sanctioned Rs 112 crore for the development of 'Mahima Peeth', Patnaik said. Apart from a meditation centre and a 'Bati Mandap' (lamp house), beautification activities will also be carried out, he said. The followers of the 'Mahima' sect are mostly spread across Odisha and in some parts of Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh,



A monk takes a selfie with CM Naveen Patnaik and ST Chairman Kartik Pandian

Telangana, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal. There are around 5 lakh 'Mahima' sect followers in the Dhenkanal Lok Sabha constituency, officials said.

SUSPENSION OF 146 OPPOSITION MPs
INDIA bloc rally in Bhub

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Joining the nationwide protest against the suspension of a large number of Opposition MPs, the Odisha leaders of the INDIA group took out a rally here Friday. Senior Opposition leaders, including state Congress chief Sarat Pattanayak, former party presidents Prasad Harichandan and Jaydev Jena, CPI's Ramakrushna Panda, SP state president Rabi Behera, and others participated in the rally. Holding banners with anti-Narendra Modi government slogans written on them, the protesters walked from Master Canteen Square towards the state Assembly. They also raised slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Pattanayak said all the leaders of INDIA constituents have come together as democracy is under threat under the BJP government.

"Our Constitution is the soul of Indian democracy. If the Modi government suspends all Opposition MPs, there will be no democracy in the Parliament. It is like murder of Indian democracy," he said. Altogether 146 Opposition MPs were suspended from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha during the just concluded Winter Session for demanding a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah in the House the December 13 Parliament security breach issue. The Central government has suppressed the voice of Opposition MPs, who were elected by lakhs of people in the country, the Congress leader said. "We appeal to the people of our country and Odisha to remove the dictator Modi government in the upcoming election," he said. The suspension of 146 opposition MPs in Parliament is an attack on Indian democracy, said CPI's Panda.

MAHARASHTRA RECORDS THE HIGHEST SUCH DEATHS, FOLLOWED BY UTTAR PRADESH AND WEST BENGAL
302 succumb to big cat attacks in 5 yrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: A total of 302 people died in tiger attacks in the country over the last five years with Maharashtra accounting for over 55 per cent of these deaths, according to official data. The Centre has disbursed ₹29.57 crore as compensation to the families of the victims. While 112 people died in tiger attacks in 2022, 59 died in 2021, 51 in 2020, 49 in 2019 and 31 in 2018, the government told the Lok Sabha earlier this week. During this period, Maharashtra alone recorded 170 such deaths -- 85 in 2022, 32 in 2021, 25 in 2020, 26 in 2019 and two



29 in 2018. Uttar Pradesh reported 39 deaths due to tiger attacks in the last five years -- 11 each in 2022 and 2021, four in 2020, eight in 2019 and five in 2018. In West Bengal, 29 people died.

However, this number has steadily decreased over the years, from 15 in 2018 to just one in 2022. The data showed an increase in tiger attack-related deaths in Bihar -- zero in 2019, one in 2020, four in 2021 and nine in 2022. The number of tigers in India increased from 2,967 in 2018 to 3,682 in 2022, an annual rise of six per cent, according to government data released in July this year. With a 50 per cent increase in the last four years, Madhya Pradesh has the maximum number (785) of tigers in the country, followed by Karnataka (563), Uttarakhand (560), and Maharashtra (444).

leisure



SELENA: SELF-RESPECT IS MY FIRST PRIORITY

Amid her blooming romance with Benny Blanco, singer-actress Selena Gomez spoke about her priorities in a relationship. The actress, in an interview, said self-respect and holding space for the feelings of others are a top priority on her list for any partner.

VIN DIESEL ACCUSED OF SEXUALLY ASSAULTING FORMER ASSISTANT

The *Fast and Furious* fame Vin Diesel has been accused of sexually assaulting his former assistant, who sued the actor Thursday. The former assistant alleged that in 2010 he pinned her against a wall in a hotel suite and masturbated in front of her, reports *Variety*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Think positive today and watch the world around you changing. Regardless of how difficult things may seem, Ganesh advises you to take it without getting upset. If you set your mind to something, you can do it. You have the Midas touch today, so it is a good time to introduce a new strategy.

TAURUS
Ganesh urges you to be prepared for setbacks and disappointments today. Your efforts may end in being a waste of precious time and energy. The results you get are likely to be far below your expectations. Falling short of your target is likely to weigh you down with stress and anxiety.

GEMINI
You will be in a state of heightened sensitivity today. Therefore you need to curb down on your emotions. You will be able to successfully express your feelings to someone, and your feelings will play a vital part in your life, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Ganesh suggests you not to be sentimental or hasty. Try to handle things deftly in stead of dodging bad episodes or turning a blind eye to them. You will give priority to domestic and private life in stead of career or business aspects.

LEO
You will feel more emotional today and share your feelings with your friends and near ones. For those who are searching for a life-partner, this might be the time when you will get hitched. You will develop a new perspective on some issues in the office. Your day will be different than normal, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Ganesh predicts that you will be rewarded today for all the good work done earlier. You will prefer to manage things in your own way, rather than taking orders from others. However, Ganesh advises you not to throw your weight around, but to stay calm and composed.

LIBRA
Nothing comes for free – keep this in mind as you may have to pay your dues for the success you desire today, especially if it is a new project that you have undertaken. Be prepared to invest a considerable amount of time and effort in your endeavours. Spare money can be used to purchase new assets that may pay dividends in the future.

SCORPIO
In all probability, your mood is extremely hawkish today. Your belligerence may even put off Lady Luck for the time being. Ganesh advises you to stay away from confrontations and troubles of any kind. The evening, however, promises to be relaxing.

SAGITTARIUS
Lady luck is all smiles for you today, predicts Ganesh. Suddenly, you feel like multi-tasking and becoming a jack of all. This is likely to keep you busy, almost throughout the day. If need be, your colleagues and peers will lend a helping hand.

CAPRICORN
You are in hot water, but do not lose hope during these turbulent times. Maintain a calm head over your shoulders and deal with the problems, guides Ganesh. Also, do not jump to conclusions or be argumentative with the people around you, as you may end up being at the losing end.

AQUARIUS
You will not need a reason to party today. Be it the news of a friend getting married or you buying a new car, you are in a mood to celebrate life like anything! Apart from this, you will have a smooth sailing through out the day, foresees Ganesh.

PISCES
A day of mixed fortunes awaits you, where taking risks could prove to be your undoing, or provide you with handsome returns, says Ganesh. This is because you could come out on top by treading cautiously, but uncalculated risks will probably throw your calculations out of gear. Your success rate is unlikely to be too high; hence it may be a tough day for you.

'Idea of death lifts my spirits'

Mumbai: Actress Sobhita Dhulipala shares that during the low phases of her life she likes to look back and enjoy the small joys and prefers living in the moment.

She elaborates saying, "Like, I could literally die tomorrow and I will die happily. I am very motivated and inspired by the knowledge that we all are going to die. It makes me appreciate the moment better. In fact, whenever I am having a bad day I think *ki yaar* it will pass too because so many things have passed, right?"

The Night Manager actress adds, "Some things might not go right, but you can't hold on to them. Because as humans we have just limited time to live so in that limited time you have so many things to do. So, the idea of death really lifts my spirits."

She opines, "I do think that spending time alone is necessary to restore. When we are living in the company of people who you share an equation with you function differently from the way you do when you are alone. It is important for us to know both the sides. You have multiple facets to your personality and you need to explore those. This makes us also a little softer and empathetic towards others is what I feel."

AGENCIES



Shruti's view on violence in movies

Mumbai: Actress Shruti Haasan, a mental health advocate, who has often publicly shared her own battles, has spoken about audience choosing their entertainment judiciously as films soaked in violence hold sway in theatres.

In a recent interview, the *Luck* actress said, "I feel that cinema and music, there are different kinds of TV shows, different kinds of books, some depict violence and some don't. Yes, I am a mental health advocate and the biggest thing I would advocate for knowing what you are watching."

She further explained about the *Salaar* teaser being called violent. "A teaser for a film is like a disclaimer of content. It's to know whether you are ready to watch that content. That discretion has to lie with the viewer and that does fall under the ability to judge one's own mental state of mind. Some people enjoy fast-paced action or thrillers, some people are triggered by emotional drama. So, it's really up to the viewer's discretion," added the actress.

On the work front, Shruti was last seen in *Waltair Veerayya*, *Veera Simha Reddy* and will be seen next in *Dacoit*.

Salman, Abhishek's unexpected reunion

Mumbai: Actor Salman Khan was seen greeting Abhishek Bachchan at producer-distributor Anand Pandit's birthday bash with a big bear hug and the video has gone viral.

A video from the party shows Salman warmly welcoming Amitabh Bachchan and Abhishek with a hug. A video shared by celebrity paparazzi Viral Bhayani posted a video on Instagram capturing the moment.

The clip shows, Salman wishing Anand Pandit. Amitabh then comes in and the *Dabangg* star greets the thespian greeting him with a handshake and a warm hug.

Following Amitabh, Abhishek greets film producer Sajid Nadiadwala, later sharing a bear hug with Salman. The two were seen having a conversation as well.

This was a rare sighting as Salman and Abhishek, who have been seldom seen exchanging pleasantries. The two share some history as Salman and actress Aishwarya Rai were in a relationship. However, the actress later tied the knot with Abhishek in 2007.

AGENCIES



Katrina finds Tamil very difficult

Mumbai: Actress Katrina Kaif, gearing up for the release of the highly anticipated thriller *Merry Christmas* alongside Vijay Sethupathi, recently shared insights into the linguistic challenges she faced during the film's shoot.

Katrina shared that she was very, very stressed and consumed with trying to learn her Tamil lines. She wanted to rehearse in a way that they sound fresh and spontaneous [while shooting]. And that was, for her, a very, very tough task. She finds Tamil and Malayalam really, really difficult. It's hard to distinguish between the consonants and vowels.

The trailer for *Merry Christmas* introduces a suspenseful narrative set on Christmas Eve. The actress, alongside Vijay Sethupathi, engages in playful banter, and as the night unfolds, unexpected events take place. Katrina expressed her admiration for Vijay Sethupathi's ability to seamlessly switch between Hindi and Tamil, describing him as phenomenal.

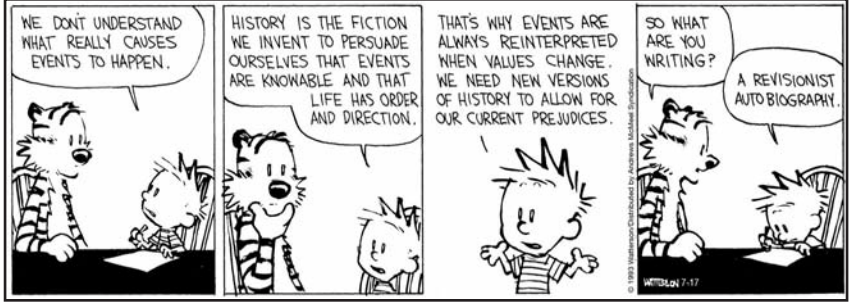
The film, directed by Sriram Raghavan, also features Sanjay Kapoor, Vinay Pathak, Pratima Kannan, Tinnu Anand, Radhika Sarathkumar, Shanmugaraja, Kevin Jay Babu, Rajesh Williams, and Pari, while Ashwini Kalsekar and Radhika Apte make cameo appearances.

AGENCIES

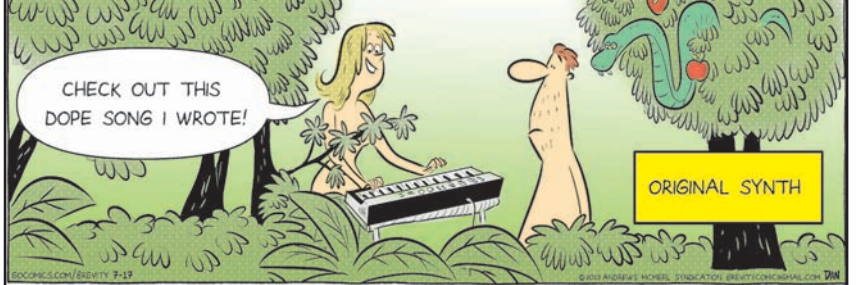
PEANUTS



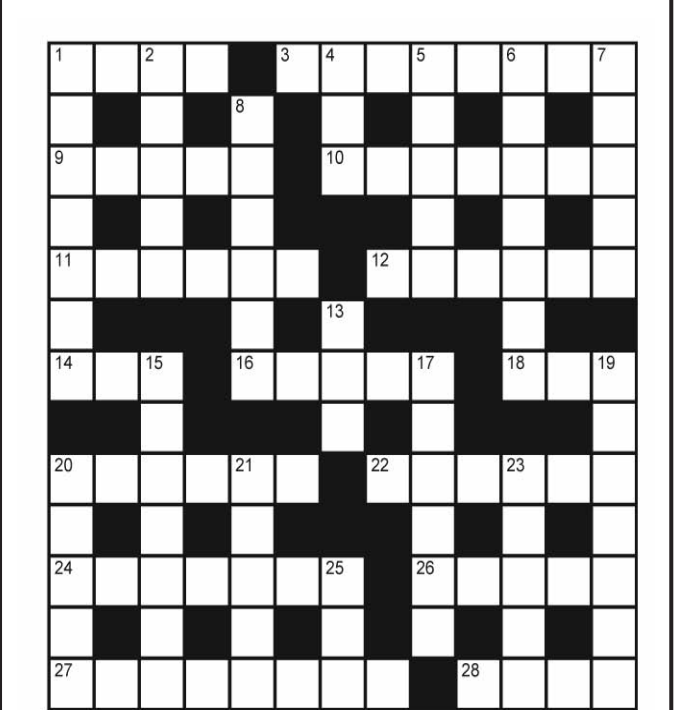
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



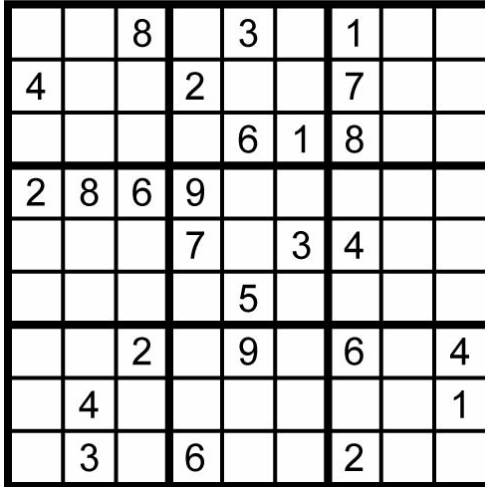
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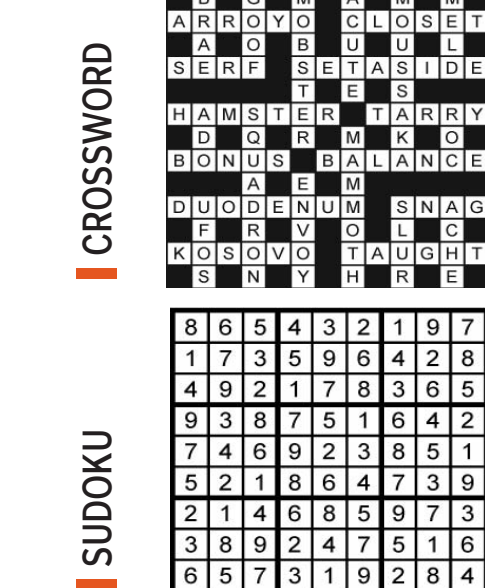
- Across**
- 1 After curfew
 - 3 Juvenile
 - 9 Unworldly
 - 10 Grind (3,4)
 - 11 Wiggle room
 - 12 Author's output
 - 14 Goose egg
 - 16 Call forth
 - 18 Soft shoe
 - 20 Pugilists
 - 22 Organ stop
 - 24 Buckle under
 - 26 Parlour piece
 - 27 Type of belt
 - 28 Depressed
- Down**
- 1 Ointment ingredient
 - 2 Variety meat
 - 4 Disfigure
 - 5 Storage room
 - 6 Radioactive metal
 - 7 Construct
 - 8 Mom's warning
 - 13 Decompose
 - 15 Knowledge of words
 - 17 Make secret
 - 19 Bathe
 - 20 No-frills
 - 21 Roulette bet
 - 23 Blacksmith's block
 - 25 Life story, in brief

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

downtown

7 projects worth ₹1,482cr okayed



SLSWCA approved the plan of Tech AIC DRI Pellets Pvt Ltd to set up an integrated steel products manufacturing plant with 0.7 MTPA capacity in Keonjhar. MAS Udyat India Pvt Ltd's proposal for integrated textile facility in Khurda got the SLSWCA approval.

ALENN STEEL INDUSTRIES PVT LTD'S PROPOSAL TO SET UP CR PRECISION PIPE MANUFACTURING UNITS, BLACK AND HRPO PIPES MANUFACTURING UNITS, COIL SLITTING AND PARTING UNITS IN JAJPUR GOT THE APPROVAL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: The State-Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA), chaired by Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena, approved seven projects spanning across diverse sectors worth Rs 1,482.53 crore that would generate 11,969 jobs, Friday. The SLSWCA approved the plan of Tech AIC DRI Pellets Pvt. Ltd to set up an integrated steel products manufacturing plant with a capacity of 0.7 MTPA in Keonjhar. With an investment of Rs 800 crore, the project is expected to generate employment for 2013 individuals and contribute to the economic growth of the region.

MAS Udyat India Private Limited's proposal for integrated textile facility in Khurda got the SLSWCA approval. With an investment of Rs 214.4 crore, the facility will provide jobs to 8,844 people. The SLSWCA approved the proposal of Vinner Labs Private Limited to set up a manufacturing unit for fine chemicals in Ganjam with an investment of Rs 52 crore. The unit is expected to create 130 employment opportunities, contributing to the industrial growth of the region. MR Unicast Private Limited's proposal for manufacturing mining and crusher equipment along

with casting units in Sundargarh with an investment of Rs 56.32 crore also got a go-ahead from the SLSWCA. With an employment potential of 250, the initiative will be a significant step towards strengthening the equipment manufacturing sector. Alenn Steel Industries Private Limited's proposal to set up CR precision pipe manufacturing units, black and HRPO pipes manufacturing units, coil slitting and parting units along with a cut-to-length unit in Jajpur with an investment of Rs 178 crore got the approval. It would create employment opportunities for 465 individuals. The SLSWCA approved the proposal of Reliance Bio Energy Limited for setting up facility for compressed biogas and fermented organic manure in Balasore with Rs 121.21 crore investment. The initiative will provide jobs to 69 individuals. Terrestrial Food Processors Private Limited, a part of the JK Paper Group, will be investing Rs 60.6 crore to set up a maize corn processing plant in Rayagada. With an employment potential of 198, the initiative will enhance the economic landscape of the region, it was learnt.

Experts urge media to guard children's privacy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: UNICEF organised a roundtable discussion on 'portrayal of children in media' in collaboration with the Odisha Women in Media (OWM) collective here Friday to emphasise the vital role of media in protecting and promoting children's rights. The event fostered a conversation about the influence of media on children's understanding of the world and the prevailing narratives. The insightful panel discussions also delved into the profound impact media has on reception of children's issues in the cultural sphere and the society in general. While addressing the media, William Hanlon Jr, chief of field office at UNICEF Bhubaneswar, emphasised the organisation's mission to champion responsible and positive representation of children. "Media has the power to shape the narratives that contribute to the well-being and future of our younger generation. Every child's story deserves to be told with authenticity, empathy, and respect," he said. UNICEF Odisha specialist in social policy Ajay Singh said, "When reporting about children, we must be positive. Reporting should also protect privacy. We should prioritise rights problems over other frivolous ones."

DA: City chief civil supplies officer held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: A day after carrying out simultaneous raids at multiple premises belonging to the chief civil supplies officer (CSO) of Bhubaneswar over allegations of possessing disproportionate assets (DA), the state Vigilance Friday arrested the official for possessing DA to the tune of 134 per cent of his known sources of income. Vigilance sources said Bhubaneswar chief CSO Prashanta Kumar Gantayat was taken into custody for possession of DA, which he could not account for satisfactorily. A case (37/2023) has been registered against Gantayat and his spouse at Bhubaneswar Vigilance police station under Sections 13(1)(b) and 12 of the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, 2018. During the searches, a three-storey building at Pandara, a two-storey building at Chandrasekharpur and a flat at Laxmisagar, all in Bhubaneswar, were found in the name of Gantayat and his family. Besides, a flat in Berhampur, five plots, including three in posh locations in Bhubaneswar, were also found in their name. "Around 625 gram of gold jew-

Ex-LAMPCS official gets 3 years in jail

Bhubaneswar: Baripada Vigilance court Friday sentenced a former government official to three years of imprisonment after finding him guilty in preparing fake list of persons, who were granted loans under a debt-waiver scheme. The convict, Narendra Prasad Panda, was the managing director of Large-sized Adivasi Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd (LAMPCS) in Mangovindpur gram panchayat of Mayurbhanj district. The court also slapped a penalty of Rs 10,000, while pronouncing an additional two months' jail for default in payment. Panda was booked for the offence under Section 13(2) 13(1)(d) of Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, 1988 along with other cases registered under other IPC provisions. As per sources, Panda accepted undue favours from the ineligible list of individuals in the form of cash or other material, which incurred losses to the government exchequer. The district Vigilance will approach the competent authority for stoppage of pension of Panda, said an official.

ellery, Rs 1.48 crore bank and insurance deposits, Rs 1.21 lakh in cash, a four-wheeler and two two-wheelers were found from them," an official said.

DMD: Govt to study models for CoE in state

ODMDA stages protest over 8-point demands for treatment of children suffering from life-threatening muscle disease

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: In a move likely to bring respite to parents in the state fighting for some palpable relief from the hassles and high expenses involved in the treatment of 'Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy' (DMD) to their suffering children, the Odisha government Friday said it will explore possibilities for opening a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for the treatment of the rare genetic disease. Special Secretary, Health department Dinabandhu Panda, additional secretary Subhananda Mohapatra and joint secretary Mamata Barik who held discussions with a delegation of Odisha Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy Association (ODMDA) said that the government is studying the various treatments available for DMD. Accordingly, a

framework is being designed to address the issue effectively. The Health department has also sought details of a MoU signed by the Madhya Pradesh government for establishment of CoE which would be a reference point for opening such a centre in Odisha. Currently, there are 11 CoEs across the country including one in neighbouring West Bengal. Earlier in the day, more than 80 parents of the children suffering from DMD staged a protest at Lower PMG to press for the fulfillment of their 8-point charter of demands, including immediate treatment and monthly pension for their immobile kids. Around 60 of the suffering children sat on a dharna. The agitating parents from across the state voiced their resentment over the alleged apathy of the Union and state governments in devising calibrated



strategies to deal with the dreaded muscle disease. Although they expressed their gratitude to state government for providing Rs 10 lakh one-time grant for purchase of wheelchairs, regular physiotherapy, 'treatment' and other requirements of the patients, the lack of facilities for effective treatment in the state has left them in de-



CHRISTMAS AHEAD: Students of Delhi Public School (DPS) Kalinga dressed up as Santa Clause pose for a photo on the institution premises in Bhubaneswar, Friday

Do not form new dist sans nod: HC

Bhubaneswar: The Orissa High Court has directed the administration not to issue any final order on the formation of new districts without the permission of the court. The court order came at a time when the state government has initiated steps to upgrade Padampur sub-division in Bargarh to a separate district as promised by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik during a bypoll last year. In its order passed Thursday, a division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice BR Sarangi and Justice MS Raman has stated that the government can continue its process of reorganisation of districts, but it cannot finalise anything without the consent of the HC. The court was hearing a plea filed by Rairangpur Bar Association president Akshaya Kumar Mohanty with a prayer to declare Rairangpur in Mayurbhanj as a new district.

CSIR-IMMT hosts IISF outreach programme

Bhubaneswar: City-based CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (IMMT) hosted an outreach programme of the India International Science Festival (IISF), 2023 here recently. IISF is a collaborative endeavour taken by the ministries of Science and Technology, Earth Sciences and the departments of Space and Atomic Energy to promote science among enthusiasts. It is organised in partnership with 'Vijnana Bharati', a movement for science spearheaded by scientists across the country.

ULTIMATE KHO KHO LEAGUE - SEASON 2

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday presented the first ticket for the Ultimate Kho Kho League - Season 2 which will commence from December 24 at the JN Indoor Stadium in Cuttack. Host and defending champions Odisha Juggernauts will take on Rajasthan Warriors, here. "Promotion of traditional Indian sport Kho Kho is crucial for us and Ultimate Kho Kho League provides an opportu-

Rayagada alumina refinery to boost state economy: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22: Aditya Birla Group's alumina refinery and apparel manufacturing unit in Rayagada district signify the beginning of a new chapter in Odisha's industrial landscape, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said, while presiding over the groundbreaking ceremony for the mega projects, Friday. The alumina refinery, which is being established at Kansarigudaan with an investment of Rs 8,000 crore, will provide employment to over 4,000 people. Similarly, the apparel complex being set up in Phulujuba village of Rayagada with Rs 114 crore investment is poised to generate 3,000 jobs. Joining the groundbreaking ceremony of both projects on virtual platform, the CM said it is a testament to the untapped potential that lies within the state's natural resources. "The project signifies the beginning of a new chapter in Odisha's industrial landscape," he said. With this, Patnaik said, Odisha has also once again proved its mettle as a preferable destination for investment in manufacturing. He thanked the Aditya Birla Group for choosing tribal ma-



and the district will be a bright spot in the industrial map of India. Earlier October 5, a pact was formalised with Hindalco Industries Limited to establish a long-term linkage for raw materials for the HINDALCO Alumina Refinery at Kansariguda in Rayagada. The Aditya Birla Group has also committed to set up an apparel manufacturing unit at Phulujuba village in the tribal-dominated district with a capacity to manufacture 36 lakh shirts annually. "This facility will create employment opportunities for 3,000 local youth. Importantly, this initiative focuses on maximising the participation of women in the workforce, contributing to the empowerment of Rayagada's local communities," Patnaik said.

The Aditya Birla Group's alumina refinery, which is being established at Kansarigudaan with an investment of Rs 8,000 crore, will provide employment to over 4,000 people

Naveen presents first ticket

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



nity for masses to enjoy the thrill of this unique game. I wish the

teams the very best and a memorable experience in Odisha," said Patnaik. The Ultimate Kho Kho - Season 2 will feature India's top 145 players, including 33 young talents aged between 16 and 18. Defending champions Odisha Juggernauts, Chennai Quick Guns, Gujarat Giants, Mumbai Khiladis Rajasthan Warriors, and Telugu Yoddhas will be the six franchises to fight for the coveted crown in the upcoming season. "It is a privilege to meet Naveen Patnaik, and we are de-

lighted to present him with the first ticket for the second edition of Ultimate Kho Kho. Odisha has emerged as the vibrant nucleus of sports in India, proudly hosting a series of prestigious events in recent years. His vision has laid the foundation for a sporting legacy that continues to inspire and captivate us. As we begin the second chapter of Ultimate Kho Kho, the excitement is extremely high, especially as we host this edition in Odisha," said Tenzing Niyogi, CEO and League Commissioner of Ultimate Kho Kho.

OHRC orders ₹5L for minor gangrape survivor's family

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Dec 22:The Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has directed the Nabarangpur district administration to pay a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the family members of a minor girl student who was reportedly gang-raped by two of her teachers at a school in November this year. The OHRC has issued the order while hearing a plea filed by rights activist Prabir Kumar Das. "This Commission taking serious view of the matter hereby recommends that a sum of Rs 5,00,000 as interim compensation be paid pending for final conclusion of the trial," the OHRC order said. The Commission has also directed the Nabarangpur district Collector and other concerned authorities to pay the balance of Rs 5,00,000 to victim's parents if the accused are pronounced guilty by the court after com-

pletion of the trial. The authorities have also been instructed to make the payment to the minor victim's father and mother jointly and ensure that Rs 3 lakh out of the interim compensation amount be kept in a fixed deposit account in any nationalised bank. Notably, the petitioner informed the OHRC that the 13-year-old girl was allegedly sexually assaulted by the headmaster and a junior teacher of her school on the school premises in Raighar block of the district November 7. The minor girl developed severe pain following which she narrated her ordeal before her parents who subsequently rushed her to the nearby community health centre (CHC) and also lodged a complaint with the police November 9. The doctors at the CHC who claimed that the girl might have been sexually assaulted later referred her to the district headquarters hospital.

Our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves, but our own crying weaknesses, our cowardice, our selfishness, our hypocrisy, our purblind sentimentalism

SRI AUROBINDO



Time For Overhaul

The recent security lapse at the Parliament has highlighted the inherent risks associated with prolonged vacancies in critical positions, emphasizing the urgent need for a reevaluation of our approach to national security. This most significant breach since the 2001 terror attack, has prompted a reassessment of key affairs, particularly the management of personnel at the highest echelons.

One glaring issue lies in the extended absence of a full-time joint secretary to head the Parliament Security Service. Currently filled by Brijesh Singh, a director-level officer, the Executive Director (Security) position at the Parliament has been vacant for too long.

In the aftermath of the security breach, there was a presumption among officers across services that the Executive Director (Security) would be promptly replaced. However, it was discovered that the vacancy had persisted since mid-November, following the departure of Raghuraj Lal, a 1997-batch IPS officer to Uttar Pradesh as ADG (Security) after completing an extended one-year tenure.

Further, the incident has woken up the government to the precarious situation of key central armed police forces like the CRPF and CISF, which have been operating under ad hoc arrangements for months. Notably, the post of CRPF Director General has been ad hoc managed by ITBP DG Anish Dayal Singh since the beginning of this month, replacing Dr Sujoy Lal Thaosan. Similarly, the DG CISF post has been filled by IPS officer Neena Singh in an ad hoc arrangement, since the retirement of Sheel Vardhan Singh in August.

Prolonged vacancies in such critical roles pose a direct threat to national security and demand swift action.

New Rajasthan CM hits the ground running

In a notable display of urgency, newly appointed Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma wasted no time in making his mark on the administration. Even as he is consulting the Centre on the composition of his cabinet, within hours of assuming office he announced the selection of three seasoned IAS officers for crucial roles in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

Though it is pointed out that this is a temporary arrangement, T Ravikanth was appointed as the Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, succeeding Kuldeep Rana who served ex-chief minister Ashok Gehlot. Adding further depth to Sharma's team, Ms Anandhi, an IAS officer of the 2007 batch, assumed the role of Secretary to the CM, while Dr Saumya Jha of the 2017 batch joined as Joint Secretary to the CM, to inject fresh perspectives and youthful dynamism.

Such prompt actions, observers note, not only set the tone for Sharma's leadership but also underscore the urgency with which he aims to address key issues facing Rajasthan, as much as his desire to distance his government from the previous Congress government under Gehlot. Still, these are early days of the administration and among Sharma's tasks will also be to show that despite his rookie status within the BJP, he has what it takes to do a good job.

UP Chief Secy's next move remains a mystery

With the appointment of three new faces as chief ministers in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, the Modi sarkar, once again, revealed its penchant for unpredictability. The attention has now shifted to the intensifying politicking in Uttar Pradesh, where some punters are predicting a similar upheaval. However, among UP babu circles the big question is whether Chief Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra will get another extension of service.

Mishra's trajectory follows a unique and unprecedented path. Originally the Union Secretary for Urban Affairs, he became chief secretary of Uttar Pradesh in December 2021. A growing consensus suggests that Mishra's tenure may extend beyond this month, marking his third successive extension. But, unlike previous extensions, this one might be limited to six months.

If Mishra indeed secures another extension, sources claim that political rivals are expected to resort to legal challenges, as seen recently in similar cases like that of ED chief SK Mishra and Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar. However, the Centre has successfully navigated such challenges in the past.

Another school of thought suggests that after December 31, Mishra may wade into politics and potentially contest the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from UP. This however seems like a remote possibility given the Centre's likely reluctance to release him before achieving its Mission 2024. Mishra is unlikely to defy the decisions of the Centre.

Share a babu experience! Follow [@dilipthecherian](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian). Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

An arrogant person considers himself perfect. This is the chief harm of arrogance. It interferes with a person's main task in life - becoming a better person. **LEO TOLSTOY**

Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past. **GEORGE ORWELL**

Morality is a matter of money. Poor people cannot afford to have morals. So they have religion. **KHUSHWANT SINGH**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1805: Joseph Smith, an American prophet whose writings, along with the Bible, provide the theological foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and other Mormon denominations, was born.

1815: British author Jane Austen published her fourth novel, Emma, which centres on a precocious young woman whose misplaced confidence in her matchmaking abilities occasions several romantic misadventures.

1876: The first comprehensive constitution of the Ottoman Empire went into effect, giving the sultan full executive power.

LOL

GI INSURANCE

Airman Jones was assigned to the induction centre, where he advised new recruits about their government benefits, especially their GI insurance. It wasn't long before Captain Smith noticed that Airman Jones was having a staggeringly high success-rate, selling insurance to nearly 100% of the recruits he advised. Rather than ask about this, the Captain stood in the back of the room and listened to Jones' sales pitch. Jones explained the basics of

the GI insurance to the new recruits, and then said: "If you have GI insurance and go into battle and are killed, the government has to pay \$200,000 to your beneficiaries." "If you don't have GI insurance, and you go into battle and get killed, the government only has to pay a maximum of \$6,000." "Now," he concluded, "which groups do you think they are going to send into battle first?"



By Willem H Buiter

PAYING INTEREST ON CBDCs WOULD NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT EITHER FINANCIAL INCLUSION OR THE EFFICIENCY OF THE PAYMENTS AND SETTLEMENTS SYSTEM

The European Central Bank and the US Federal Reserve have each said that they do not intend to abolish physical cash if and when a central bank digital currency (CBDC) is introduced. Recent policy briefs by the ECB and the Bretton Woods Committee argue against paying interest (positive or negative) on CBDCs. Policymakers should reconsider both stances. There are good reasons not only to support the early introduction of CBDCs, but also to pay interest on them and abolish cash.

The United States is a CBDC laggard. According to the Atlantic Council's CBDC tracker, CBDCs have already been fully launched in 11 currency areas, all of them developing and emerging-market economies and 100 other countries are exploring the idea. These currency areas have embraced two common arguments in favor of a CBDC: that it can boost financial inclusion and improve the efficiency of payments and settlements.

Of course, CBDCs also have their critics. One argument against them is that commercial banks could be sidelined as households and firms substitute CBDC holdings for commercial bank deposits. This risk grows if a CBDC pays interest (like bank deposits do). Another concern is that the central bank, as the CBDC issuer, might obtain sensitive information about CBDC holders' finances and private spending decisions. And yet another concern is that CBDCs running on a proof-of-work blockchain consensus mechanism would be extraordinarily energy-intensive.

But there is a third argument in favor of CBDCs. If (and only if) a CBDC bears interest and is accompanied by the abolition of physical cash, it will enhance the effectiveness of monetary policy by eliminating the effective lower bound (ELB) on policy interest rates.

The ELB, an artifact of central-bank paper currency with

FOCUS ECONOMY

FAREWELL TO CASH



Across advanced economies, central banks appear willing to keep policy rates high enough for long enough to restore inflation to the 2% target range by the end of 2024

zero nominal interest rates, was a frequent binding constraint on advanced-economy monetary policy from the 2007-09 financial crisis up until policymakers (belatedly) began hiking interest rates in late 2021 and early 2022. Because central banks were unable to set policy rates at significantly negative levels, they had to resort to quantitative easing (QE) - monetizing their balance-sheet expansions through massive purchases of public and private securities.

QE was not only ineffective in boosting below-target inflation rates but also contributed to asset bubbles that continue to threaten financial stability, and made it far too easy for improvident governments to run excessive budget deficits.

Across advanced economies, central banks appear willing to keep policy rates high enough for long enough to restore inflation to the 2% target range by the end of 2024. But low inflation plus a low neutral real interest rate will increase the likelihood of the ELB again becoming a binding constraint in the case of future contractionary and disinflationary shocks.

After all, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's most recent estimates of r-star - the real interest rate consistent with

full employment and stable on-target inflation - are barely above 0.5% for the US. That low level makes eliminating the ELB highly desirable. Should inflation or employment end up materially below target, the Fed would be able to set significantly negative interest rates, if needed.

Moreover, the standard financial-stability argument against interest-bearing CBDCs makes little sense. If private holders of bank deposits decide to switch to a CBDC, and if the resulting disintermediation is considered undesirable, the central bank can make offsetting deposits with the affected financial intermediaries. A fear-driven run out of uninsured bank deposits into CBDCs can be offset and neutralized in the same way.

Similarly, while no CBDC can fully replicate the privacy of physical cash, that might not be so bad. The anonymity of cash makes it a preferred option for criminal and terrorist organizations worldwide. Moreover, the information made available to the central bank (and the government) will depend on the design and implementation of the CBDC.

At one extreme, there could be a completely centralized model, with commercial banks, other financial institutions, and

all firms and households holding accounts with the central bank. But there could also be a two-tier system in which banks and other eligible financial institutions maintain wholesale CBDC accounts with the central bank and administer the retail CBDC to the public. A retail CBDC account would effectively be a conventional bank account guaranteed by the central bank. Administrators of retail accounts would pass on to the relevant authorities only the information required to comply with rules to combat-money laundering and the financing of terrorism. In the US, this would include compliance with the Bank Secrecy Act.

Or, at the other extreme, there could be a completely decentralized distributed-ledger-based system, like many blockchain-based crypto currencies and stable coins today. Although proof-of-work consensus mechanisms (what Bitcoin uses) are very energy-intensive and don't scale well, proof-of-stake blockchains (like Ethereum's since September 15, 2022) may be able to surmount these obstacles. Either way, a blockchain allows for transaction history to be in the public domain, while individuals' identities can remain private (which is why some cryptocurrencies are also being used by criminal and terrorist organizations).

Finally, paying interest on CBDCs would not adversely affect either financial inclusion or the efficiency of the payments and settlements system.

Policymakers who oppose abolishing physical cash and introducing an interest-bearing CBDC should think again. This is the moment to do both - before the effective lower bond (ELB) returns.

The writer, a former member of the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England, is an independent economic adviser.

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SPECTRUM LIFESTYLE

Importance of statistical literacy



Rajiv Gupta

STATISTICS CAN EITHER CONVEY RELEVANT INFORMATION WHICH CAN LEAD TO SOUND DECISIONS, OR THEY COULD BE MISINTERPRETED LEADING TO ACTION WHEN NONE IS WARRANTED

Suppose you take your temperature on two successive days. On the first day it is 98.2 degrees, on the second day it is 98.8 degrees. What would you infer from these readings? More importantly, what course of action would be warranted as a result? A lot of people take notice and act on information that is not very different from the example cited above. We often read items in newspapers with statistics to make a point. The numbers could be about the economy, the number of accidents, or the crime rate, etc. We read the numbers but not everyone reflects on what the numbers mean.

Statistics can either convey relevant information which can lead to sound decisions, or they could be misinterpreted leading to action when none is warranted. In the above case, it should be clear that no action needs to be taken. Why? Because typical human temperatures fluctuate within a range, the range depending on the individual circumstances. If any medication is taken because the body temperature reaches 98.8,

it can lead to undesirable side-effects.

The reason we should not start medicating ourselves when the body temperature reaches 98.8 is because the body temperature has a natural range of variation. This variation is due to various factors such as the ambient temperature, our clothing, what we may have eaten, whether we have just exercised, etc. Dr. W.E. Deming, a noted statistician and management guru who helped the Japanese industry become world leaders, called this natural variation caused by "common causes." If the statistic (in this case, the body temperature) is within some defined limits, no action is required. But if it goes outside these limits, then Deming said that we need to investigate and possibly take action. So once the body temperature crosses, say 100 degrees, it may be a sign that one needs to see a doctor.

Deming wrote that if the data only shows natural or random variation, any action in response to a change from one period to the next would make the system

unstable, with the potential to increase the variation in the data. In the case of the body temperature example given at the beginning of this article, most healthcare professionals agree that unnecessary medication to counter random changes in the body temperature can lead to problems. We should take steps to improve one's health, such as eating well and exercising. But action should not be taken to counter a slight blip in the body temperature.

According to Deming, any unnecessary intervention based on short term changes in data would make the system unstable, with higher highs and lower lows. However, when the change is significant, i.e., the data crosses the limits beyond the natural variation, investigation into the cause of that occurrence is warranted and action needs to be taken. In the body temperature analogy, if the temperature were to cross 100 degrees, it often signals an infection for which some treatment becomes necessary.

Examples of misguided over-reaction to data are seen in sev-

eral walks of life. Perhaps one of the more glaring examples is when a company announces a drop in the sales or profit number compared to the previous quarter or year. The immediate reaction of the stock market is to selling of the stock which often leads to a drop in its price. Sales and profits of organisations do not always go up in a straight line. Any panic selling of a company's stock in response to a poor quarter or year is unwarranted as long as the company remains healthy.

This article was written to emphasise the need to develop literacy in reading statistical data. Data is important for managing organisations, communities, and nations. However, collecting data involves time and cost. Therefore, we need to make sure that the data is put to proper use. In addition to the cost of collecting data, incorrect reaction to random fluctuations in the data can lead to worsening the system. The message should be clear: We need a better understanding of how to interpret statistical data.

INFPA

Let's stand united

Sir, The recent surge in COVID-19 cases in India is alarming, as the active caseload approaches 3,000. This resurgence of the virus demands urgent attention and a concerted effort from both the government and citizens. While we have made commendable progress in vaccination drives and public health awareness, it is evident that the battle against this virus is far from over. There is an urgent need for reinforced measures to curb the spread, including rigorous testing, contact tracing, and ensuring access to vaccines and healthcare facilities in every region of the country. Collaboration between the government, healthcare professionals, and communities is pivotal in overcoming this challenge. As responsible citizens, we must remain vigilant and proactive in our efforts to combat the virus. I encourage everyone to get vaccinated and to strictly follow the prescribed guidelines to protect ourselves and our communities. Together, we can overcome this adversity and emerge stronger. Let us stand united in our fight against COVID-19.

Maimul Safui, HOWRAH

Blessing in disguise

Sir, The motley group that intruded into Parliament did not blow up anything except their own futures. But they have unwittingly done the nation a favour on two counts: one by exposing flawed security in the most hallowed of premises, and two by underscoring that there are issues that underlie the social fabric that politicians are ignoring.

Shanthi Ramanathan, GHAZIABAD

Respect the cyclists

Sir, Cycling is a popular mode of transport. It causes the least pollution and boosts our immune system. No fossil fuel is emitted by cycling. It is a cheaper form of transport. It strengthens our cardio-vascular system. Our weight remains balanced, and our heartbeat becomes normal through cycling. The practice also promotes friendship and brotherhood. Apart from this, it is good for mental and physical health. But more often than not, cyclists are lampooned as poor and destitute. And they are criticised as paupers and mischief mongers on the road. As cyclists emit no poisonous gases into the environment, they should be more respected.

Prabhudutt Dash, BHUBANESWAR

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

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Blockbusters

COME BACK TALES

With several blockbusters, the outgoing year not only put the struggling Hindi film industry back on track, but also witnessed one of the biggest individual comebacks in Indian cinema history, as top star Shah Rukh Khan became the only Indian actor to deliver two consecutive ₹1,000 crore films in one calendar year. The glamour world also had its share of marriages, separations, and memorable losses.

Orissa POST looks back on the year gone by...

HOLLYWOOD - At a glance



Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour became the highest-grossing concert film of all time, with over 250 million views worldwide. As if that wasn't enough, her 1989 (Taylor's Version) (Taylor's Version) bowed at No. 1 on the Billboard 200. She became the most-streamed artist in a single day in Spotify's history, her "Cruel Summer" from a four-year-old album hit No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart and "The Eras Tour" itself was the highest-grossing tour of the year, making her a billionaire. She got six Grammy nominations, including Album of the Year. No wonder Time crowned her "Person of the Year."

Barbenheimer, Everything Everywhere in spotlight

From the Hollywood Sign turning 100 to singer Taylor Swift's box office bonanza with 'The Eras Tour', to 'Friends' actor Mathew Perry's death, to bumper success of 'Barbenheimer', 2023 was an eventful year for Hollywood. Here's a look at some of the highlights

Securing the coveted title of Best Picture at the Academy Awards, Everything Everywhere All at Once marked the pinnacle of an exceptional award season, emerging as the most decorated winner since 2008's Slumdog Millionaire. The film clinched a total of seven Oscars. Prior to its Oscar triumph, the film also made waves at the Screen Actors Guild Awards and the Film Independent Spirit Awards, amassing accolades and setting records along its illustrious journey.

OLLYWOOD ROUNDUP Boycott to BAFTA

The outgoing year was a mixed bag for the Odia film industry. While 2022 provided a glimmer of hope with movies like 'DAMA: N', 'Pratikshya', and 'Adieu Godari', garnering critical appreciation, 2023 will be remembered for controversies and a few individual glories

While the year brought huge success for the Hindi film industry, back home boycott of Manoj Mishra, a senior actor, by a producers' body sparked a row among the film fraternity. So much so that Congress leader Narasingha Mishra went ahead to warn that the issue could divide the state. Mishra was boycotted for allegedly asking his supporters to disrupt the screening of the Assamese Roy starer Ram in a few western Odisha theatres.

Lipika's distinction While not much can be written about the fate of Odia movies, barring a few like Phalguna Chaitra, Puskar, and My Sweet Housewife, some individual achievements made the state proud. Four-time National Award winner Lipika Singh Dargi earned the rare distinction of being one of the ten emerging figures from the Indian film industry selected for the prestigious BAFTA (The British Academy of Film and Television Arts) Breakthrough Initiative.

ETERNAL REST section with portraits and names of Swarup Nayak, Pintu Nanda, Satish Kaushik, and others.

SAG-AFTRA Strike Fran Drescher, SAG-AFTRA President, initiated a strike July 13, halting the film and TV industry alongside the WGA. After a five-month period, November 8, the Writers Guild of America leadership reached a tentative agreement with the AMPTP companies, describing the deal as exceptional in their announcement.

By mid-July, amid an industry-wide strike, Wonder Twin Barbie and Oppenheimer, soared at the box office, collectively grossing over half a billion dollars worldwide. Greta Gerwig's Barbie, featuring Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling, secured 18 nominations at the Critics' Choice Awards 2024. Concurrently, Christopher Nolan's Oppenheimer, starring Cillian Murphy, Emily Blunt, Robert Downey Jr., and Matt Damon, also registered astonishing number at the box office.

Mrs Asia World 2023 Sandhya Dalal, originating from Rayagada, reached a significant milestone by clinching the coveted Mrs. Asia World 2023 title on October 15 in Pattaya, Thailand. Sandhya's path to success includes securing the titles of Mrs. India 2020 and Mrs. India Universe 2023 (virtual quarantine queen). Possessing a postgraduate degree in Political Science, she was additionally bestowed with an honorary doctorate degree from the International Peace University in Coimbatore, thus earning the esteemed title of Dr. alongside her name.

Lead role for Odia girl in Tollywood Monika Samardar was selected to play the lead role in a Telugu film titled Garaga. Hailing from MV 75 village in the Kailmela block of Malkangiri, Monika pursued dance training at the High-Dance Studio in Hyderabad, where two years of dedicated dance training caught the attention of casting directors, leading to opportunities in several television soap operas and eventually landing a lead role in the film.

Showbiz on a roll

It is not lost - an adage held true for the Hindi film industry in 2023 - with at least six movies making it to the Rs 500 crore club and a couple of more on the way. The eye-popping business made by films like Pathaan, Jawan, Gadar 2, Tiger 3, and Animal made the industry as well as stars like Shah Rukh Khan and Sunny Deol return to their winning ways. In a noteworthy year post-Covid, the industry is poised to surpass the 2019 record of Rs 10,948 crore in 2023, reaching an expected Rs 11,000 crore, according to a recent report by Ormax Media. Despite an existential crisis in 2022 due to the influence of South Indian films, Bollywood's redemption came this year with as many as six blockbusters cited above. Pathaan, SRK's comeback movie, set the revival tone, and Gadar 2, featuring Sunny Deol, resonated with patriotic themes. The success signifies a robust return for Indian cinema, blurring the lines between cinema halls and OTT platforms in 2023. The year also saw noteworthy OTT debuts and long-format shows by Kareena Kapoor, Kajol, Tamannaah Bhatia, Shahid Kapoor, Sonakshi Sinha, and Aditya Roy Kapoor further narrowing the gap. National Film Awards for top stars Alia Bhatt, Kriti Sanon, and Pankaj Tripathy and the Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award for veteran Waheeda Rehman only sum up how the showbiz fared in a year that draws to a close.

Return of The King Khan's life was a movie. For the past few years, things have been tough for the actor. His movies didn't have the same magic as before, making fans and experts wonder if his time as a top actor was over. But just like in great stories, the hero made a comeback in 2023, making it to be the year of resurgence for Shah Rukh Khan in Bollywood. In 2014, his movie Happy New Year was a big success. However, between 2014 and 2023, even though his films made money, fans and critics weren't completely happy with SRK's work. After almost 10 years, 2023 proved to be a turning point with his first two releases - Pathaan and Jawan - showing that King Khan was back on track. Pathaan, part of the Kash Raj Spy Universe, had SRK and Deepika Padukone, and it also featured him alongside Salman Khan after five years. The film ended a dry spell at the box office, earning Rs 1,655 crore, adding to SRK's legendary status. 2023 was a year of reinvention for SRK. At 58, known for his romantic roles, he surprised everyone by becoming an action hero in Jawan and Pathaan. With a mix of charm and intensity, the new and improved King Khan won over audiences. It's interesting to note that the last time SRK had three releases in a year was in 2004 with Main Hoon Na, Veer-Zaara, and Swades - all now considered classics among his best projects.

INDIAN GLOBAL STARS Deepika Padukone The Om Shanti Om actress hogged the spotlight at international level as a presenter at the 2023 Oscars held at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. She introduced the live performance of the Best Original Song nominee, Naatu Naatu, which received a standing ovation. She was also adjudged "The Global Star" by Time Magazine for taking Bollywood to the world. Alia Bhatt Alia debuted with Hollywood star Gal Gadot in Heart Of Stone. She also made her Met Gala debut paying tribute to fashion icon Karl Lagerfeld in a creation by Prabal Gurung. Sonam Kapoor The Khoobsurat actress was in the news for attending and performing at King Charles' coronation ceremony held at London. Sonam was given the distinction of introducing the Commonwealth virtual choir at the ceremony. Anushka Sen The popular TV actress was appointed as the Honorary Brand Ambassador of Korean Tourism from India. She also made history by becoming the first Indian to present the official anthem at COP28 in the UAE. Radhika Madan Radhika became the first Indian actress on jury at Tallinn Film Festival and the youngest jury member at the International Emmy Awards. Vir Das The ace comic became the first Indian comedian to win the International Emmy for Comedy at the International Emmy Awards 2023. He won the award for his Netflix comedy special, Vir Das: Landing. Jason Brettlean Telangana born Jason won the Mister Global 2023 title at the age of 19 while representing India in the male pageant in Thailand besting contestants from 35 countries.

Love and Unions

This year, a few celebrities embraced romance and took their relationships to the next level by formalising their commitment and joyfully saying "I do!" Orissa POST lists some of the most talked about affairs of the year: Kiara & Siddharth The internet said "wow" when it witnessed the dreamy and picturesque wedding of Kiara Advani and Siddharth Malhotra. The couple's fairy tale-like wedding was held in Rajasthan, in Jaipur's regal Suryagarh Palace February 7. The wedding pictures got a whopping 14.9 million likes. Parineeti & Raghav After keeping their relationship under wraps, Parineeti Chopra and Raghav Chadha's highly anticipated union unfolded against the stunning backdrop of The Leela Palace in Udaipur, Rajasthan, which took place September 24, embracing the solemnity of Anand Karaj and Hindu rituals. Swara Bhasker & Fahad Ahmad Actress and political activist Swara Bhasker entered the realm of matrimony with political leader Fahad Ahmad January 6. Swara officially announced her union with Fahad Ahmad February 16, but the marriage was registered earlier in court January 6. Athiya & Rahul After dating for quite a few years, actress Athiya Shetty and cricketer KL Rahul got married January 23 in a private wedding ceremony at Suniel Shetty's Khandala bungalow, with just their close friends and family in attendance. Lipsa Mishra & Akash Acharya Odia actress Lipsa Mishra known for Toh Aaganara Tulasi Mu got hitched to boyfriend Akash Acharya in Bhubaneswar February 27. Randeep Hooda & Lin Laishram Actor Randeep Hooda tied the knot with his longtime girlfriend and actress Lin Laishram in a traditional Meitei wedding ceremony in Manipur's capital Imphal November 23. Mukti Mohan & Kunal Thakur Dancer and actress Mukti Mohan tied the knot with the Animal starrer Kunal Thakur in a lavish ceremony in Mumbai December 10. Arbaaz Khan-Georgia Andriani After his divorce with Malaika Arora, Arbaaz started dating model Georgia Andriani but got separated after dating for more than four years. While Arbaaz was tight-lipped about the development, Georgia said, "We both knew it wouldn't have lasted forever because we were very different."

Tara Sutaria- Aadar Jain Actress Tara Sutaria and actor Aadar Jain, who were in a relationship for nearly three years and frequently appeared together at various events and parties, have mutually decided to separate amicably and have opted for friendship. Joe Jonas-Sophie Turner Singer Joe Jonas and actress Sophie Turner who got married in May 2019 after being in a relationship for several years and have two children, have decided to part ways after four years of marriage. Anubhav-Varsha The couple, who has been fighting a legal battle over their marital dispute, have been granted divorce by the Orissa High Court December 21. Actor-cum-Lok Sabha MP Anubhav Mohanty had moved High Court after Cuttack Family Court rejected his divorce plea against his wife Varsha Priyadarshini September 22. Ariana Grande-Dalton Gomez Singer Ariana Grande and real estate agent Dalton Gomez who tied the knot in a private wedding in May 2021 have reportedly ended their marriage after two years. Moonbin Singer Moonbin, a member of K-pop band Astro, died by hanging himself in his Seoul residence, April 19 at the age of 25.

While admirers marveled at star weddings, 2023 also saw a notable prevalence of high-profile celebrity separations, leaving fans speculating about the reasons behind the splits. A look at prominent splits

ETERNAL REST section with portraits and names of Vaibhavi Upadhyaya, Rio Kapadia, Michael Gambon, and others.

Southern dominance

Be it 'Pushpa', 'KGF', 'Vikram' or 'RRR', in recent years, South Indian film industry dominated the national entertainment scene like never before. 'RRR' went on to make history at the 95th Oscar Awards with 'Naatu Naatu' becoming the first song from an Indian production to win the Oscar for Best Original Song

Naatu, Naatu fever Naatu Naatu achieved the historic feat of being the inaugural song from an Indian production nominated and subsequently victorious in the Best Original Song category at the Oscars. Although the live rendition may not have replicated the dynamic energy of the film version, witnessing lyricist Chandrabose and composer MM Keeravani accepting their award was truly stirring. With sweeping the awards at the Oscars, RRR continued to thrive to receive the National Awards, like Best Stunt Choreography, Best Special Effects, Best Choreography, Best Background Music, and Best Male Playback Singer, all attributed to the RRR crew. RRR was also awarded the Most Popular Film providing wholesome entertainment, which was received by SS Rajamouli, the director.

'The best Whisperers' India secured its first victory at the 95th Oscar Awards when The Elephant Whisperers, directed by Kartiki Gonsalves, triumphed in the Best Documentary Short Film category, which was received by Guneet Monga and Gonsalves. Gonsalves' film unfolds in Tamil Nadu's Mudumalai National Park, depicting the heartwarming story of an orphaned elephant calf nurtured by an indigenous couple. Gonsalves came on stage with producer Guneet Monga. 'Pushpa, Kahi Jhukega Nahi' South Indian actor Allu Arjun was honoured with a National Award for best actor in his outstanding performance in the film Pushpa: The Rise directed by Sukumar. Arjun was the first Telugu actor to win this award in 68 years. 'Rocketry, rocketry too far' Rocketry: The Nambi Effect, a Tamil film, which was released in the year 2022, biographical drama directed, produced, and written by R. Madhavan as his debut as a director, was recognised as the Best Feature Film at the 69th National Film Awards.

ETERNAL REST section with portraits and names of Andre Braugher and Moonbin.

Blockbusters section featuring movie posters for Gadar, Animal, Jubilee, Scoop, and others.

Formal Endings section featuring portraits and names of Arbaaz Khan-Georgia Andriani, Tara Sutaria- Aadar Jain, Joe Jonas-Sophie Turner, Anubhav-Varsha, and others.

ETERNAL REST section with portraits and names of Swarup Nayak, JR Mehmood, Vaibhavi Upadhyaya, Rio Kapadia, Michael Gambon, and others.



Children dressed as Santa Claus during pre-Christmas celebrations at a school in Jabalpur



A Swedish-made archer self-propelled howitzer of Ukraine's 45th separate artillery brigade fires at Russian positions in the Donetsk region



Anganwadi workers stage a protest demanding a hike in their wages in Solapur



A woman with her child on a cold day in Gurugram



Mourners lay candle lights outside the headquarters of Charles University for victims of mass shooting in Prague, Czech Republic. A lone gunman opened fire at a university Thursday, killing more than a dozen people and injuring scores of people



Students wear face masks in Jammu amid rise in Covid cases in the country



A delivery van stands in the water of the Elbe during a storm surge near the fish market in Hamburg, Germany



Telangana minister Jupally Krishna Rao during the inauguration of PETEX INDIA 2023, an exhibition on pet care, in Hyderabad

national

of the day quote

A special camp was organised in Chennai for expeditious settlement of claims by general insurance companies in areas impacted by cyclone Michaung and similar efforts would be made in four districts of Tamil Nadu affected by excessive rains and flood

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

Saddened by the news of the shooting incident at Prague's Charles University. Deepest condolences to the families of the victims

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

It is a proud moment for all Manipuris and we will all stand for a strong and united India... I thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for acknowledging the importance of Manipur and naming a defence warship after Imphal

N BIREN SINGH | MANIPUR CM

SHORT TAKES

Kejriwal summoned for third time

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate has issued a fresh summons to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for questioning for January 3 in the excise policy-linked money laundering investigation, sources said Friday. This is the third notice to Kejriwal, also the national convener of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), after he refused to appear before the federal agency on two earlier summons for November 2 and December 21. The Chief Minister is currently undertaking a Vipassana meditation course.

Students forced to clean toilets

Bangalore: Close on the heels of an incident in Kolar where school students were 'forced' to clean the sookpit, another incident of pupils being allegedly asked to clean toilets at a government school here has come to light. In a viral video, some of the students were purportedly seen cleaning the toilet at Andrahalli in the city. Following the incident, parents of students expressed outrage and staged a protest outside the school campus demanding strict action against its administration.

Custodial remand of Jha extended

New Delhi: A Delhi court Friday extended till January 5 the police custody of Lalit Jha, the alleged 'mastermind' of the Parliament security breach incident, for his sustained interrogation. Special Judge Hardeep Kaur extended Jha's custody on an application moved by the Delhi police. Police sought extension of Jha's custody, saying he was needed to be taken to various places for investigation, which was "at a crucial stage". The Public Prosecutor told the court he was required to be quizzed further to unravel the entire conspiracy and to get to the root of the matter. "We have to find out the actual persons involved in the conspiracy... All are required to be looked into in totality while investigating this matter. We have to find out the ultimate objective of the offence," the prosecutor told the court.

Man arrested

New Delhi: A man has been arrested for allegedly killing his live-in partner in outer Delhi's Nangloi area four months ago, police said. Pankaj Kumar Mehto, a resident of Bihar's Samastipur, had allegedly strangled his live-in partner Tamanna (32) in August after she pressurised him to divorce his wife and leave his children, they added.



It is disappointing that caste is being mentioned during serious debates in Parliament

P CHIDAMBARAM | CONGRESS LEADER

SANJAY TO REMAIN IN JAIL

A Delhi court Friday dismissed the bail application of senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh in a money laundering case related to the Delhi excise policy 'scam', observing that he was connected with the 'proceeds of crime to the extent of Rs 2 crore' and the case against him was 'genuine'



NIKHIL GUPTA CASE

No Indian jurisdiction: Czech justice ministry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: India's judicial authorities have "no jurisdiction" in the case involving Nikhil Gupta, Czech justice ministry spokesperson Vladimir Repka has said, days after his family approached the Supreme Court seeking its intervention in the matter.

Gupta, charged by the US government of involvement in a conspiracy to kill a Sikh separatist on American soil, has been in a jail in Prague since he was detained in the Czech Republic around six months ago.

The US has approached the Czech government for Gupta's extradition and proceedings relating to it are underway. "Any judicial authorities of the Republic of India have no jurisdiction in the matter in question, the case is under the jurisdiction of the competent authorities of the Czech Republic," Repka said.

A family member of Gupta, 52,



approached the Supreme Court last week pleading for issuing direction to the Indian government to intervene in the extradition proceedings and ensure a fair trial in the case. The US federal prosecutors have charged Gupta of working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill US-based Sikh separatist Gurbaj Singh Pannun, who holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada.

India has already constituted a probe committee to investigate allegations. Repka also responded to allegations made in a petition filed in the Supreme Court by Gupta's family that he is not having adequate legal representation in the Czech Republic.

INDIA bloc protests suspension of MPs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: The opposition INDIA bloc staged a protest at Jantar Mantar here Friday against the suspension of 146 MPs from the two Houses of Parliament during the Winter Session and gave a call to people to unite in saving democracy in the country.

The protest organised under the banner of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) was attended by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi and the leaders of Left parties, DMK, NCP, SP, NC, TMC, JMM, RJD and other members of the opposition coalition.

Addressing the gathering, Kharge said the leaders of the INDIA parties have come together as democracy is under threat under the BJP-led government. "When everyone unites, (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi will not be able to do anything. The more you try to crush us, the more we will rise. We are fighting unitedly to save the country and democracy," he said.

"Modiji and (Home Minister) Amit Shahji have taken the re-



sponsibility to destroy democracy and the Constitution. These people are working to crush the Dalits, tribals, labourers, women and farmers. That is why we have formed the INDIA bloc to save the country," the Congress chief said.

"People holding high constitutional posts say that 'I am a man of this caste, hence they are insulting me. We are not even allowed to read the notice in the House. So can I say that the Modi government does not even allow Dalits to speak?' Kharge asked the gathering.

Noting that the freedom of speech is enshrined in the Constitution and this freedom was given to people by

Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and B R Ambedkar, he said, "We are not afraid of the Modi government. No matter how hard you try to bury us in the ground, we are those seeds who have the habit of growing again and again."

"You threw out the opposition MPs from Parliament and passed all the laws without any opposition. This is not good for democracy," the Congress chief said.

Rahul Gandhi said the opposition members were suspended from Parliament for demanding answers from Shah on the December 13 Parliament security breach issue. "The more hatred the BJP spreads, the more love and brotherhood the INDIA par-

ties will spread," he said. By shunting out 150 MPs from Parliament, the government has shut out the voice of 60 per cent Indians, he added.

NCP chief Sharad Pawar said the leaders of the bloc are ready to pay whatever price required to be paid to save democracy in the country. DMK's Tiruchi Siva accused the BJP of attempting to destabilise the country's federal and secular structures. "The INDIA bloc will oust the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls," he said.

ST Hasan of the Samajwadi Party (SP) said this is not the suspension of the MPs, but the suspension of the country's democracy. Hasnain Masoodi of the NC demanded a statement in the House as to how the security lapse occurred in Parliament. Mausam Noor of the TMC said the MPs who raised questions on the security lapse in Parliament were suspended. Sitaram Yechury of the CPI(M) said democracy is being killed across the country. "If we want to save democracy and the Constitution, we will have to remove the Modi government from power," he said.



A Sikh devotee shows his skills during a 'Nagar Kirtan' procession in Amritsar

PTI PHOTO

22 cases of JN.1 found so far, Kerala woman recovers

States have been urged to ensure effective compliance of the detailed operational guidelines for revised surveillance strategy for COVID shared by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: Twenty-two cases of COVID-19 sub-variant JN.1 have been detected in the country till Thursday, with 21 cases being reported from Goa and another from Kerala, official sources said.

In Goa, the sources said, no clustering of cases of the JN.1 variant has been seen and all infected people have recovered without complications. Those infected had mild upper respiratory tract infection with symptoms of mild dry cough, sore throat with or without fever, they said.

In November, 62 samples were sent to different INSACOG labs for whole genome sequencing for detection of the JN.1 variant, while in December, so far, 253 samples have been sent, the sources said Friday. "A total of 22 cases

of the JN.1 variant have been reported till December 21 in the country," an official source said.

The Kerala case, a 79-year-old woman, has recovered without complications. She had mild symptoms and was the first case of JN.1 to be detected in India. The detection was made December 8. NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr V K Paul Monday had said that the scientific community in India is closely investigating the new variant but stressed on the need for states to ramp up testing and strengthen their surveillance systems.

Even though the number of cases is rising and the JN.1 sub-variant has been detected in the country, there is no cause of immediate concern as 92 per cent of those infected are opting for home-based treatment, indicating mild illness, officials said.

There is also no increase in hospitalisation rates and COVID-19 is an incidental finding in people hospitalised due to other medical conditions. In a letter to states and Union territories, Union Health Secretary Sudhanshu Pant Monday had underlined the critical COVID-19 control and management strategies considering the upcoming festive season and advised them to put in place requisite public health measures to minimise the risk of increase in transmission of the disease.



K'taka CM draws flak as video in luxury jet goes viral

In the viral video, Siddaramaiah is seen seated in a swanky private jet along with Housing Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan and Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, among others

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Dec 22: The opposition BJP Friday came down heavily on the Congress government in Karnataka for flaunting their "rich fortunes and luxury lifestyles" following a viral video on social media showing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his cabinet colleague B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan in a private jet.

The CM hit back by questioning the flying preferences of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the viral video,



Siddaramaiah is seen seated in a swanky private jet along with Housing Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan and Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, among others.

In a post, Minister Khan is seen walking inside the jet with a popular Bollywood song playing in the background. Karnataka BJP president B Y Vijayendra in a post of 'X' said:

"If bigotry had a face, @INC Karnataka govt would be the Best of it! At a time, when whole of Karnataka is reeling under severe drought, farmers staring at the worst of crisis with loss of crops & no rainfall & hardly any development works taking off, all that @CMofKarnataka & his team of cabinet ministers could think of is flaunting their Rich Fortunes & Luxury Lifestyles over the poor damsels of the State!"

"By the way, they were traveling in this luxurious aircraft to seek funds for drought relief works! What a crude mockery of our distress! Splurging the Taxpayers' money comes so easy for @INC India ministers!" Vijayendra said in the social media post.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.A-1073
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
"e" Procurement Notice-3/2023-24
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. SAL-BDK-3-P1 OF 2023-24

- Name of work :- Maintenance of Canal and Embankment (River & Saline) works
- Class of Contractor :- Varies from "D" Class to "B" Class
- No. of works :- 30 Nos. (Details as per NIT available in website)
- Value of Work :- Rs.11.02 lakhs to 48.96 lakhs
- Time of Completion :- 6 Calendar Months
- Type of Bid :- Percentage Bid
- Summary for key dates is provided below

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender for online bidding	Date & time of opening of Bid
Superintending Engineer, Salandi Canal Division, Bhadrak	SAL-BDK-3 P1 OF 2023-24	27.12.2023 From 11.00 AM To 10.01.2024 At 5.00 PM	11.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website <http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in> / www.dowrodisha.gov.in. Any addendum/ Corrigendum/ Cancellation to the above notice will be published in this website only.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer,
 Salandi Canal Division, Bhadrak
 OIPR-32005/11/0004/2324

जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
Jawaharlal Nehru University
 New Delhi-110067
Advertisement No. RC/70/2023

Online applications are invited from eligible candidates for appointment to the posts of **Assistant Professor, Associate Professor & Professor** in various Schools/Special Centres of the University as per latest UGC Regulations.

The details of vacancies, qualifications, general instructions etc. are available in JNU website <https://www.jnu.ac.in/career>. The last date for submission of online applications completed in all respects, shall be **29th December, 2023 (5.30 PM)**.

Any addendum/corrigendum shall be posted only on the University website.
 CBC 21284/12/0002/2324 **REGISTRAR**

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
SAHEED LAXMAN NAYAK MEDICAL COLLEGE
AND HOSPITAL, KORAPUT
 Tel. No. 06852 252121
 E-mail: suptslnmchkpt.od@gmail.com
 No. 6995/2023 Date: 21.12.2023

TENDER CALL NOTICE

No.E-659:- The Medical Superintendent, SLNMCH, Koraput-764020, Dist. Koraput, Odisha invites sealed Tenders in plain papers/pads are invited from intending Manufacturers/Distributors/Stockists/Wholesaler for supply of medicine and medical consumable items in bulk quantity to the undersigned as per requirement of the hospital which will be valid for a period of one year from the date of approval or till finalisation of next tender. The detail information terms and condition can be obtained from the office of the undersigned in all working day after publication in newspapers. The bidder can also download the tender documents directly from the website www.koraput.nic.in and www.slnmch.nic.in. The last date of receipt of tenders through Regd. Post/ Speed Post is on or before Dt: 12.01.2024 & the Tender will be opened on Dt: 16.01.2024. It may be extended. The Superintendent, SLNMCH, Koraput reserves right to accept/reject/ cancel any or all the tenders in full or part without assigning any reason thereof.

1	Date of sale of Tender Paper	Rs. 4000/- (In shape of Demand Draft in favour of Medical Superintendent, SLNMCH, Koraput payable at Koraput)
2	Cost of Tender Paper	Rs. 50000/- (In shape of Demand Draft in favour of Medical Superintendent, SLNMCH, Koraput payable at Koraput)
3	Cost of EMD	12.01.2024 till 5 P.M.
4	Last date of receipt of Tender Paper	16.01.2024 at 12.00 A.M.
5	Date of opening of Technical Bid	16.01.2024 After completion of Technical Bid
6	Date of opening of Financial Bid	Office of the Superintendent, SLNMCH, Koraput
7	Venue for opening Technical Bid and Financial	Office of the Superintendent, SLNMCH, Koraput, At-Pujaripur, Po/Dist- KORAPUT
8	Address for Correspondence	

Sd./- Superintendent, SLNMCH, KORAPUT
 OIPR-10121/11/0013/2324

CORRIGENDUM No.MM-390
Section-II
(Eligibility Criteria)

The Bidder must satisfy all of the following General and Technical Eligibility Criteria to participate in this Tender:-

- General Eligibility Criteria (Necessary support documents are to be enclosed):**
 - Each Technical Bid must Contain the Requisite Tender Document Cost of Rs.6000/- and EMD of Rs.20,000/- (Rupees Twenty Thousand Only) as per the advised mode in the Tender Document.
 - The Bidder should be a Registered Company in the business of construction and Earth work. Necessary Certificates are to be enclosed.
 - The Bidder must have been registered with GST and must furnish the GST Registration Certificate, PAN of the Firm.
 - The Bidder shall submit a self Declaration as mentioned below either with the technical bid or before opening of the financial bid.

Self Declaration

I here by declare that:-

- I have not been declared in-eligible for corrupt and fraudulent practises.
- I have no history of defaulting in execution of work under State Govt./ Central Govt.
- I have not been blacklisted by Central/ State Government. 4. No Criminal proceedings in any Court of Law is pending against me.
- I undertake that after completion of building, I will provide quarterly maintenance support for next two years.

Signature of Bidder
Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer, Athmallik Division
 OIPR-08125/11/0017/2324



“We are working in a highly dangerous situation. More than 135 of our colleagues have paid (with) their lives. We’re working in a highly complicated system where different verifications have to go in”
ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

RESTRICTIONS ON ONLINE GAMING

China released draft guidelines aimed at curbing excessive spending on online gaming in the latest move by the ruling Communist Party to keep control of the virtual economy



of the day quote

Tibetans are a democracy-loving people who wish to practice their own religion freely and have their own wishes and desires acknowledged as we do in the United States of America

MICHAEL MCCAUL | US HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

The country wants to strengthen cooperation with the United States to combat climate change

HUANG RUNQIU | CHINA'S ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

The Artemis programme is the most ambitious space exploration effort in generations. For the first time in more than half a century, the United States will return astronauts to the lunar surface. We will establish the first lunar base camp and the first station in lunar orbit - all of this in collaboration with our allies and partners

KAMALA HARRIS | US VICE PRESIDENT

Israel expands ground offensive

Israeli forces signalled they were widening their ground offensive with a new push into central Gaza Friday, as the UN Security Council was expected to vote on a resolution to increase humanitarian aid to stave off the threat of famine

AGENCIES

Rafah (Gaza Strip), Dec 22: The Palestinian death toll in Gaza surpassed 20,000, health officials said Friday, the latest indication of the staggering cost of the war as Israel expanded its ground offensive and ordered tens of thousands more people to leave their homes.

The deaths, amounting to nearly 1 per cent of the territory's pre-war population, are just one measure of the devastation wrought by the conflict that over 11 weeks has displaced nearly 85 per cent of Gaza's people and levelled wide swaths of the tiny coastal enclave.

Israel, shielded by the United States, has resisted international pressure to scale back its offensive and has said it would press on until Hamas, the militant group that has ruled Gaza for 16 years, has been destroyed.

On Friday, the military ordered tens of thousands of residents to leave their homes in Burej, an urban refugee camp, and surrounding communities, within the territory that Israel originally told people to flee to.

The air and ground campaign also continued in the north, even as Israel says it is in the final stages of clearing out Hamas militants there.

In the city of Rafah, on the border with Egypt, an air strike on a house killed six people, in-



MEDICAL CHARITY MSF SAYS 'NOWHERE IS SAFE' FOR GAZANS

GAZA HOSTAGE, A US-ISRAELI DUAL-NATIONAL, DIES IN CAPTIVITY, A GROUP REPRESENTING HOSTAGES' FAMILIES SAYS

THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL FRIDAY APPROVED A TONED-DOWN BID TO BOOST HUMANITARIAN AID TO THE GAZA STRIP

ISRAEL MONITORS THE LIMITED AID DELIVERIES TO GAZA VIA THE RAFAH CROSSING FROM EGYPT AND THE ISRAELI-CONTROLLED KEREM SHALOM CROSSING

cluding an infant, according to Associated Press journalists who saw the bodies at a hospital. Rafah is one of the few places in Gaza not under evacuation orders, but has been targeted in Israeli strikes almost every day.

Gaza's Health Ministry said Friday that it has documented 20,057 deaths in the fighting. It does not differentiate between combatant and civilian deaths. It previously said that roughly two-thirds of the dead were women or minors. It said 53,320

Palestinians have been wounded. Israel blames Hamas for the high civilian death toll during its intense air and ground campaign, citing the group's use of crowded residential areas for military purposes.

Israel declared war after Hamas militants stormed across its border and killed some 1,200 people and kidnapped 240 others. Israel's military says 139 of its soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive. It says it has killed thousands of Hamas mil-

Imran, Qureshi get bail in Cipher case



AGENCIES

Islamabad, Dec 22: In a relief to jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan ahead of elections, Pakistan's Supreme Court Friday approved his and close aide Shah Mahmood Qureshi's bail in the cipher case related to the alleged leakage of state secrets.

The apex court also directed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders to submit surety bonds worth Rs 1 million each, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The order was issued by a three-member bench headed by Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and comprising Justices Athar Minallah and Syed Mansoor Ali Shah on a set of PTI petitions ahead of the February 8 general elections. The case is based on the allegation that a diplomatic document sent by the Pakistan embassy in March last year was mishandled by Khan, 71, and Qureshi, 67, and they violated the secrecy laws of the country.

However, Khan will remain in jail as he is convicted in the Toshakhana corruption case about the concealment of details of state gifts. During Friday's hearing, Justice Masood observed that the statement of a witness is taken on oath, but Azam Khan's - ex-principal secretary of for-

Khan and Qureshi, who is also behind bars, were first indicted in the case October 23. Both had pleaded not guilty

The trial was being held at the Adiala Jail and four witnesses had already recorded their statements when the Islamabad High Court termed the government's notification for a jail trial "erroneous" and scrapped the entire proceedings

mer premier Khan who is a key witness in the case - statement was taken without one, the Express Tribune newspaper said. During the court proceedings, the top court also heard the petition against Khan and Qureshi's October 23 indictment.

Meanwhile, in a huge setback to the party of Imran Khan, Pakistan's top election commission rejected Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's organisational elections and its plea to have cricket bat as the electoral symbol for the February 8 general elections.

A five-member panel of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Monday reserved the verdict after concluding the hearing of multiple petitions filed by members of the PTI against the party elections held December 2 in Peshawar.

SHORT TAKES

Iraq donates fuel to Gaza

Baghdad: Iraq has donated 10 million litre of fuel to the Gaza Strip, the media reported. "A ship carrying 10 million litre of gas oil has sailed through the international water toward the Suez Canal," Iraqi military spokesman Yahya Rasoul was quoted by the media as saying Thursday. Rasoul said the Iraqi government had coordinated with the Egyptian authorities about the shipment sent to the Palestinians stranded in Gaza. Xinhua news agency reported.

20 killed in rebel attack

Bangui (Central African Republic): At least 21 people, including children and a soldier, were killed by rebels during attacks targeting a security outpost and a village in northern Central African Republic, according to local authorities. "The rebels first attacked the army checkpoints, killing one person and wounding several others, before attacking the civilian population, killing about 20 people," Ernest Bonang, a federal lawmaker who represents Nzakoundou, the village attacked Thursday.

India, Nepal to ink power deal

Kathmandu: India and Nepal will ink a long-term power deal during the visit of Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in the first week of January, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" said Friday. Speaking during the inauguration of the Inaruwa substation of Nepal Electricity Authority, Prachanda said that Nepal is doing extremely well in the sector of power generation. "A long-term agreement between Nepal and India will be reached during the upcoming visit of Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to Nepal in the first week of January," Prachanda said.

Wildfire rages

Cape Town: A wildfire was burning for a third day on a mountain near Cape Town, the legislative capital of South Africa. The wildfire started Tuesday on the mountain slopes of Simon's Town, around 40 km south of Cape Town and part of the City of Cape Town metropolitan municipality, Xinhua news agency reported. So far, the wildfire has burnt nearly 1,140 hectare of land in the area, said a statement issued by South African National Parks on social media Thursday evening.

PRAGUE UNIVERSITY SHOOTING

3 foreign nationals among wounded

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Prague, Dec 22: Three foreign nationals were among the 25 people wounded when a student opened fire at a university in the Czech capital, Prague, shooting dead 14 people before killing himself, authorities said Friday.

It was the worst mass shooting in Czech history. Interior Minister Vit Rakusan said police in Prague worked overnight and all the 14 who died in Thursday's attack have been identified. The Institute of Music Sciences confirmed that its head, Lenka Hlavkova, was among the dead.

The Czech Foreign Ministry confirmed that three of those wounded were foreigners — two from United Arab Emirates and one from the Netherlands. The bloodshed took place at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, where the 24-year-old shooter was a student, Prague Police Chief Martin Vondrasek said.

Petr Matejcek, the director of the police regional headquarters in Prague said the gunman killed himself on the balcony of the university building when police officers approached him. The gunman's name has not been released. Early Friday, with the scene of the shooting still sealed off by the police, people could be seen lighting candles to mourn the victims at an impromptu vigil by the university headquarters.



People take part in the winter solstice celebrations at the Stonehenge prehistoric monument on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, England

Plane with over 300 Indians on board grounded in France

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

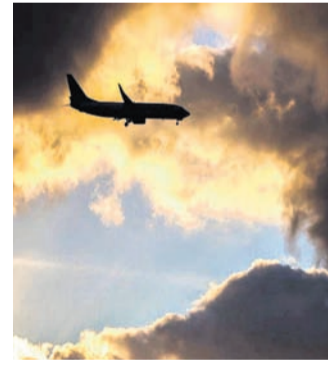
Vatry, France, Dec 22: A Nicaragua-bound plane carrying more than 300 Indian passengers has been grounded in France over suspected "human trafficking", authorities said Friday.

The aircraft carrying passengers "likely to be victims of human trafficking" was detained Thursday after an anonymous tipoff, the Paris public

prosecutor's office told AFP. The plane had taken off from the United Arab Emirates.

The national anti-organised crime unit JUNALCO has taken over the investigation, prosecutors said.

The prefecture in the northeastern department of Marne said the A340, operated by Romanian company Legend Airlines, "remained grounded on the tarmac at Vatry airport following its landing".



New AI tool can help in nerve disorder screening

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington/New Delhi, Dec 22: Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bangalore have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) tool that can detect a nerve-related disorder known as carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS).

The tool developed by IISc researchers in collaboration with Aster-CMI Hospital, Bangalore detects CTS by identifying the median nerve in ultrasound videos.

CTS arises when the median nerve, which runs from the forearm into the hand, is compressed at the carpal tunnel part of the wrist, resulting in numbness, tingling or pain, the researchers said. It is one of the most common nerve-related disorders,

specifically affecting individuals who perform repetitive hand movements, such as office staff who work with keyboards, assembly line workers, and sportspeople, they said.

Doctors currently use ultrasound to visualise the median nerve, and assess its size, shape, and any potential abnormalities.

"But unlike X-rays and MRI scans, it is hard to detect what is going on in ultrasound images and videos," said Karan R Gujarati, a former MTEch student at IISc.

"At the wrist, the nerve is quite visible, its boundaries are clear, but if you go down to the elbow region, there are many other structures, and the boundaries of the nerve are not clear," said Gujarati, first author of the



study published in the journal IEEE Transactions on Ultrasonics, Ferroelectrics, and Frequency Control.

Tracking the median nerve is also important for treatments that require doctors to administer local anaesthesia to the forearm or block the median nerve to provide pain relief. The team turned to a machine

learning model based on transformer architecture, similar to the one powering ChatGPT.

The model was originally developed to detect dozens of objects simultaneously in YouTube videos. The team stripped the model's computationally expensive elements to speed it up, and cut down the number of objects it could track to just

one - the median nerve, in this case.

They collaborated with Lokesh Bathala, Lead Consultant Neurologist at Aster-CMI Hospital, to collect and annotate ultrasound videos from both healthy participants and people with CTS, to train the model.

Once trained, the model was able to segment the median nerve in individual frames of the ultrasound video.

"Imagine a video of an autonomous car. If the car is moving on the road, you want to track the car," said study corresponding author

Phaneendra K Yalavarthy, Professor at CDS.

"In the same way, we are able to track the nerve throughout the video," Yalavarthy said.

The model was also able to automatically measure the cross-sectional area of the nerve, which is used to diagnose CTS. This measurement is performed manually by a sonographer. "The tool automates this process. It measures the cross-sectional area in real time," said Bathala.

It was able to report the cross-sectional area of the median nerve with more than 95 per cent accuracy at the wrist region, the researchers added.

India in command Kohli returns home due to family emergency



Richa Ghosh (L) and Jemimah Rodrigues talk during their stand; Deepti Sharma hugs Pooja Vastrakar after completing her half century against Australia Women, Friday

Mumbai, Dec 22: A sturdy 102-run unbeaten stand between Deepti Sharma (70 batting, 147b, 9x4) and Pooja Vastrakar (33 batting, 115b, 4x4) restored India Women's command against Australia on the second day of the ongoing one-off Test, stretching the home team's first-innings lead to 157 here Friday.

But the Indians eventually wrestled back control, riding on the splendid partnership between Deepti and Vastrakar, who were a mere five runs away from recording the best eighth-wicket stand for India Women's ever when stumps were drawn.

Notching up a second consecutive fifty in as many Tests, Rodrigues appeared primed for a maiden century too but she had only herself to blame after hitting one straight to Annabel Sutherland at extra cover off Gardner.

India reached 376/7 in reply to Australia's 219 with their resolute batting show spruced up by Smriti Mandhana's 74 (106b, 12x4), Jemimah Rodrigues' 73 (121b, 9x4) and a fine 52 (104b, 7x4) from debutant Richa Ghosh.

However, the highlight of the day was youngsters Ghosh and Rodrigues taking apart the Australian bowlers with disdain, putting on 113 runs for the side's second-best partnership for the fourth wicket.

With the pitch providing variable bounce, each of the Indian batters who got runs showcased immaculate approach in anticipating the bounce and trusting their defence, which was not the case for a few others.

Deepti and Vastrakar came together after India lost four quick wickets for a mere 14 runs to cede advantage to Australia, as their resistance flattened the visitors who used eight bowling options with only Ashleigh Gardner (4/100) making an impact.

In her maiden outing with the bat in Tests, Ghosh put on a fine show of attack and resilience alike producing strokes on both the sides of the pitch. But Ghosh also had Ellyse Perry to thank who spilled a sitter at mid-off when the Indian batter mistimed one off Gardner having reached 14.

Earlier in the day, overnight batters Mandhana and Sneha Rana (9) brought up their 50-run stand for the second wicket before Gardner cleaned up the latter. But there was heartbreak for Mandhana when she was run out.

The right-arm off-spinner Gardner, coming off an eight-wicket spell in the women's Ashes Test, troubled the Indians the most as she kept nibbling away with crucial wickets while being persistent with probing line and lengths.

However, she became the 14th Indian batter to score a fifty on debut, joining Rodrigues and Shubha Sathesh to have done so in the span of last 10 days or so.

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur (0) lasted for only two balls. India slipped further and lost the advantage when Yastika Bhatia (1) got out.

BRIEF SCORES: Australia Women 219; India Women 376/7 (Smriti Mandhana 74, Jemimah Rodrigues 73, Deepti Sharma 70 batting, Richa Ghosh 52; Ashleigh Gardner 4/100). Match to continue.

Centurion, Dec 22: Virat Kohli has returned to India due to a family emergency but the senior batter will be back in time for the first Test against South Africa starting here next week. Kohli had travelled to South Africa as part of the Indian squad for the two-Test series, which will begin at SuperSport Park December 26. "Virat Kohli has returned to India due to a family emergency.

But he will be back before start of the first Test," a BCCI source told PTI Friday. It is understood that Kohli had already taken permission from BCCI brass about his short leave. "Virat had already left on Thursday and it was pre-decided. Virat didn't take part in the three day intra squad match where India and India A players took part," the source added. No one in BCCI however could confirm the nature of the emergency. Kohli had

missed out on a Test match during the last away series in South Africa due to a back injury. He will be back in the Rainbow Nation on December 24 and will take part in the pre-match training. Meanwhile, Indian batter Rituraj Gaikwad was ruled out of the two-match series, which is a part of the World Test Championship cycle, after fracturing his finger. In Gaikwad's place, Abhimanyu Easwaran, who had a good intra squad

match, has been drafted into the main team. "Rituraj Gaikwad has been ruled out of the two-Test series with ring finger fracture," the source added. Gaikwad had injured his finger while trying to take a catch during the second ODI against South Africa earlier this week. That Gaikwad was ruled out of the first Test was reported by PTI Thursday but it wasn't confirmed if he had sustained a fracture.

Real back in lead after Girona held by Betis in La Liga

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Dec 22: With a late goal after a lackluster performance, Real Madrid found their way to victory and to the top of the Spanish league standings. Lucas Vazquez scored with a header in stoppage-time and Madrid pulled off a 1-0 win on the road against Alaves to reclaim first place after Girona conceded a late equaliser in their 1-1 draw at Real Betis earlier Thursday.

Stalled Nationals will resume

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 22: The wrestling fraternity has largely heaved a sigh of relief that the national camps and competitions will finally begin with the formation of a new federation, and it does not matter that Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh will continue to call the shots. The country's top wrestlers, including Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik, had pushed for a woman president, but Brij Bhushan loyalist Sanjay Singh emerged as the winner in the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) polls Thursday by beating former wrestler Anita Sheoran.



after the Supreme Court intervention. Koi jabardasti nahi huee (No one was forced to do anything). The government was also looking at it," said Jagdish Dhanda, a coach at the famous Chhotu Ram stadium in Rohtak. "The sport had literally stopped in the last 11 months. It's good that the activities have started immediately after the formation of the new body. Now national camps will be held and competitions will be organised, you won't realise the loss in the last 11 months," Dhanda said. Similar sentiments were shared by the coaches at Delhi's Chhatrasal Stadium. "A solid

leadership is required in WFI. You have seen how the ad-hoc panel struggled to take decisions. They kept changing their decisions, so it is only good that the same panel has returned to power. You need experience, and they have done a tremendous job in the last 10-12 years," said the coach, who did not wish to be named. "Thankfully, now nationals will be held. All that the wrestlers need is competition. We are not from any party. We just want the betterment of our sport." The new dispensation has already announced that the U-15 and U-20 Nationals will be held in Gonda in the last week of December.

'ODISHA: A SPORTS HUB' DREAM MEETING REALITY



Fireworks at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium ahead of a World Cup match

SHAMBHU DATTA MISHRA, OP

The former first lady of United States - Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of former US President Franklin D. Roosevelt - once said: "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." And Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, whose slogan is "Sports for Youth, Youth for the Future", is an apt ode to the adage. The gritty leader dreamt of transforming Odisha into the sports hub of India, and under his visionary leadership the state is developing a robust sports ecosystem, which includes world-class sports infrastructure - be it modern facilities, High Performance Centres or launching programmes to promote sports from grassroots level.

forms at Tokyo 2020 prompted the Naveen Patnaik-led government to extend endorsements until 2033. The tribal belt of Sundargarh, a breeding ground of hockey players, now offers potential to churn out rugby talents, and the Sports Ministry has focused on building the requisite infrastructure at the grassroots level. A total of 17 astro turf facilities are being built here, while Odisha also decided to adopt rugby as the next major sport, with sponsorship of the men and women's national teams. Two new HPCs - gymnastics and hockey - were inaugurated earlier this year at the Kalinga Stadium. The Gymnastics HPC is a joint initiative with Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel (AM/NS) India, while the Hockey HPC is being set up in partnership with Tata Steel and Tata Trusts. Also, Odisha recently signed an MoU with AM/NS India to establish Kho Kho HPC. So far, Odisha has HPCs for shooting, hockey, badminton, weightlifting, athletics, sports science, swimming, football, gymnastics and a Centre of Excellence (CoE) in sports management. Patnaik also announced the strengthening of the partnership with Tata Group and starting of new HPCs in archery and sport climbing. In November this year, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and Odisha government, in the presence of Arsene Wenger, FIFA's Chief of Global Football Development, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set up the AIFF-FIFA



Naveen Patnaik felicitates hockey players Amit Rohidas and Deep Grace Ekka for the Asian Games performances

Talent Academy at the Odisha Football Academy in Bhubaneswar. The objective of the academy is to identify talents, to educate children to get them as good as they can be and provide good level of competition to make great players. The target is to put India on global football map. The year also witnessed the introduction of India's first indoor athletics stadium. Italian firm, Mondo SpA has set up a 10,000 sq metres track in the stadium which is going to be the first-of-its-kind in India. The stadium can accommodate 120 athletes for full-time coaching. It also has a classroom for studies, medical facilities and a dedicated pantry for inmates. The track features long jump, triple jump, 100m, 200m tracks, pole vault and shot-put, each with its own specific require-

ments. The facility has two 110m practice tracks, gallery for spectators, press box as well as a broadcast arena. **MAJOR EVENTS HOSTED BY ODISHA IN 2023** The state played host to several competitions, including Men's Hockey World Cup in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela, Inter-continental Cup football, Inter-State Senior Athletic Championships, National Aquatic Championships, Odisha Masters badminton, National Rugby 15s Championship (Division 1), Khelo India Women Fencing League & Ranking Tournament (Phase 3), Kalinga Super Swimming Series as well as several national and state-level tournaments. The plans for promotion of kho kho got a huge boost when Odisha bagged the hosting rights of Ultimate Kho Kho

season 2 as the competition gets underway December 24 at the JN Indoor Stadium in Cuttack. Odisha athletes hog limelight The year will mostly be remembered for javelin thrower Kishore Kumar Jena - the Hangzhou Asian Games silver medalist. He had finished a credible fifth - 1.90m short of bronze medal winner's throw - at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest. Another notable athlete for the state was para shuttle Pramod Bhagat who bagged gold in the men's singles SL3 category to go with bronze medals in the men's doubles SL3-SL4 and mixed doubles SL3-SU5 events at the Hangzhou Asian Para Games. Both Kishore and Pramod also brought laurels to Odisha with wonderful performances in few other competitions. The year turned out to be an even better one when Shriyanka Sadangi secured a gold medal for India at the 50m rifle 3 positions team event and a bronze medal at the 10m air rifle team event at the Asian Shooting Championship in South Korea. The Sambalpur eve narrowly missed another medal as she finished fourth in the 50m rifle 3 positions individual event. However, it didn't stop her from securing a 2024 Paris Olympics quota for India in the category. Overall, it wouldn't be wrong to say that Odisha is not only turning into a sports hub in terms of infrastructure and modern facilities, but the athletes are slowly but gradually making a mark at global level. It may take a decade or so, when Odisha will be known for its athletes' prowess in global sporting arenas.



A view of the newly-built Indoor Athletics Stadium



KISHORE KUMAR JENA WITH HIS ASIAD MEDAL