

Self-made actress
 Actor Meera Chopra says she never wanted to use the names of her cousins - Priyanka & Parineeti Chopra - to boost her career

LEISURE | P2

Counter attack
 Ukraine claims it shot down 28 out of 31 Russian drones amid an overnight airstrike

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Second unicorn of 2023
 InCred becomes India's second unicorn this year after raising \$60 million from new and existing investors

BUSINESS | P11

India face South Africa
 India look to end their 31-year wait for a Test series win in South Africa when the first Test between the sides begins today

SPORTS | P12

SHORT TAKES

Three criminal justice Bills get Prez assent

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu Monday gave assent to the three new criminal justice Bills which were cleared by Parliament last week. The three new laws - the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Act - will replace the colonial era Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872. While replying to a debate in Parliament, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the focus was on delivering justice rather than handing down punishment. The Telecommunications Bill also got the President's assent.

Eight arrested in Capital group clash

BHUBANESWAR: Commissionerate Police Monday arrested eight persons in connection with a group clash that broke out in a locality near Biju Patnaik International Airport here Sunday evening in which two persons suffered injuries of varying degrees. Briefing media persons about the case, Zone-II ACP Girija Shankar Chakrabarty said two youths - Rakesh Kumar Guru and Siba Maharana - had threatened an elderly person, Pradeep Singh, for giving his place on rent to a youth for a garage. Singh owns a small market complex in the airport area here. The dispute turned violent Sunday evening when the two youths attacked Pradeep with a sword.

Diarrhoea claims 2 lives in Bolangir

Bolangir: Two people died of suspected diarrhoea at Kantabanji town in this district Monday, said sources. With Rourkela yet to fully control the cholera outbreak, it seems that diarrhoea is spreading its tentacles in Bolangir too. Six patients with symptoms of vomiting and loose motion were admitted to Kantabanji hospital Sunday. However, two of them died Monday morning. CDMO (in-charge) Kuber Chandra Mohanta visited the hospital.



XMAS FERVOUR: Girls take selfie during Christmas celebrations at Satya Nagar Catholic Church in Bhubaneswar, Monday

DETENTION IN PARIS
PLANE WITH INDIANS TO LAND IN MUMBAI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai/Paris, Dec 25: A Romanian aircraft carrying 276 passengers, mostly Indians, left for India Monday, four days after they were detained by the French authorities at an airport near Paris over suspected "human trafficking". The flight is expected to land at Mumbai airport early Tuesday morning. Associated Press reporters outside the Vatry Airport in Champagne country saw the unmarked Legend Airlines A340 take off after the crew and about 200 other people boarded the plane. The passengers include a 21-month-old child and 11 unaccompanied minors who were put under special administrative care. Several passengers requested asylum in France. Two passengers were detained and are appearing before a judge Monday to face possible charges. Four French judges questioned the detained passengers Sunday. The hearings were conducted as part of the investigation opened by the Paris prosecutor's office on the suspicion of human trafficking. According to French media, some of the passengers spoke Hindi and the others Tamil.

CM nod to spl security battalion for Srimandir

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday approved a proposal for creation of a dedicated special security battalion for Srimandir in Puri, in a bid to ensure proper crowd management at the 12th century shrine, an official said. It was envisioned and conceptualised to render security, better facilitation of devotees, and crowd management measures at Srimandir, which draws thousands of devotees every day, the official said. While daily footfall of devotees was estimated to be about 50,000, it doubles and triples on weekends and important religious occasions, official sources said. "The anticipated flow of devotees is likely to witness a substantial increase after the dedication of the new Heritage Corridor Project - Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa - to the public," the official mentioned. The new battalion would have the primary responsibility of providing security to the temple and they will be specially trained for better crowd management and tourist/devotee facilitation



- The special security battalion would comprise around 1,190 personnel and it would be placed under the command and control of the Superintendent of Police, Puri
- While daily footfall of devotees was estimated to be about 50,000, it doubles and triples on weekends and important religious occasions
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for ensuring a hassle-free and orderly 'darshan' by the devotees, said the Inspector General of Police (Central Range) Ashish Singh. The special security battalion would comprise around 1,190 personnel and it would be placed under the command and control of the Superintendent of

Police, Puri, he said. While the temple stands over about 10 acres of land, now after the opening of the Heritage corridor, the area would increase threefold. There will be a big open space to go around the temple and its periphery. This apart, the security of the temple is the top priority of the government, Singh said. Meanwhile, with a large number of devotees from across Odisha and outside thronging the world famous shrine in Puri to seek the blessings of the Lord Jagannath during the New Year, the authorities have made elaborate arrangements to ensure smooth 'darshan'. In view of the rush at the shrine, the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) has taken a host of measures to ensure hassle-free darshan for the devotees, an official said, adding that the district police has also made arrangements and installed CCTV cameras outside the temple with barricades. While special security arrangements have been made at the temple, the local police have also deployed special police personnel, home guards and lifeguards for tourists near the sea beach.

India records 628 fresh Covid cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: India recorded a single-day rise of 628 new Covid-19 cases while the active caseload jumped to 4,054, even as the country reported 63 cases of sub-variant JN.1 till Sunday. The total fatalities were recorded at 5,33,334 (5.33 lakh) with one new death reported from Kerala in the previous 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed, according to Union Health Ministry. The country's Covid case tally is currently at 4,50,09,248 (4.50 crore). The number of people who have recuperated from the disease has risen to 4,44,71,860 (4.44 crore) while the national recovery rate stands at 98.81 per cent, according to the health ministry website. The case fatality rate stands at 1.19 per cent. According to the ministry website, 220.67 crore Covid vaccine doses have been administered. Meanwhile, following the detection of a fresh Covid-19 case in the state, the Odisha government Saturday advised elderly persons and those with co-morbidities to wear masks. Taking to its official X handle, Odisha Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department wrote, "With the emergence of

JN.1 driving death rates in China

Beijing: Amid the global rise in fresh Covid-19 cases, China is reportedly experiencing increasing death rates due to infection caused by the JN.1 variant, claimed a media report. In a report, The Epoch Times claimed that the country's crematoriums are working round the clock due to a surge in Covid deaths. This comes after China recently saw a pneumonia outbreak, particularly among the children. Locals in Henan province of China reportedly revealed that government-run crematoriums are operating all day, and even during the night. #JN1Covid Variant, #Odisha Government has advised the elderly people and those with co-morbidities to wear face masks while going out and avoid visiting crowded places. #OdishaCares." Sixty-three cases of Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 were reported in the country till Sunday, including 34 detected in Goa, official sources said Monday. Nine cases have been detected from Maharashtra, eight from Karnataka, six from Kerala, four from Tamil Nadu and two from Telangana, they added.

ISRAELI STRIKE KILLS 106 IN CENTRAL GAZA

AGENCIES

Deir Al-Balah, Dec 25: At least 106 people were killed by an Israeli airstrike in central Gaza, health officials said Monday. Palestinian medical officials said the death toll from an Israeli airstrike in central Gaza has risen to 106 from 68 earlier. The announcement makes the Sunday night airstrike in Maghazi refugee camp among the deadliest in Israel's air campaign in Gaza, launched October 7 in response to a deadly cross-border attack by Hamas militants. Hospital officials initially said 68 people had died. The first responders retrieved more than three dozen additional bodies that were taken to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital in Deir al-Balah Monday. Later, hospital records seen by The Associated Press listed 106 deaths. "We were all targeted," said Ahmad Turokmani, who lost



IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Let's replace the colonial-era laws with laws that help us transform the country into our own colony

Afghan schoolgirls finishing 6th grade in tears

AGENCIES

Kabul, Dec 25: Bahara Rustam, 13, took her last class at Bibi Razia School in Kabul December 11 knowing it was the end of her education. Under Taliban rule, she is unlikely to step foot in a classroom again. In September 2021, a month after US and NATO troops withdrew from Afghanistan following two decades of war, the Taliban announced that girls were barred from studying beyond sixth grade. They extended this education ban to universities in December 2022. The Taliban have defied global condemnation and warnings that the restrictions will make it almost impossible for them to gain recognition as the country's legitimate rulers. Last week, UN special envoy Roza Otunbayeva expressed concern that a generation of Afghan girls is falling behind with each day that passes. Last week, an official in the Education Ministry said Afghan girls of all ages are allowed to study



in religious schools known as madrassas, which have traditionally been boys-only. But Otunbayeva said it was unclear if there was a standardised curriculum that allowed modern subjects. Bahara is holding onto her education and pores over textbooks at home. "Graduating (from sixth grade) means we are going to seventh grade," she said. "But all of our classmates

- In September 2021, a month after US and NATO troops withdrew from Afghanistan following two decades of war, the Taliban announced that girls were barred from studying beyond sixth grade
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cried and we were very disappointed." There was no graduation ceremony for the girls at Bibi Razia School. In another part of Kabul, 13-year old Setayesh Sahibzada wonders what the future holds for her. She is sad she can't go to school anymore to achieve her dreams. "I can't stand on my own two feet," she said. "I wanted to be a teacher. But now I can't study, I can't go to school." Analyst Muhammad Saleem Paigir warned that excluding women and girls from education will be disastrous for Afghanistan. "We understand that illiterate people can never be free and prosperous," he said. The Taliban have barred women from many public spaces and most jobs, all but confining women to their homes.

several family members including his daughter and grandson. "There is no safe place in Gaza anyway," he added. Earlier, the Health Ministry in Gaza gave the death toll as 68. The Israeli military had no immediate comment. As Christmas Eve fell, smoke rose over the besieged territory, while in the West Bank Bethlehem was hushed, its holiday celebrations called off. In neighbouring Egypt, tentative efforts continued on a deal for another exchange of hostages for Palestinians held by Israel. The war has devastated parts of Gaza, killed roughly 20,400 Palestinians and displaced almost all of the territory's 2.3 million people. The mounting death toll among Israeli troops - 154 since the ground offensive began - could erode public support for the war, which was sparked when Hamas-led militants stormed communities in southern Israel October 7, killing 1,200 and taking 240 hostage.

WEATHER

BBSR	CTC
Max Temp 27.6°C	26.6°C
Min Temp 16.0°C	15.5°C
Humidity 91%	89%
Rainfall Nil	Nil

FORECAST
 FOG/MIST IN THE MORNING

leisure



CHER DOESN'T CARE IF NO ONE BUYS HER CHRISTMAS ALBUM

Singer Cher has put out her first ever festive LP titled *Christmas* and includes collaborations with the likes of Stevie Wonder, Michael Buble, and Cyndi Lauper. She isn't concerned about how well the record sells as she just knows she's very proud of it.

MIB STAR NUSSBAUM DIES A WEEK BEFORE REACHING 100

Veteran actor Mike Nussbaum, renowned for his role in *Men in Black*, passed away from natural causes Saturday at the age of 99, while residing in a hospice. His demise occurred just a week before he would have celebrated his 100th birthday.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today, you are not in your usual gregarious mood. An unpleasant situation may also prove to be a challenge. Even though you're enterprising, Ganesh suggests that you don't go tripping all over yourself. A little devotion to God can make a big difference to your life.

TAURUS
It is very likely that you will stay physically alert and spiritually awake today, forecasts Ganesh. You will discover an artistic temperament as you engage in performing arts, designing, graphics and special effects. You will also appear extremely tempting to the opposite gender.

GEMINI
You are likely to have a great time with like-minded people, says Ganesh. At work, achieving perfection will be your motto. You will strive for perfection at work and home. You will remain practical and pragmatic throughout the day.

CANCER
It is highly probable that you will be highly pious and dutiful today, foretells Ganesh. You will spend sparingly in the afternoon. You will stay in excellent health condition. Romantic dinner with sweetheart is likely, hopes Ganesh.

LEO
It is fine to make hay while the sun shines, but do not forget to put aside some for a rainy day as well, says Ganesh. Today is one such day when you can do fantastically well by putting aside some money for your family's future. At work, pending tasks may have piled up, but today you shall do well to try and clear the backlog.

VIRGO
Your position of strength will be shaken badly today. All chances are, this may invite unwanted troubles and furrow deeper lines of worry. But you may yet do good if you shift out of the usual and foray into something new.

LIBRA
To be or not to be? Well, that may not be your precise state of mind, but Ganesh does see possibilities of you being puzzled and perplexed today when it comes to professional issues. Chances are that in the afternoon, you may happen to run into an unpleasant situation, so just keep your cool. In any case, things shall get better by the evening.

SCORPIO
You shall be a live wire today - full of energy and zest. Freelancers will take imagination to new levels when working. At work, your inspiration will kick-start an epidemic of vigour and high-performance. Surprises in the evening will end the day on a high note, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Today you shall remain deep in thought. You may have plans to change the look of your home and a romantic evening with your sweetheart is on the cards, says Ganesh. Fine gourmet and a nice ambience will arouse those senses more, informs Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You don't shy away from working hard and today, at your work you will do everything to improve upon your performance. But, perfection seems distant no matter how hard you try, says Ganesh. Your mind is making creative plans, but you are unable to put them on paper and get them executed. You will not get off the track by a minor bump on the track.

AQUARIUS
Put your best dress on, get a smart hairdo, and polish your shoes - you have to make your presence felt! Don't depend too much on the outer appearance though. You will need to apply your mind and make some vital decisions because they will have a permanent impact on your life, advises Ganesh.

PISCES
You will harbour feelings of attraction towards those of the opposite sex, and are also likely to benefit from them. You will find lady luck favouring you. Post afternoon should see you struggling with a tough decision. Overall, the day ought to be routine, with nothing exceptional lurking to surprise you, says Ganesh.

Arbaaz gets hitched again

Mumbai: Actor Arbaaz Khan has tied the knot for the second time with makeup artist Sshura Khan, and dropped first pictures as husband and wife.

According to the reports, Arbaaz and Sshura had met on the sets of the upcoming movie *Patna Shukla*. The intimate wedding ceremony which was held at Arbaaz's sister Arpita Khan's residence saw the presence of his family members, including Salman Khan, Sohail Khan and his kids, Arbaaz's son Arhaan, his parents Salim and Salma Khan, Helen, actress Raveena Tandon and her daughter Rasha, and model Lulia Vantur, amongst others.

Taking to his social media, Arbaaz has shared a couple of wedding pictures. He captioned the post as: "In the presence of our loved ones, me and mine

begin a lifetime of love and togetherness from this day on! Need all your blessings and good wishes on our special day!"

The celebrities have showered love and blessings to the newly-wed couple in the comment section.

Previously, Arbaaz was married to model Malaika Arora, and they have a son Arhaan. The couple got divorced in May 2017. Arbaaz also dated Georgia Andriani for several years after his divorce. The two parted ways as was confirmed by Georgia a few days ago.



Never wanted to play family card: Meera

Mumbai: Actress Meera Chopra who made her debut with movie *1920: London*, clarified that she never wanted to use the names of her cousins, actresses Priyanka Chopra and Parineeti Chopra, to progress in her career.

In an interview, the actress admitted that she is tired of the struggles that have become a truth in her life. Having spent nearly nine years in the industry with only four projects to her credit, she clarified that she doesn't mean to give up the fight. Meera shared that she should be getting more roles, which she is not, and is tired of running behind people. She expressed that there should be more movies like *Safed* where she can honestly and truly show what she can do.

She also took a dig at star kids, noting that many non-actors get lead roles because of their family connections. The actress explained that they come from film families or know people in the industry. This has to stop, and talent needs to move forward, added the actress.

Saiyami not a fan of violent movies

Mumbai: Actress Saiyami Kher, who was last seen in *Ghoomer*, said that she was disturbed after watching *Animal* and said that she belongs to the section which didn't quite warm up to the film.

During an interview, the *Mirzya* actress was asked about her opinion on the film *Animal*. To which she said, "Personally, for me, I have been told very strongly 'do not tell your opinions, because nobody wants to hear that.' But I was disturbed. Every director has the right to make every-

thing that one wants, but somewhere, you have a responsibility towards people. Cinema has the power to influence people and I truly believe that, in the good and in the bad way."

She said, "I personally don't agree with the phenomenon of glorifying somebody who is a dark and bad character. With great power comes great responsibility, so I would consider that when working."

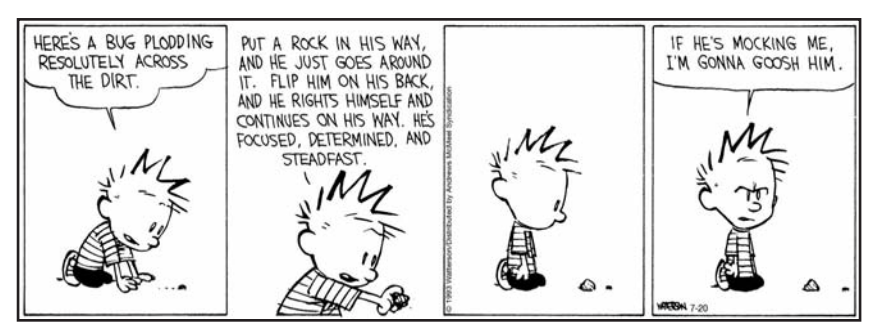
"I was a little confused, because if this is what the country is watching, then where do I stand in this? It is not just men, it is women who are loving the film as well. I am not the biggest fan of that kind of cinema," she concluded.



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

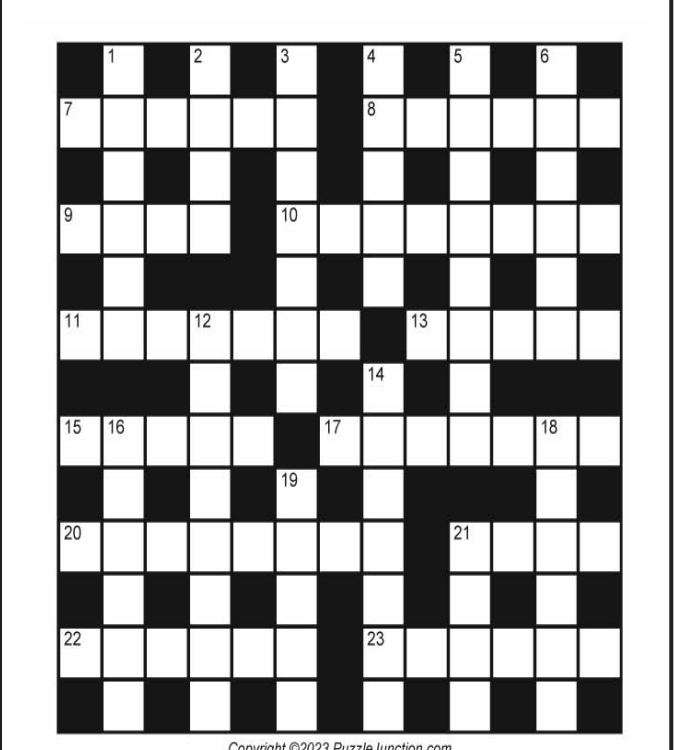


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



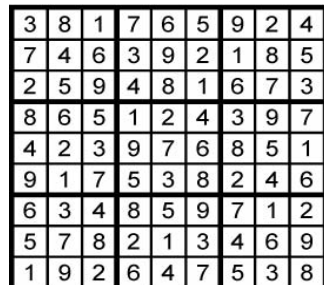
- Across**
- 7 Gambol
 - 8 Uzi, e.g.
 - 9 Mosaic piece
 - 10 Waterproof garments
 - 11 First
 - 13 Pub game
 - 15 Act the coquette
 - 17 Noblewoman
 - 20 Get down
 - 21 Boat movers
 - 22 Qajar dynasty's domain
 - 23 Like the seas, at times
- Down**
- 1 Slander
 - 2 Small pigeon
 - 3 Footstool
 - 4 Hunky-dory
 - 5 Repercussion
 - 6 Verse form
 - 12 Italian dessert
 - 14 Equity
 - 16 Hang around
 - 18 Playwright's offering
 - 19 Type of race
 - 21 Double-reed instrument

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

ANNUAL FETE

Artistes perform during the annual function of Jyoti Kala Mandir at Bhanja Kala Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Monday



8 HELD IN CITY GROUP CLASH



5 of the 8 accused in custody

“Two cases have been registered—one by Pradeep and other by Siba's brother, and so far, eight persons have been arrested. Rakesh was arrested for attacking Pradeep, while seven others involved in the street clash were taken into custody in the other case”

GIRIJA SHANKAR CHAKRABARTY | ZONE-II ACP

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: The police Monday arrested eight persons in connection with a group clash that broke out in a locality near Biju Patnaik International Airport here Sunday evening in which two persons suffered injuries of varying degrees. Briefing media persons about

Odisha vets to go on mass leave from Jan 4

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Veterinarians in the state have threatened to proceed on mass leave from January 4 over their demands for complete revamp of the Odisha Veterinary Service Association (OVSA).

Addressing a press conference here, Monday, association president Jadunath Parida said the reformulation includes parity with medical doctors, DACP and non-practicing allowance. “When the state was selected under One Health programme of the United Nations to cover human and veterinary treatment under one umbrella, the responsibilities of veterinarians have been multiplied. In such circumstances, the state government is not fulfilling the demands of OVSA showing apathetic attitude,” general secretary of the association Sankarsan Maahunta said. This has demoralized the veterinarians’ working ability and interest, he added.

Further, he said that currently about 1,300 doctors are shouldering the responsibility of 1,910 vets of the state as the rest posts are lying vacant. Also about 40 per cent of the supporting posts are lying vacant in the department, which has led to undue pressure upon the vets.

“They are even forced to work beyond working hours and even on holidays to cope with the expectations of the livestock owners,” Parida said advancing reasons for the proposed mass abstention as a mark of protest.

the case, Zone-II ACP Girija Shankar Chakrabarty said two youths, Rakesh Kumar Guru and Siba Maharana, had threatened an elderly person, Pradeep Singh, for giving his place on rent to a youth for a garage. Singh owns a small market complex in the airport area here.

“The dispute turned violent Sunday evening when the two youths attacked Pradeep with a sword. When the other group members, who were present, intervened in the matter, the duo turned towards them. Meanwhile, the other group members snatched the sword and attacked back the duo, leaving one of them seriously injured,” Chakrabarty said.

The ACP said two cases have been registered—one by Pradeep and other by Siba's brother, and so far eight persons have been arrested. Rakesh was arrested for attacking Pradeep, while seven others involved in the street clash were taken into custody in the other case.

All the arrested persons are habitual offenders and have cases in different police stations. Siba was released from jail on bail a month ago. Further investigation is going on to nab other persons involved in the incident, the ACP said.

2 girls drown

Bhubaneswar: Two 10-year-old girls drowned in a pond in their village in Cuttack district, Monday. The deceased were identified as Sofiya Khatun and Nandini Kumari, both from Kuranga Pradhan village under Sadar police limits in Cuttack. “The two girls, along with another friend, had gone to a pond in the village to take bath. One of the minors slipped into deep water while bathing. Later, two others also fell into the water while trying to save her. “A local youth present near the pond rushed to their help. However, he managed to save one of the minors,” said a villager.

Met predicts dense fog for 2 days

Dry weather is likely to prevail Tuesday and Wednesday and shallow to moderate fog may occur at a few places over the districts of Odisha in the morning hours

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Dense fog is likely to occur at some places over several districts of Odisha during the next 48 hours, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Monday.

It said there will be no major change in the minimum temperature at many places over the districts of Odisha during next 4 to 5 days.

The Meteorological Centre in Bhubaneswar said that dry weather is likely to prevail over the districts of the state. Shallow to moderate fog is very likely to occur at a few places over the districts of Odisha in the morning hours, Tuesday.

In its mid-day bulletin, the IMD mentioned, “Minimum temperatures observed no large change over the districts of Odisha. They were markedly below normal at one or two places, below normal at one or two places, appreciably above normal at one or two places over



JOY BY THE BAY: A family enjoys camel ride as thousands throng the Golden Beach in Puri on Christmas holiday, Monday

AGENCIES

Christmas celebrated with traditional fervour

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Christmas was celebrated with traditional fervour in the state, including the sensitive Kandhamal district, Monday as thousands of people thronged churches for special prayers.

Christmas was celebrated in a big way in the cities of Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Balasore, Berhampur, Rourkela, Jeypore and Rayagada and in the districts of Kandhamal, Gajapati, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and other places where Christians live in large number.

Governor Raghubar Das and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik greeted the people on the occasion.

Describing the festival as a symbol of peace, harmony and humanism, the governor in a message wished the people of Odisha, especially the Christian community happiness, peace and prosperity. Wishing the people of the state on this day, Patnaik appealed for their cooperation to build a developed and empowered Odisha.

Churches across the state were decorated with lights, candles, Christmas trees, bells, Santa Claus figurines, and elaborate decorations.

Celebrations began with midnight prayers on Sunday night marking the birth of Lord Jesus. Mass prayers and special services were held in most of the



Churches Monday morning.

Both Roman Catholics and Protestants celebrated the festival with religious fervour visiting the impeccably decorated churches. People lighted candles and joined mass prayers in the churches.

In Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, apart from the Christian com-

munity, a large number of locals visited the churches on this special occasion.

“On this auspicious holy day, I appeal to all to experience the love, joy and happiness that God has given to us and share it with all our brothers and sisters,” said Archbishop John Barwa, head of the Catholic Church in Odisha.

Meanwhile, tight security arrangements have been made and police have intensified patrolling in the sensitive Kandhamal district, which witnessed a large-scale riots in 2007 and 2008.

As many as 42 platoons (one platoon comprises 30 personnel) of police force were deployed in the Kandhamal district. The po-

lice conducted flag marches in all police stations of the district. People stepped into churches at Phulbani, G.Udayagiri, Balliguda, Raikia, Daringbadi, Kotagarh and Bamunigam and offered prayers to Lord Jesus.

Police said the festival is being celebrated without any report of any untoward incident from anywhere in the state.

To mark this day, internationally acclaimed sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik has created a Santa Claus using two tonne of onions and sand at Blue Flag beach in Puri. The sculpture is 100 feet long, 20 feet high and 40 feet wide in size. Pattnaik and students of his sand art school took eight hours to complete the sculpture.

Guv, CM pay tributes to Vajpayee on birth anniv

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Governor Raghubar Das and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik paid tributes to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 99th birth anniversary.

Das paid floral tributes to Vajpayee at Raj Bhawan here and remembered his indelible contribution to modern India.

In a post on X, the Governor said Vajpayee will be remembered for his powerful speeches, revolution in the telecom sector, formation of three states, including Jharkhand, nuclear testing, Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Kisan Credit Card, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and many other people-centric schemes.

“Humble tributes to former Prime Minister of India and Bharat Ratna recipient #AtalBihariVajpayee on his birth anniversary. He was a great poet, orator and statesman. His significant role in nation-building

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan also paid tributes to the former PM and described him as a mass leader connected to the people and the land

and patriotism will continue to inspire the generations to come,” said the Chief Minister on X.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who hails from Odisha, also paid floral tributes to the former prime minister and described him as a mass leader connected to the people and the land.

“Atal ji left an indelible mark on Indian politics with his ideals, values and principles. He started a new era of Sarva Shiksha, development, good governance and welfare of the poor in India. His life dedicated to the nation and his devotion to duty is a source of eternal inspiration for all of us,” Pradhan said.

Legal literacy drive on forest, women rights

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 25: Union Justice department organised a legal literacy campaign here Monday to create awareness about the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (recognition of forest rights) Act, 2006 and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

As part of the campaign, organised in association with the Shadow Advertising and Communications Pvt Ltd, a van mounted with LED screen is dispersing information about the laws in tribal-dominated districts of the state.



“The Information Education and Communication (IEC) van started campaigning Dec 11 and is schedule to continue till Dec 30, 2023. Kandhamal, Rayagada, Koraput, Nabarangpur has been covered and the van will further cover Kalahandi, Nuapada and Bolangir in the last phase,” said an official.

Through this van campaign, people are being informed about Forest Rights Act 2006, with a special focus on the rights of forest dwelling communities and tribal populations over the forest land and forest produced.

Other than forest rights, local leaders like Sarpanchs and ward members are also being made aware about forms of domestic violence women are subjected to, which not only includes physical violence but also emotional, verbal, sexual and economic abuse.

Study finds shared genetics of problematic drinking

Researchers revealed that people around the world possess a shared genetic architecture for Problematic Alcohol Use (PAU) - habitual heavy drinking, accompanied by harmful consequences.

The findings, published in the journal Nature Medicine, could help scientists understand the genetic basis of PAU, a major cause of health problems in many age groups. It is a leading cause of death in those it afflicts.

The study is the largest to date for PAU - it identified many new risk genes and uncovered a large amount of new biology. With a better understanding of PAU biology, scientists will have

new possibilities in developing treatments.

“Research with the primary focus on understanding the molecular mechanism underlying PAU and identification of gene targets for potential pharmacological studies is extremely important for future treatments and could help mitigate the consequences of excessive alcohol use,” said Hang Zhou, Assistant Professor of psychiatry and of biomedical informatics and data science at Yale University’s School of Medicine.

Researchers studied more than 1 million people with PAU and included as many genetic ancestral groups as possible, including people with European,



African, Latin American, East Asian, and South Asian ancestries. They found that the genetic ar-

RESEARCHERS STUDIED MORE THAN 1 MILLION PEOPLE WITH PROBLEMATIC ALCOHOL USE (PAU) AND INCLUDED AS MANY GENETIC ANCESTRAL GROUPS AS POSSIBLE, INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH EUROPEAN, AFRICAN, LATIN AMERICAN, EAST ASIAN, AND SOUTH ASIAN ANCESTRIES

THE ANALYSIS ALSO IDENTIFIED SEVERAL EXISTING MEDICATIONS AS POTENTIAL TREATMENTS FOR PAU

cestry information, we identified 110 gene regions and had an improved fine-mapping of the potential causal variants in each region,” Zhou said.

The researchers also used various methods to prioritise multiple genes with convergent evidence linking association to PAU with brain biology through gene expression (transcriptional-wide association study in 13 brain tissues) and chromatin interaction analysis in the brain.

This work will provide valuable resources and targets for future functional analysis and drug development.

The analysis also identified several existing medications as potential treatments for PAU. IANS

TECH TAKEOVER

AMID TWO MAJOR WARS, A HIGH INTEREST RATE REGIME AND SKYROCKETING INFLATION ACROSS NATIONS, ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES GATHERED SOME PACE IN DEVELOPING ECONOMIES, ALTHOUGH THE PICTURE REMAINED GLOOMY IN MUCH OF THE DEVELOPED WORLD IN THE OUTGOING YEAR. SIDE BY SIDE, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SCALED NEW PEAKS AND STARTED THREATENING HUMANITY IN TERMS OF LIVELIHOOD LOSS.

ORISSA POST RECAPS THE MAJOR EVENTS, ISSUES AND TRENDS IN THE WORLD OF BUSINESS IN 2023

YEAR OF LAYOFFS

Infographic showing layoffs at Meta (21,000), Amazon (18,000), Microsoft (10,000), Google (12,000), and Nokia (14,000). Includes a 'FUNDING WINTER' section with various startup funding figures.

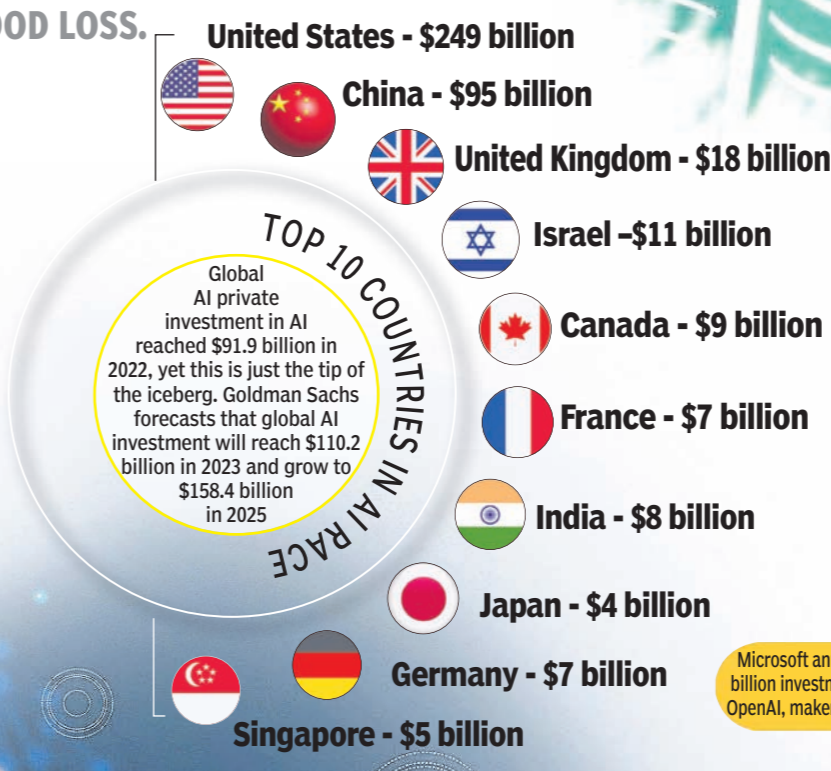
AI goes mainstream

The outgoing year played out as an apt acknowledgement to the extraordinary leap made in the field of artificial intelligence (AI). In a year awash with groundbreaking technological innovations and profound ethical debates, the world witnessed AI's omnipresent sway in uncharted territories...

Infographic about Bard, Google's AI chatbot, highlighting its capabilities and development.

Infographic about xAI, Elon Musk's AI venture, detailing its goals and initial steps.

Infographic about Microsoft Copilot, a large language model-based chatbot, and its integration into various Microsoft products.



Section titled 'HAMMERED BY HINDENBURG' featuring a portrait of Gautam Adani and text about his financial setbacks and the impact of Hindenburg Research's report.

PUMPING MONEY

Infographic listing major AI investments by companies like Microsoft, Google, Meta, and Amazon throughout the year.

The 'damning report'

On January 24, 2023, Hindenburg Research released its report 'How The World's 3rd Richest Man is Pulling The Largest Con In Corporate History'. It alleged that the group had undertaken questionable practices...

PILs in Supreme Court

In March, the Supreme Court combined various public interest litigations (PILs) filed in the Adani-Hindenburg saga into one case, before the markets regulator SEBI...

Stocks crash

Stocks of all the nine companies of the group went into a freefall after the report was released. A month after Hindenburg's bombshell report, Adani Group lost over ₹12 lakh crore market value...

Adani loses crown

In early February, Gautam Adani's ranking in the global rich list fell from #2 to #21, a result of the crash in the group's stocks.

Slow, steady recovery

Adani group stocks may have recovered slowly since Hindenburg Research's scathing January report, they are still trading up to 84 per cent below of the group's January levels.

INDICES SCALE NEW PEAKS

The year 2023 has proven to be a remarkable one for the Indian stock markets, characterised by notable accomplishments and landmarks. The mid- and small-cap stocks experienced a phenomenal rebound this year...

Infographic celebrating milestones for various companies: 70-HR WORK WEEK (Infosys), TWITTER BECOMES X, VISION PRO (Apple), VIEWERSHIP RECORD (Disney+ Hotstar), TYPE-C TAKES OVER (Apple), GOOGLE TURNS 25, and UPI'S 10BN FEAT.

DEMONETISATION 2.0

The much talked about ₹2,000 denomination bank notes which were introduced in November 2016 following demonetisation of the then prevailing ₹1,000 and ₹500 currency notes were withdrawn from circulation May 19 by RBI.

AEROPLANE BINGE: Infographic about the aviation boom in India, highlighting orders from Air India, IndiGo, and other airlines.

MAKE IN INDIA: Infographic celebrating India's growth as a global manufacturing powerhouse, mentioning investments from companies like AMD, Cisco, and Apple.

IPO bonanza

Infographic celebrating the success of Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) in 2023, featuring Cello World, IREDA, JSW Infrastructure, Flair, Honasa Consumer Care, and Tata Technologies.

FALL FROM GRACE

Infographic detailing the financial setbacks of BYJU'S (layoffs of 2,500) and FTX (disgraced crypto king), including market value drops and legal issues.

US BANKS COLLAPSE: Detailed infographic about the failures of Silicon Valley Bank, Signature Bank, and First Republic Bank, including the reasons behind their collapses and the impact on investors.

They left us

Infographic paying tribute to prominent business leaders who passed away in 2023, including SRICHAND PARMANAND OR SP HINDUJA, KESHUB MAHINDRA, PRITHVI RAJ SINGH OBEROI, and SUBRATA ROY.



A general view of the fishing town of Grindavik, which was evacuated due to volcanic activity in Iceland



Traffic congestion on a road owing to rush of tourists for Christmas and New Year celebrations in Manali



Security personnel intercept a boat carrying suspected Rohingya refugees near Shaheed Dweep, in Andaman and Nicobar Islands



PM Narendra Modi pays tribute to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary, at Sadaiv Atal in New Delhi



Tourists visit the historical Hawa Mahal during the Christmas and New Year celebrations at Badi Chaupar in Jaipur



A woman poses for a souvenir photo as a Xiamen Airlines plane flies over a temple in Xiamen in southeast China's Fujian province



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a house, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip



A group of geese used to help vigilance patrols around the Penitentiary Complex honk near Florianopolis, Santa Catarina State, Brazil

REUTERS/AP/PTI PHOTOS

international

of the day quote

We're living in a time when there are all kinds of forces that are tearing at democracy, at here and abroad

MICHAEL BENNET | UNITED STATES SENATOR

There's a recognition that my government is committed to climate action and that we're playing a positive role, not just with our commitment to reduce our emissions by 43% by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050, but that, importantly, we are playing a role in the region, and indeed, around the globe

ANTHONY ALBANESE | AUSTRALIAN PM

A country cannot expect to be taken seriously on a global stage if neighbouring countries are upset with it

NAWAZ SHARIF | FORMER PAKISTAN PM

SHORT TAKES

Minor quakes rattle Hawaii's Big Island

Hawaii: Hundreds of people reported feeling minor earthquakes of similar intensity on Hawaii's Big Island and on the Olympic Peninsula northwest of Seattle, but no damage was reported. The earthquakes Saturday afternoon in Hawaii and Sunday morning in Washington state were over 2,600 miles (4,200 kilometres) apart and apparently unrelated.

Gunmen kill 16 in Nigeria

Abuja: At least 16 persons were killed in an attack by suspected gunmen in Nigeria's central Plateau state, local officials have said. Oya James, spokesperson for Operation Safe Haven, a military-led multi-security taskforce in Plateau, told reporters in Jos, the state capital, Sunday that the attack occurred in Mushu, a village in the Bokkos local government area. Xinhua News Agency reported. The villagers were asleep when the gunmen entered the neighborhood, shooting indiscriminately and destroying property, James said.

Five killed in Brazil plane crash

Rio De Janeiro: Five people, including a minor, died Saturday when a plane crashed in a residential area in the Brazilian state of Sao Paulo, local media reported. The firefighters did not reveal whether all the victims were traveling on the plane, which was "small in size," said the reports, Xinhua News Agency reported. The plane was a single-engine RV-10 with seating for a pilot and three passengers.



We're all familiar with the jolly, white-haired and bearded overweight man who sneaks down chimneys on Christmas Eve delivering presents to children. But where did this come from? With roots in Christianity, the origins of the world's most beloved gift-giver transcend time, culture and religion. **St Nicholas** It all starts with St Nicholas, a man who lived in the fourth century. No credible historical

Serbia police detain 38 people as Oppn plans more protests

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Belgrade, Dec 25: Serbian police said Monday they have detained at least 38 people who took part in a protest against reported widespread irregularities during a recent general ballot that declared the governing populists as winners of the parliamentary and local councils' elections.

Opposition group Serbia Against Violence has been staging protests since the December 17 elections, saying there has been election fraud, particularly in the capital, Belgrade. Some politicians began a hunger strike.

On Sunday evening, protesters tried to enter Belgrade's city council, breaking windows, before riot police pushed them back using tear gas, pepper spray and batons.

Senior police official Ivica Ivkovic told reporters that those detained were facing charges of inciting violent change of constitutional order — in reference to attempting to overthrow the government — and violent behaviour.

Several hundred university students and other citizens Monday blocked traffic at a key Belgrade street that hosts government headquarters, braving a police warning against the blockades of roads and bridges in the capital.

UKRAINE DOWNS 28 RUSSIAN DRONES

Russian and Ukrainian military officials both reported Sunday, downing enemy drones in different areas of the 1,000-km-long (621-mile) front of their 22-month-old war

AGENCIES

Kyiv, Dec 25: Ukraine's air force Monday reported that it shot down two Russian fighter jets during the night along with two cruise missiles and 28 Shahed-type drones.

The report said the attacks were aimed at southern and central regions of Ukraine, but that no casualties were immediately known. It said that 31 drones were launched in all, but details of what the three that weren't intercepted may have struck weren't given.

A summary from the Ukrainian presidential office said that one civilian was killed and at least four wounded in Russian attacks over the previous 24 hours. The death occurred in the town of Chornobaivka in the Kherson region, which is partly under Russian control and experiences daily fighting.

Ukraine observed Christmas Monday, the first time the country has officially marked the holiday December 25 rather than the January 7 date followed by some Orthodox countries, including Russia.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed legislation in July to move the public holiday's date. Ukraine is predominantly Orthodox Christian, but



Women dressed in national suits sing carol as they celebrate Christmas in the village of Pirogovo outside Kyiv, Ukraine

AP/PTI PHOTO

Maersk prepares to resume operations in Red Sea

AGENCIES

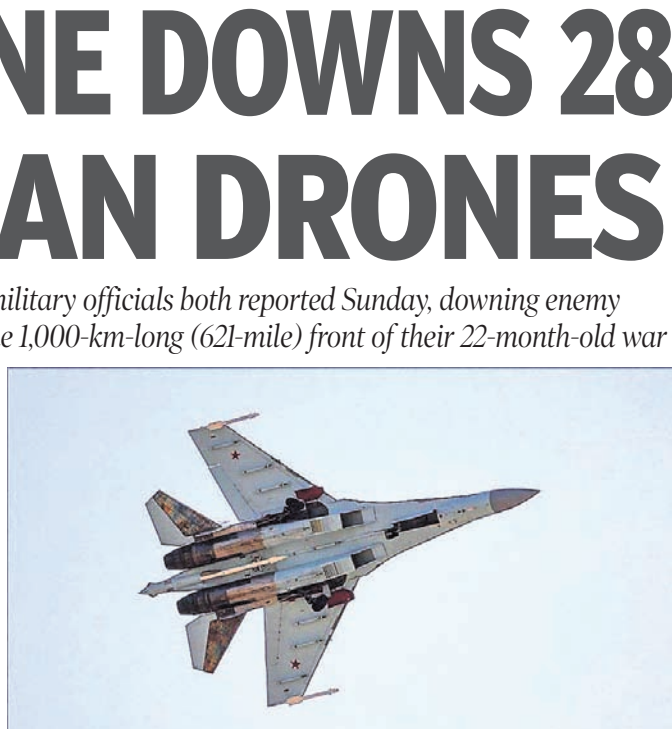
Frankfurt, Dec 25: Shipping firm Maersk says that it's preparing to allow vessels to resume sailing through the Red Sea, thanks to the start of a US-led multinational naval operation to protect shipping from attacks by Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Houthi attacks have led to a

major disruption of shipping through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, one of the most important arteries for trade in oil, natural gas, grain and consumer goods between Europe and Asia. Maersk said in a statement Sunday that "we have received confirmation that the previously announced multi-national security initiative Operation

Prosperity Guardian (OPG) has now been set up and deployed to allow maritime commerce to pass through the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden and once again return to using the Suez Canal as a gateway between Asia and Europe." The company said it was working on plans for the first vessels to make the journey "and for this to happen as soon as oper-

ationally possible." The Houthis are Iranian-backed rebels who seized Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in 2014, launching a grinding war against a Saudi-led coalition seeking to restore the government. The Houthis have sporadically targeted ships in the region, but the attacks have increased since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.



the faith is divided between two churches, one of which had long affiliation with the Russian Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which didn't recognize the authority of the Russian church and had been regarded as schismatic, was granted full recognition in 2018 by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Orthodoxy's top

authority. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which was a branch of the Russian church, announced in 2022 after the start of the Russia-Ukraine war that it was breaking ties with Moscow and considered itself autonomous. However, its parishes continue to follow the same liturgical calendar as the Russian church and will observe Christmas January 7

Fire breaks out on Russian nuclear ship

Moscow: Russia's emergencies ministry said a fire broke out on a nuclear-powered container ship and icebreaker in the northern port of Murmansk but was quickly extinguished. The ministry said in statements on Telegram that the fire occurred late Sunday in a cabin of the Sevmorput vessel and spread to about 30 square meters (300 square feet). The fire was put out about an hour after the initial report and there were no injuries, it added. The statement did not disclose what caused the fire or how close it was to the ship's reactor. The 260-meter (830-foot) Sevmorput is the only nuclear cargo ship in service.

The origins of Santa Claus

St Nicholas Day

Across Europe, the legacy of St Nicholas's charity and kindness sparked a variety of traditions, with December 6 becoming his feast day.

In France, particularly in regions such as Alsace and Lorraine, children would leave their shoes out for St Nicholas, hoping to find them filled with chocolates and gifts the next morning.

This tradition was accompanied by parades in which a donkey would pass through town streets, laden with baskets of biscuits and sweets for the children. In Central Europe, particularly in Alpine regions, St Nicholas Day tradition merged gradually with unique local customs when the non-Christian population adopted Christianity as their religion. **The transformation into**

Santa Claus

The metamorphosis of St Nicholas into Santa Claus was a gradual process influenced by cultural and religious shifts.

In Germany and the Netherlands in the course of the 17th century the practice of gift-giving in the name of St Nicholas began to take root. The Dutch called him "Sinterklaas", a term that would eventually evolve into the English colloquial "Santa Claus". This transformation first occurred in Germany and later spread to other European countries. The tradition of St Nicholas was brought to North America in the 17th century. By the 19th century, various iterations of St Nicholas were emerging in English-speaking communities across the world. The legacy of St Nicholas and

Jaishankar in Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, Dec 25: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Monday arrived in Moscow a five-day visit to Russia during which he will hold talks with his counterpart and discuss various bilateral and global issues.

"Arrived in Moscow. Look forward to my engagements," Jaishankar said in a post on X. During his visit, he will also travel to St. Petersburg.

"The time-tested India-Russia partnership has remained stable and resilient and continues to be characterized by the spirit of the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in New Delhi Sunday.

SNIPPETS

China vows consular support for detained Vivo employees in India

Beijing: China Monday said it will provide consular protection and assistance to the arrested employees working for China's smartphone maker Vivo in India and expressed its firm backing to the Chinese businesses in protecting their lawful rights and interests. The Enforcement Directorate last week arrested three vivo-India executives in connection with its money laundering probe against the Chinese smartphone maker and some others. Asked for her reaction to the arrests, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here Monday that China is closely following the issue. "The Chinese government firmly supports Chinese businesses in safeguarding their lawful rights and interests," she said.

China earthquake: Toll rises to 149

Beijing: The death toll from the 6.2-magnitude earthquake that jolted northwest China earlier this week has risen to 149 with two people still missing. The quake, the worst in nine years in the region, struck

midnight December 18 at a depth of 10 kilometres. The quake hit Jishishan County, Gansu Province, and Minhe County in the neighbouring Qinghai Province last Saturday causing heavy death and destruction. The death toll in Qinghai Province has risen to 32 while two people are still missing, the Qinghai Emergency Management Department said on Monday. Search for the two missing people was continuing, the department said.

Gunfire erupts at Colorado mall

Colorado Springs: A man was fatally shot and three people were hurt as gunfire rang out at a shopping center in Colorado on Christmas Eve, police said Sunday. A fight broke out between two groups of people in the afternoon at the Citadel Mall in Colorado Springs and officers received a report of gunshots and responded, the Colorado Springs Police Department said in a series of posts on the social media platform X. One adult male was dead at the scene with a gunshot wound, and two more, each of whom had been shot at least once, were taken to hospitals in serious condition, police said.

PAK ELECTIONS

Hafiz Saeed-backed party fields candidates



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, Dec 25: A new political front organisation of the 26/11 terror attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed has fielded candidates for most of the national and provincial assembly constituencies across Pakistan for the February 8 general elections.

Saeed, the founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), has been in jail since 2019 after being convicted for several years in multiple terror finance cases along with some other leaders of the banned Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD).

The Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) party - set up by Saeed - says it is a political party. The electoral symbol for the PMML is 'chair'. In a video message, PMML President Khalid Masood Sindhu said that his party is contesting on most of the national and provincial assembly seats.

"We want to come to power not for corruption but to serve the people and make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state," he said.

Navalny located in Russia penal colony

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Dec 25: Associates of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said Monday that he has been located at a prison colony above the Arctic Circle nearly three weeks after contact with him was lost.

Navalny, the most prominent foe of Russian President Vladimir Putin, is serving a 19-year sentence on charges of extremism. He had been imprisoned in the Vladimir region of central Russia, about 230 kilometers (140 miles) east of Moscow, but his lawyers said they had not been able to reach him since December 6.

His spokesperson, Kira Yarmysh, said he was located in a prison colony in the town of Kharp, in the Yamalo-Nenets region about 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow. Navalny is "fine — at least as much as possible after such a long stage" and a lawyer visited him, Yarmysh told The Associated Press. Navalny has been behind bars in Russia since January 2021.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

MISSION 'SAFARI SUPREMACY'

ROHIT & CO GEAR UP FOR A BIG CHALLENGE AS THEY LOOK FOR MAIDEN TEST SERIES WIN IN SOUTH AFRICA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Centurion, Dec 25: He endured the heartbreak of a lifetime 36 evenings back but Rohit Sharma will give his all to erase the memories of a World Cup final defeat as he trains his eyes on ending India's 31-year wait for a Test series win on South African soil. The two-match Test rubber, starting here on the Boxing Day, will be India's ninth away series in the Rainbow Nation since 1992, and captain Rohit will have an onerous task of traversing a difficult terrain in order to conquer what has always been dubbed the team's 'final frontier'. However, for the action to start at Supersport Park, the heavy rains predicted on the first two days need to subside. The Centurion track offers variable bounce and is one of the fastest in the region. And



MATCHDAY
INDIA vs SOUTH AFRICA
1st Test (Day 1)
Time: 01:30 pm
Telecast: Star Sports Network
Stream: Disney+Hotstar

INDIA : SOUTH AFRICA

Rohit Sharma (C), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul (wk), Shreyas Iyer, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Prasidh Krishna, KS Bharat (wk) & Abhimanyu Easwaran (2nd Test) : Temba Bavuma (C), Aiden Markram, Tony de Zorzi, Dean Elgar, Keegan Petersen, Kyle Verreynne (wk), Tristan Stubbs (wk), Nandre Burger, Marco Jansen, Wiaan Mulder, Gerald Coetzee, Keshav Maharaj, Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi & David Bedingham

will remain. For the golden generation of Indian cricketers, this is also their last African Safari and a chance to conquer what no other team could on eight previous tours. In Temba Bavuma's South Africa, they have a team that has a crack fast bowling attack, which could make some of the young Indian batters look like cats on hot tin roof. For Yashasvi Jaiswal, it will be the first big test against a quality attack comprising Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi, Marco Jansen and Gerald Coetzee. There will be way more bounce than what he got in the Caribbean, and the variable nature of it will ask him probing questions. Similarly, Shubman Gill and Shreyas Iyer, who have proven their mettle on sub-continental pitches, need to up their game in more challenging batting conditions. Iyer, especially, with his well-documented weakness against the short ball, will have to churn out something really special. Coach Rahul Dravid doesn't

want Jaiswal and Gill to change their style but wants them to develop game awareness and play as per the need of the hour. India's performance will depend on three factors: how well the skipper executes his hook and pull shots, for how much time Virat Kohli decides to leave balls outside the off-stump, and how well the team covers up Mohammed Shami's absence. The skiddy Mukesh Kumar looked better at the nets but the extra bounce available makes a case for Prasidh Krishna. Bavuma, the retiring Dean Elgar, the stylish Aiden Markram, the exciting Tony de Zorzi, and the dogged Keegan Petersen constitute a good batting unit that can make Indian bowlers toil hard. KL Rahul donning the big gloves is another aspect of this game. The team management handing over keeping responsibilities to Rahul can be viewed from two different prisms. The positive one would be the faith in his ability as a glovesman



in 50-over cricket and hoping that he can do it for 90 overs in a day. The not-so-positive aspect will be the sheer desperation not to lose that extra batter in Iyer and also not looking at the bigger picture that Rahul could find it extremely difficult to stand up to Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja in a month's time against England at home,

provided Ishan Kishan isn't back from his mental health break. It will be another away Test match which Ashwin might have to miss because of conditions and combinations. At Supersport Park, it normally takes three and half to four days to achieve results and if the toss happens on the second day, after a washout on opening day, batting first will surely be a very difficult proposition.

Want to achieve what nobody has done: Sharma

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Centurion, Dec 25: India captain Rohit Sharma Monday said, as a leader, he wants his team to "achieve" what others Indian sides in the past have failed to do in South Africa. Since their first Test series in South Africa in 1992, India have never achieved success there. India will play South Africa in the first of the two Tests starting here Tuesday. "Want to achieve what nobody has achieved in this part of the world," Rohit said during the pre-match press conference. Rohit also did not want to speak about his cricketing future, just saying that he wants to enjoy the game. "I want to play whatever cricket is there in front of me," he said without elaborating his plans. KL Rahul is expected to keep wickets in the first Test but the skipper said it will be up to the wicketkeeper-batter to decide how long he wants to don the gloves in the five-day format. "I am not sure how long KL Rahul would want to keep wickets but he is keen as of now," said Rohit. India's World Cup hero, Mohammed Shami has been ruled out of the series with an ankle injury and Rohit termed the speedster's absence as a big loss. "Shami will be a big miss for what he has done for us over the years. Someone will fill up (the) hole but it won't be easy," he said.

<p>23 Tests played in South Africa with India winning 4 compared to the hosts' 12, while 7 matches ended in draws</p>	<p>HIGHEST TOTAL (in last decade) India: 421 (Johannesburg, December 2013) South Africa: 500 (Durban, December 2013)</p>	<p>MOST RUNS (Current squad) INDIA: VIRAT KOHLI (719 runs; 7 matches) SOUTH AFRICA: DEAN ELGAR (442 runs, 6 matches)</p>
	<p>LOWEST TOTAL (in last decade) INDIA: 135 (Cape Town, January 2018) SOUTH AFRICA: 130 (Cape Town, January 2018)</p>	<p>MOST WICKETS (Current squad) INDIA: JASPRIT BUMRAH (26 wickets; 6 matches) SOUTH AFRICA: KAGISO RABADA (35 wickets; 6 matches)</p>

Giants hand Warriors second straight loss at Ultimate Kho Kho

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Dec 25: Gujarat Giants produced a complete performance in attack and defence as they defeated Rajasthan Warriors 41-30 to begin their Ultimate Kho Kho Season 2 campaign on a winning note here Monday. This was the Warriors' second straight defeat in this edition after their 27-35 loss against the hosts and defending champions Odisha Juggernauts on the opening day, Sunday. P Narasayya contributed to the Giants' win with eight points while Sanket Kadam and Suyash Gargate secured six points each. Shubham Thorat, Abhinandan Patil and Akshay Bhangare defended brilliantly for more than 6.53 minutes to earn crucial dream run bonus points for the winning team. Gujarat Giants will now clash with Mumbai Khiladis Tuesday while the title holders Odisha Juggernauts will face Chennai Quick Guns in their second match of the season.

FIFA threatens to suspend Brazil

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rio de Janeiro, Dec 25: FIFA warned Brazil it could suspend its national teams and clubs from international competitions if an intervention by its football body leads to the election of a new president in January. FIFA said in a letter to a Brazilian football executive that the country's football body CBF could face suspension if it does not heed its call to wait and instead holds a swift election to replace Ednaldo Rodrigues as president regardless. The document was obtained by this news agency. A Rio de Janeiro court removed Rodrigues and all his appointees at CBF from office December 7 due to irregularities in his election last year. Brazil's two highest courts upheld that ruling last week. Football's governing body FIFA historically rejects government and third-party interference in its member associations, which ultimately could leave five-time World Cup win-



ners Brazil out of major competitions until the crisis is solved. The Rio court ruling also named Jose Perdiz, the head of Brazil's top sports court, as an intervener to organize new elections for the presidency within 30 working days. FIFA said in previous letters to CBF it considers the intervention to be undue. Sunday's letter was signed by FIFA's Kenny Jean-Marie, its chief members' association officer, and CONMEBOL's deputy secretary-general, Monserrat Jimenez Garcia. FIFA and South

American football body CONMEBOL also said in the letter they will form a commission to discuss the matter in Brazil January 8. "FIFA and CONMEBOL would like to strongly emphasize that, until such mission takes place, no decision affecting CBF, including any elections or call for elections, shall be taken. Should this not be respected, FIFA will have no other option but to submit the matter to its relevant decision-making body for consideration and decision, which

might also include a suspension," the letter said. "For the sake of good order, we would also like to underline that should CBF be eventually suspended by the relevant FIFA body, it would lose all of its membership rights with immediate effect and until the suspension is lifted by FIFA. "This would also mean that CBF representative and clubs teams would no longer be entitled to take part in any international competition while it is suspended," it added. The document also says that any irregular interference in its member associations "can lead to sanctions as provided for in the FIFA Statutes, including a suspension, and this even if the third-party influence was/is not the fault of the member association concerned." Perdiz said in a statement he sees FIFA's letter "as a positive sign." He also added he will "call for the elections within the established deadline, with the transparency and integrity that are demanded."

India women's team for Oz ODIs sees new faces



Harmanpreet Kaur (R) and Smriti Mandhana have been named captain and vice-captain, respectively, for the series

New Delhi, Dec 25: Shreyanka Patil, Mannat Kashyap, Saika Ishaque and Titas Sadhu were Monday included for the first time in the Indian women's ODI squad for the upcoming limited overs assignment against Australia. The Indian women's team will play in three One-day Internationals and as many T20Is against the visiting Australian team from December 28 with the first ODI at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. A crafty left-arm-spinner, the Patiala-born Kashyap, 20, was earlier called up for the T20I series against England but did not get a game. Shreyanka earned her maiden ODI call-up after she made her debut in the T20I series against England earlier this month. In three matches against Heather Knight's women, Shreyanka picked up five wickets and won the Player of the Match award in the third and final T20I of the series. Kashyap was part of India's victorious women's Under-19 World Cup winning squad in February, and so was Titas Sadhu. Saika Ishaque was one of the top bowlers for the Mumbai franchise in the inaugural Women's Premier League. The three-match ODI series will be played at the Wankhede Stadium and will start December 28. The next two matches will be played December 30 and January 2. The action will then shift to DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai which will host the three T20Is January 5, 7 and 9. Harmanpreet Kaur remains the captain of both the teams with Smriti Mandhana being her deputy. India won the one-off women's Test against Australia by eight wickets in Mumbai Sunday.

THE SQUADS
FOR ODIs: Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Yastika Bhatia (wk), Richa Ghosh (wk), Amanjot Kaur, Shreyanka Patil, Mannat Kashyap, Saika Ishaque, Renuka Singh Thakur, Titas Sadhu, Pooja Vastrakar, Sneha Rana, Harleen Deol.
FOR T20Is: Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Yastika Bhatia (wk), Richa Ghosh (wk), Amanjot Kaur, Shreyanka Patil, Mannat Kashyap, Saika Ishaque, Renuka Singh Thakur, Titas Sadhu, Pooja Vastrakar, Kanika Ahuja, Minnu Mani.

Jyoti eyes spot in India's Olympic Qualifiers squad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 25: Boosted by her experience on Valencia tour, young forward Jyoti Chhatrri is now eyeing a place in the Indian women's hockey team for next year's FIH Olympics Qualifiers in Ranchi. The 19-year-old from Rourkela was part of the Indian team at the recently-concluded 5 Nations Tournament in Valencia. She has been a key figure in the Junior team setup for the past year and played across all six games for India at the Junior World Cup, scoring a goal during the thrilling 3-3 (3-2 SO) win over New Zealand. She also played a prominent role during India's gold medal-winning performance at the Women's



Junior Asia Cup this year. "The preparatory tour in Valencia has boosted my confidence as an individual and I am hopeful to get

a chance to be a part of the Indian squad for the FIH Hockey Olympics Qualifiers Ranchi 2024," she said in a press release issued by Hockey India (HI). "This past year has really helped me develop as a player and I am eager to grab on to every opportunity that comes my way. The senior players, coaches, and support staff have been thoroughly supportive and have helped me a lot whenever needed. It is a dream for every player to represent India at the Olympics, and our journey to Paris as a team will hopefully begin in January." While Jyoti made her senior team debut at the 4 Nations Women's Invitational Tournament in Barcelona earlier this year against England, the 5 Nations Tournament in Valencia was another good chance for her to compete against some of the top teams - Ireland, Germany, Spain, and Belgium.

Jyoti believes her experience in Valencia has helped her grow as a player. "I was elated to be considered for the squad for the Valencia tour. It is always a great opportunity to learn when you get to train alongside the senior team," she said. "Having competitive matches against such strong oppositions also helped me understand the tenacity and mental strength needed to fight to win at the highest levels." India will be competing in the Olympics Qualifiers in Ranchi, aiming to secure a spot in the Paris Games. India will begin the campaign against the USA January 13 before facing New Zealand January 14. Their last Pool B clash will be against Italy January 16.