



Kareena's favourite

Actor Kareena Kapoor Khan takes to her Instagram stories and shares a glimpse of her favourite couple

LEISURE | P2



Travel ban for Yoon

South Korean Prez Yoon Suk Yeol has been banned from leaving the country over a failed attempt at imposing martial law

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Auto sales

Retail sales of vehicles across categories in India grow by 11.21 per cent at 32,08,719 units in November

BUSINESS | P11



Raring to go

Mohammed Shami proves his fitness with an all-round show while playing for Bengal in SMAT

SPORTS | P12



SEASON'S FIRST: Badrinath Dham, in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, receives the first snowfall of the season, Monday

PTI PHOTO

5,000 docs, 3,000 paramedics soon

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: Two days after the CAG report flagged an acute shortage of doctors and nurses in public healthcare institutions in the state, the government Monday said the process will start for recruitment of 5,000 doctors and 3,000 paramedical staff soon.

Replying to a question by BJD legislator Pratap Keshari Deb in the Assembly, Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling said, "We have brought two amendments in the doctors' recruitment rules. Very soon, we are going to start the process for recruitment of 5,000 doctors and 3,000 paramedical staff."

Mahaling said the government is committed to ensure that every district has one medical college.

"BJP had promised to set up a medical college in each district of Odisha in its manifesto, and the government is committed to implement it," he said.

As per information available with me, around ₹250 crore to ₹300 crore is needed to set up

a 100-seat medical college. The Union government will bear 60 per cent of the cost, he added.

Mahaling said Central government organisations like the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) have established a medical college in Sundargarh district, while the National Aluminium Company Ltd (NALCO) set up a medical college at Talcher in Angul.

Besides, another medical college at Keonjhar has been set up with funding from the District Mineral Foundation (DMF).

"I want to assure the House that we will keep the promise made in our manifesto to open new medical colleges with funding from both the Centre and state, so that every district can have at least one such institute," the minister said.

The CAG had pointed out that there are 49 per cent vacancies in posts of specialist doctors and 40 per cent in positions of medical officers, while nursing staff shortage stands at 30 per cent. This is significantly below the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) norms, the auditors found.

Sanjay Malhotra new RBI Governor



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: The government Monday appointed Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra as the 26th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet cleared Malhotra's name, who has been appointed as the RBI Governor for three years, starting Wednesday. Malhotra, a 1990 Batch Rajasthan Cadre IAS Officer, will replace Shaktikanta Das, whose tenure ends Tuesday.

Malhotra, 56, will be the 26th RBI Governor. He is an engineering graduate in computer science from the IIT-Kanpur, and has a Master's in Public Policy from Princeton University, the US. In his career of over 33 years, he has worked in multifarious sectors, including power, finance and taxation, information technology, and mines, among others.

Man torched on pyre over sorcery

Eleven years after the promulgation of the Odisha Prevention of Witch Hunting Act, 2013, sorcery-related crimes continue unabated in the state. The family members of a man, who died following protracted illness, brutally murdered a neighbour in a Koraput tribal hamlet and later threw his body on the pyre over sorcery suspicion Sunday. The police have detained five alleged perpetrators of the ghastly crime for questioning. According to a joint study by Odisha State Commission for Women (OSCW) and ActionAid in 2021, around 83 per cent of witch-hunting and witch-branding cases were concentrated in seven tribal-dominated districts. Nevertheless, the incident is symptomatic of a systemic failure in bringing people in these districts out of ignorance and superstition through spread of education and awareness

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput/Narayanpatna, Dec 9: In a shocking incident, a man was allegedly beaten to death by his neighbours over suspected

witchcraft and sorcery following the death of one of the latter's kin at Jarpa village under Bandhugaon police limits in Koraput district, Sunday afternoon.

Even a whip was allegedly issued in the village to keep the incident a secret after the angry family members allegedly threw the body over the burning pyre of the deceased to hush up the murder. The victim has been identified as Shiba Minyaka, 34, and the deceased, Dasa Minyaka, 52.

The matter came to the fore after reports surfaced Monday. Following a tip off, the Bandhugaon police reached the village and launched an investigation with the help of a forensic team, IIC Prasanna Kumar Mishra said.

Koraput ASP Manobrata Satapathy also visited the village and took stock of the situation Monday. Police have detained five accused persons who are learnt to have confessed to the crime during questioning.

Police said Dasa breathed his last Sunday afternoon af-

ter protracted illness. However, his family members and kin suspected Shiba responsible for Dasa's death as the former was not in good terms with the latter and his cousins over some past enmity. Moreover, Shiba often used to pick up fights with Dasa and his cousins, and even threatened to kill them using witchcraft and sorcery.

The alleged incident occurred following Dasa's death. Police said Shiba went to the cremation ground during the last rites of Dasa when five of the latter's kin assaulted him with wooden planks. A critically injured Shiba died on the spot. Panicked, the family members of Dasa threw Shiba's body on the pyre and let it burn to ashes in order to suppress the incident.

They also allegedly threatened the villagers not to disclose the incident before others and warned them of dire consequences if they did so.

Police said the petrified members of Shiba's family did not report the matter to them.

Oppn mulls resolution to remove Dhankhar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: The turbulent relations between Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and the INDIA bloc came to a head Monday with Opposition camp sources saying they are considering submitting a notice "very soon" for moving a resolution to remove the vice president from his office.

They said the Opposition parties had required signatures from all INDIA bloc parties in August itself but did not move as they decided to give Dhankhar "another chance but his conduct Monday" convinced them to go ahead with it.

The sources said the Congress had taken the lead on the issue and the TMC and the Samajwadi Party, besides other INDIA bloc parties, were supportive of the move.

"The chairman's behaviour is unacceptable. He is sounding more loyal than a BJP spokesperson," a senior Opposition leader said. In Rajya Sabha Monday, soon after a brief first adjournment during Zero Hour, Leader of the House JP Nadda said BJP members were agitated over an issue that involved Congress leaders and wanted a discussion.

"The link between FDL-AP



and George Soros is a matter of concern. Its co-president is a member of this House," he said.

Nadda alleged the FDL-AP sees Jammu and Kashmir as a "separate entity" and gets financial support from the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. As Chairman Dhankhar sought to know why the ruling party members were protesting, many BJP MPs alleged that the top Congress leadership has links with George Soros. They demanded that the issue be discussed in the House as it is connected to national security.

Several MPs of the BJP and NDA allies demanded an immediate discussion on it while Congress members claimed this was being done to divert attention from the Adani issue.

LoP Mallikarjun Kharge and other Congress leaders asked how the Chairman was allowing the ruling party members to raise the issue when he had rejected their notices in this regard.

Sujeet Kumar files papers for RS bypoll

Bhubaneswar: Former BJD MP Sujeet Kumar Monday filed nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha by-election from Odisha as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) nominee. Kumar's name was formally announced by the BJP's Central Election Committee Monday. Accompanied by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, BJP state president Manmohan Samal and other senior leaders of the party, Kumar filed two sets of nomination papers. P3

40 Delhi schools get bomb threat mail

New Delhi: Around 40 schools in Delhi received a bomb threat mail Monday morning with the sender demanding USD 30,000, prompting a multi-agency search of the premises but "nothing suspicious was found", a police official said. The threat was sent in a single e-mail marked to some of the city's prominent schools including DPS RK Puram and GD Goenka, Paschim Vihar. P9

₹500cr for 2 rly flyovers

Bhubaneswar: The Railways has sanctioned ₹509 crore for the construction of two major flyovers in Cuttack and Rayagada districts, official sources said Monday. The two flyovers include the construction of a 10.89-km structure, connecting Rajathgarh, Radhakishorepur and Machhapur Railway Stations in Cuttack. The total cost for the project is ₹268.92 crore. The second one, a 5.50-km flyover, will be constructed at a cost of ₹239.83 crore at Singapur Road Station in Rayagada to address traffic congestion. P4

'Polarisation' Merriam-Webster's 2024 word of the year

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Dec 9: The results of the 2024 US presidential election rattled the country and sent shockwaves across the world — or were cause for celebration, depending on who you ask. Is it any surprise then that the Merriam-Webster word of the year is "polarisation".

"Polarisation means division, but it's a very specific kind of division," said Peter Sokolowski, Merriam-Webster's editor at large, in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press (AP) ahead of Monday's announcement. "Polarisation means that we are tending toward the extremes rather than toward the centre."

The election was so divisive,

many American voters went to the polls with a feeling that the opposing candidate was an existential threat to the nation. According to AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 120,000 voters, about 8 in 10 Kamala Harris voters were very or somewhat concerned that Donald Trump's views — but not Harris' — were too extreme, while about 7 in 10 Trump voters felt the same way about Harris — but not Trump.

The Merriam-Webster entry for "polarisation" reflects scientific and metaphorical definitions. It's most commonly used to mean "causing strong disagreement between opposing factions or groupings". Merriam-Webster, which logs 100 million pageviews a month on its site, chooses its word of



the year based on data, tracking a rise in search and usage.

Last year's pick was "authentic". This year's comes as large swaths of the US struggle to reach consensus on what is real.

"It's always been important

to me that the dictionary serve as a kind of neutral and objective arbiter of meaning for everybody," Sokolowski said. "It's a kind of backstop for meaning in an era of fake news, alternative facts, whatever you want to

say about the value of a word's meaning in the culture."

It's notable that "polarization" originated in the early 1800s — and not during the Renaissance, as did most words with Latin roots about science, Sokolowski said. He called it a "pretty young word," in the scheme of the English language. "Polarised is a term that brings intensity to another word," he continued, most frequently used in the US to describe race relations, politics and ideology.

"The basic job of the dictionary is to tell the truth about words," the Merriam-Webster editor continued. "We've had dictionaries of English for 420 years and it's only been in the last 20 years or so that we've actually known which words

people look up."

"Polarisation" extends beyond political connotations. It's used to highlight fresh cracks and deep rifts alike in pop culture, tech trends and other industries.

All the scrutiny over Taylor Swift's private jet usage Polarising. Beef between rappers Kendrick Lamar and Drake Polarizing. The International Olympic Committee's decision to strip American gymnast Jordan Chiles of her bronze medal after the Paris Games You guessed it polarising.

Even lighthearted memes — like those making fun of Australian breakdancer Rachael "Raygun" Gunn's performance — or the proliferation of look-alike contests, or who counts as a nepo baby proved polarising.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Not some rabble-rouser or hatemonger — this is a sitting judge speaking, dear!

leisure



JAY-Z, DIDDY ACCUSED OF RAPING MINOR

Jay-Z has been accused of raping a 13-year-old girl along with Sean "Diddy" Combs at a MTV Video Music Awards afterparty in 2000. The music mogul and entrepreneur, born Shawn Carter, was named in a civil lawsuit that was re-filed Sunday.

RYAN REYNOLDS, BLAKE LIVELY TO TAKE A BREAK

Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds are stepping away from their demanding Hollywood careers in 2025 to focus on family. Following a busy year marked by professional successes and public controversies, the couple plans to decline projects and enjoy a break with their children.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
The yogis have finally succeeded in impressing you. Was it a stint in a Art of Living course? Ganesha gives you the thumbs-up and suggests you join that music or dance class you have been wanting to. Generally a nice day, and success is on the cards.

TAURUS
Today is a day of closure. You may find yourself on the winning side of things, says Ganesha. Pending projects will reach completion and you will achieve satisfaction and success in education. With a little extra effort, you can build a castle from stone. Ganesha wishes you a cheerful and colourful day.

GEMINI
You will think about the issues faced by other people as well as about increasing your social standing and elevating your social esteem. It is an extremely profitable day for those in the retail business and hence make the most of it, says Ganesha.

CANCER
There may not be many opportunities visible on the horizon today. And, chances are that you may end up getting embroiled in some complicated situations, without even a fault of yours. Relax! Given your people skills and lively spirits, you will be able to sail through.

LEO
The discomfort similar to the fish-out-of-water syndrome will be a thing of the past, as today you will be quite flexible and would want to remain on the move, says Ganesha. So much so that you may even begin to feel bound by the environment in your office. Ganesha sees this as a good sign, as being adaptable will help you manoeuvre your way around people.

VIRGO
You are quick-witted, sharp and artistic to the core, says Ganesha, so you may go ahead and enrapture people with your special abilities, perhaps at a social gathering. However, Ganesha says it would be better if you could conserve some of that enthusiasm in order to focus your attention on issues of greater importance.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that to gain future opportunities you may have to rely on past experience. You will tend to become possessive about things close to you. You will also have to deal with unpleasant situations where your integrity is questioned. All said and done your day will go good except for minor issues and your understanding attitude will be praise worth today.

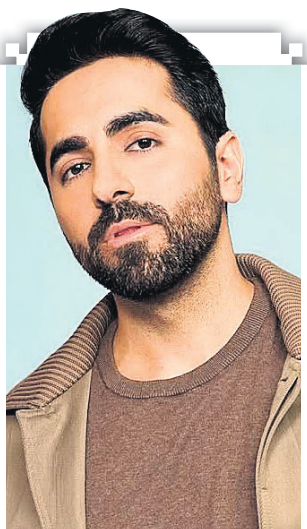
SCORPIO
It is very likely that the moment of victory is often preceded by a moment of peril; but that is not where the danger ends. In the heat of victory, arrogance and over-confidence can push you away from what you aimed for. So, it is important for you to learn when to stop in victory. Set a goal and stop when you reach there, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Today will be a day for introspection, says Ganesha, as you try and find the root causes of your problems. But the job is only half-done: the rest will depend on the initiatives you may take to implement possible solutions to your problems. Overall, a day spent pondering. But act fast, advises Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
You have meticulously planned every aspect of your plan and prepared the check list. The only thing left now to do is execution of that plan. Delays and obstacles, however, will block your path and will leave you disheartened. Don't doubt your abilities though. You have planned properly and have faith as those delays are not permanent, assures Ganesha.

AQUARIUS
Don't let your emotions play a spoilsport in the important decisions of your life. The tendency to be sentimental when you need to be rational will become an obstacle in your path. Learn to curb this habit otherwise you may have to pay a heavy price, advises Ganesha.

PISCES
Today your professional and love life will cause worry. You will want to be emotionally balanced but you may not find the time to sort things out. Long sightedness and open discussions will help resolve matters easily.



AYUSHMANN LIVING HIS DREAM

MUMBAI: Ayushmann Khurrana says artists are probably one of the most loved people because they are blessed to get love from across the world. He added that he is living his dream as an actor, poet and a singer & musician. The actor said, "Artists are probably one of the most loved people because they are blessed to get love from across the world! Art can transcend borders and languages, unify people, transport them from their daily lives and make the world a happier place." Ayushmann's music has been streamed and heard by people living in 184 countries in 2024 and he is humbled to have entertained people worldwide. The *Anek* actor toured the US with his smash hit music. He had shows in five cities - Chicago, San Jose, New York, New Jersey & Dallas. The actor added, "I'm living my dream as an actor, as a poet and as a singer & musician. I thank everyone who has listened to my songs, who have always showed up at my concerts. Your support means the world to me and encourages me to do so much more and I hope you continue to listen to my music and watch my films and get entertained forever!" Ayushmann will be seen in *Thama*, from Maddock's blockbuster horror comedy universe that is scheduled to release in Diwali 2025.

A literary festival on train

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: In a bid to provide book lovers and travel writers a unique experience of having the most democratic and liberating way of travelling, the Walking Bookfairs, for the first time, is going to organise a Travel Writing Festival on a train at Bhubaneswar railway station December 14. What is more exciting is that travellers can enjoy all these for the price of a cup of coffee. Speaking about the event, Co-Founder of Walking Bookfairs Satadi Mishra, said, "This year, the Walking Bookfairs Travel Writing Festival is back with a bigger and better version. This time we thought, why not hold a literary festival on a train for the first time? So we've engaged with Indian Railways and booked an entire train coach for our writers and readers." She said, "The festival will begin at 11am at the railway station here December 14,



then we will head to Puri on Sambalpur Intercity Express, and will come to an end close to midnight with the return journey. Along the way, we have planned events with two great personalities of Puri - Debabrata Tripathy, owner of Honey Bee Pizzeria and Pulak Mohanty, founder of Grass Routes, who is well-versed with the history of Puri. We will also have writer and former DM of Koraput and Mayurbhanj Rajesh Patil, food writer Sweta Biswal, chef Rachit Kirtiman, Editor of 'Dharitri' and 'OrissaPOST' Tathagata Satpathy, businessman Ravi Mantha, and novelists Hansda Sowwendra Shekhar and Chandras Choudhury, among others." Publisher Ravi Singh of Speaking Tiger Books will join from Delhi, Mishra added. Akshaya Bahibala, Co-Founder of Walking Bookfairs, said, "On Blue Flag Beach in Puri, there will be discussions on what really makes for great travel writing, over tea and pizza. And of course, as probably the last generation of Indians to have grown up travelling long-distance on trains, we'll have so many railway stories from different generations to share. You may bring your favourite travel book to share with others." "You can dial 8598013877 to have your ticket for this unique journey," he added.

KAREENA'S favourite couple

MUMBAI: Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan has shared a glimpse of her favourite couple Soha Ali Khan and Kunal Kemmu. Kareena took to her Instagram, where she shared a picture of Soha and Kunal sitting. In the image, Soha is seen reading a book, while her husband Kunal is listening to her with full attention. The Bollywood diva captioned the image: "Favourite couple Kunal Kemmu and Soha Ali Khan." Kunal and Soha were in a relationship since May 2009. The couple got engaged in July 2014 and got married in Mumbai January 2015. They welcomed their daughter Inaaya Naomi Kemmu in September 2017. December 8, Kareena celebrated the birthday of her mother-in-law and veteran star Sharmila Tagore. The actress took to Instagram to wish her mother-in-law on her birthday. She shared a picture of herself with the veteran actress. In the picture, both of them can be seen in comfortable clothing. "Who's the coolest Gangsta ever? Do I need to say? Happy birthday to my mother-in-law. Just the Best," she wrote as the caption. Kareena and Saif tied the knot October 16, 2012. The couple welcomed their first son Taimur December 20, 2016. Their second son Jehangir was born February 21, 2021.



Kritika on balancing both worlds

MUMBAI: Actress Kritika Kamra, who is currently busy filming her latest series *Matka King* in Mumbai and managing her fashion label based in Madhya Pradesh, said that juggling between both has been challenging yet incredible. Speaking about her journey, Kritika said, "Balancing my acting career and my business has been challenging yet incredibly fulfilling." Kritika frequently visits local artisans and suppliers to oversee production, ensuring the highest standards of quality in her brand's offerings. De-

spite her packed shooting schedule, she makes it a point to connect with the grassroots, showcasing her passion for empowering local artistry. She added, "I feel a deep responsibility towards both worlds—on one hand, I'm creating stories that resonate with audiences through my work in *Matka King*, and on the other, I'm building a brand that celebrates the talent and craftsmanship of local artists in Madhya Pradesh." The actress said, "I personally visit the artisans and suppliers to ensure we deliver nothing short of excellence. It's hectic, but when you love what you do, it's all worth it." *Matka King* delves into the intricate world of Matka gambling that started in Mumbai. The series features Vijay Varma in the titular role of the Matka King.



PEANUTS



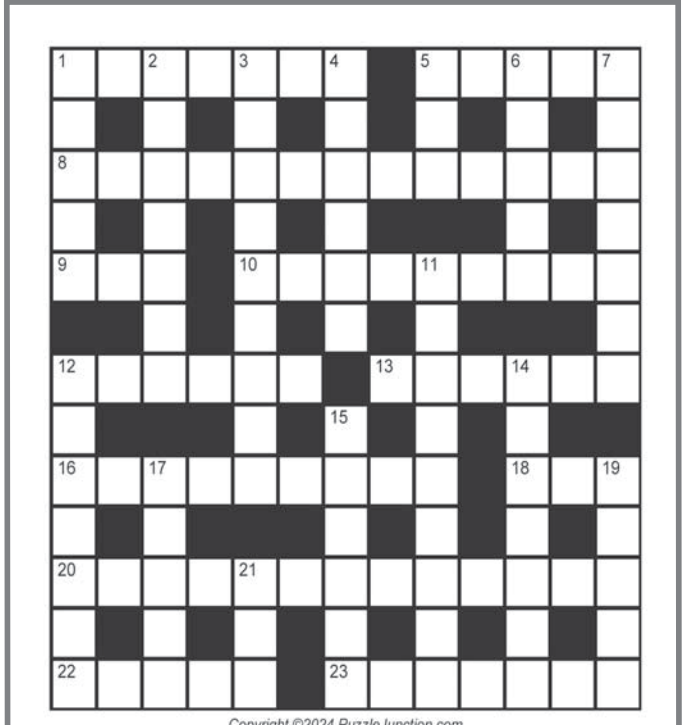
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



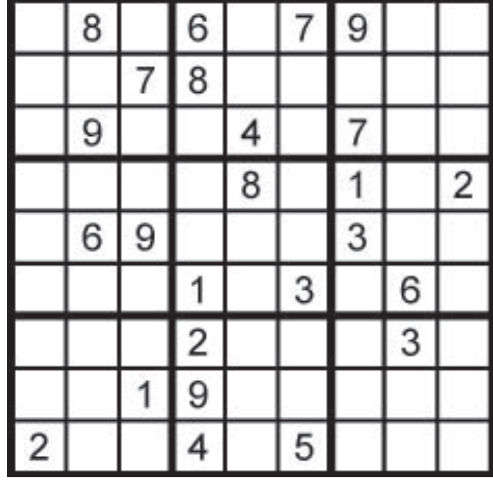
FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across**
1 Tasteless
5 Scale
8 Disneyland, e.g. (9,4)
9 Unagi, at a sushi bar
10 Junket
12 Dunce (Yiddish)
13 People overthrown by Cortes in 1519
- Down**
16 Moving staircase
18 Increases
20 Full of sorrow
22 Little ones
23 Duchy
- Down**
5 Film director's cry
6 Basra native
7 Swimwear
11 Mongrel hog
12 Frozen dessert
14 Made like Krakatoa
15 Inscribed
17 Type of watcher
19 Sin city
21 German resort

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

59K victims of online trading fraud in 6 yrs

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: As many as 59,437 people in Odisha have fallen prey to online trading frauds during the last six years, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi told the Assembly Monday.

Responding to a question of Congress legislator Tara Prasad Bahinipati, Majhi, who also hold the Home portfolio, said, "A staggering 769 online trading fraud cases were reported in the state between 2019 and November 2024. A total of 59,437 people were victims of such frauds during the period."

He said most of these frauds were reported in 2023 and 2024. "Altogether 190 cases involving cheating of 18,994 people were reported in 2023, while 40,270 people were cheated in 472 cases the next year," the CM added.

In 2023, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) registered four online trading fraud cases against cyber criminals who cheated 18,804 people, he said. Similarly, the EOW registered three such cases in the current year, in which 40,219 people



were cheated during online trading, Majhi said.

Stating that steps have been taken to curb online trading frauds, the CM said a dedicated cyber crime unit under the Crime Branch has been functional in Bhubaneswar since September 5, 2023.

"The unit specialises in investigating a wide range of cyber offences, including identity theft, fake email and social media accounts, hacking, ATM and online banking fraud, credit card fraud, website defacement, cyber pornography, child pornography, phishing and cyberstalking," he said.

The unit addresses the increasing complexity of cyber crimes in Odisha through its specialised sub-units, each focusing on specific areas of ex-

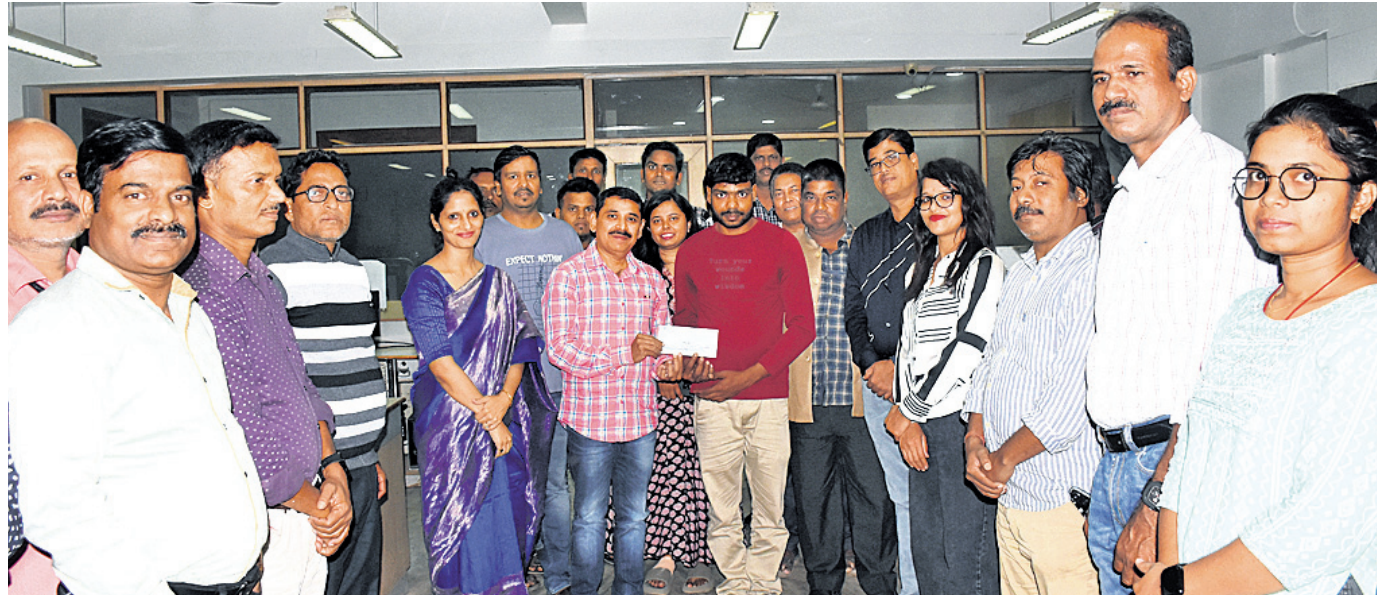
pertise, he added.

Majhi said a cyber police station was established in 2004 under the State Crime Record Bureau. Later, in 2006, it was moved to Crime Branch, Cuttack with jurisdiction across Odisha.

"The cyber police station handles high-value cases involving frauds exceeding Rs 25 lakh. Despite lacking dedicated sanctioned strength, it has investigated critical cases using the CID strength," he pointed out.

Additionally, 11 new cyber crime police stations have been established and the three existing cyber police stations – Berhampur, Rourkela and Sambalpur – have been upgraded in 2021. Besides, cyber crime cells are operational in the offices of all superintendents of police, the CM said.

Moreover, a cyber help desk, 1930 call centre, children and women online abuse monitoring unit, cyber monitoring and coordination unit, cyber forensic unit, social media cell and cyber tracing unit are functioning in the state to deal with cyber crime-related cases, the CM pointed out.



FOR A CAUSE: Young environment activist Pupun Sahoo of Nayagarh district receives ₹1 lakh climate grant for his innovative initiatives towards preservation of environment from leading Odia daily Dharitri's Deputy News Editor Mihir Kanta Das at the newspaper's office in Bhubaneswar Monday, in presence of Dharitri and OrissaPOST Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy and staffers

Mission Shakti support staffers cry govt apathy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: As hundreds of women working as support staff under Mission Shakti department staged a demonstration outside the Assembly over a host of issues, the Opposition BJD Monday demanded immediate release of their salaries.

While the agitating women were shouting slogans at Mahatma Gandhi Road leading to the Assembly, the issue was raised in the House during Zero Hour

by Opposition Chief Whip Pramila Mallik. She criticised the state's BJP government for stopping the salaries of about 60,000 women working as supporting staff to different women SHGs across the state.

Stating that these supporting staffers were recruited by the previous BJD government to help SHGs, Mallik said, "The BJP government stopped their remunerations after assuming office. There is fear among the

women that their jobs will be terminated." She said that former CM Naveen Patnaik had empowered 70 lakh women in the state by bringing them under the umbrella of Mission Shakti.

BJD MLA Byomakesh Ray also supported Mallik and said that the women were appointed as Master Book Keepers, Bank Mitras, Logistic Service Providers, Community Resource Persons, Krushi Mitras and Prani Mitras. They were given salary

on the basis of a state-Centre sharing formula.

BJP member Manas Dutta, however, blamed the previous BJD government and held it responsible for not extending their service agreement which ended in April 2024.

"Who was in the government in April this year? Why the previous government did not extend their jobs," he asked and accused the Opposition BJD of misleading the agitating women.

Adani bribery row: Cong questions govt's silence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: The Opposition Congress Monday questioned the BJP government's silence on the alleged Adani bribery case in which the state has been named by a US court.

The issue was raised during the Zero Hour by Congress

Legislature Party (CLP) leader RC Kadam who asked, "What is the reason behind the state government's silence? While the Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh governments have already made their stands clear, the Odisha government is still mum."

Demanding a judicial probe into the issue, Kadam said, "The

then government had purchased green power from Adani Group at a higher price, allegedly by bribing some officials in the state." He questioned, "What could be the reason behind the Odisha government's silence? It could be due to the Adani-Modi Bhai-Bhai relationship."

Congress' CS Raazen Ek-

ka pointed out, "Though the Odisha government-run PSU, Gridco, had initially rejected the proposal to purchase 500 MW of green power from Adani through SECI, later the state corporation agreed." He asked, "What was the reason behind the initial refusal and later acceptance of the agreement?"

Sujeet Kumar files papers for Rajya Sabha bypoll

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: Former BJD MP Sujeet Kumar Monday filed nomination papers for the Rajya Sabha byelection from Odisha as the BJP nominee.

Kumar's name was formally announced by BJP's Central Election Committee Monday.

Accompanied by CM Mohan Charan Majhi, BJP state president Manmohan Samal and other senior leaders of the party, Kumar filed two sets of nomination papers. As many as 30 MLAs were proposers in Kumar's nomination papers.

While the CM is a proposer in one set of nomination papers,

Deputy CM KV Singh Deo has signed as a proposer in another bunch of nomination papers.

"The people are aware of my work as an MP in Rajya Sabha in the last four and half years. With the cooperation of our leaders, I'll work for the development of Kalahandi and the KBK region of the state," Kumar said.

DSPL-246

Silver City Cuttack welcomes you to

Sri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

BWF Tour Super 100

Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, Cuttack

10 - 15 December 2024

Watch Great Shuttlers In Action

30 Countries
250+ Players

Watch Live: /Sports Odisha

Sri Mohan Charan Majhi
Chief Minister, Odisha

OIPR-29001/13/0028/2425

Equipment Partner

Physiotherapy Partner

TPSODL's campaign to protect wildlife

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 9: TP Southern Odisha Distribution Limited (TPSODL) has initiated a comprehensive campaign to combat wildlife poaching caused by the illegal use of live electricity wires. The programme, which spans eight districts in TPSODL's operational area, seeks to protect biodiversity and prevent the loss of animal lives.

In collaboration with the Forest department and local law enforcement agencies, TPSODL has identified sensitive zones and intensified surveillance in high-risk areas. The initiative focuses on raising awareness, engaging local communities, and eliminating the use of electrified wires for poaching purposes.

"Our forests and wildlife are

invaluable treasures that need safeguarding. Illegal use of electricity for poaching poses a grave threat to biodiversity. TPSODL is committed to addressing this issue through targeted measures and community participation," TPSODL COO Amit Kumar Garg said.

The initiative also involves training linemen and field staff to identify and report unauthorised electrical connections. Additionally, community workshops are being organised to educate locals on the environmental consequences of poaching and the importance of wildlife conservation.

By fostering collaboration among stakeholders and encouraging community involvement, TPSODL aims to create a sustainable model for biodiversity protection in southern Odisha.



SPECTACULAR SHOW: Artistes perform during cultural programme 'Shri Padmalaya' organised by Lingaraj Kala Niketana at Annapurna Theatre in Puri Monday

WEATHER

BBSR CTC
 Max Temp 30.0° 28.5°
 Min Temp 26.6° 18.6°
 Humidity 81% 86%
 Rainfall Nil Nil

FORECAST
 Generally cloudy sky with light rain

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	81,508.46 ↓ 200.66
NIFTY	24,619.00 ↓ 58.80
DOLLAR	84.83 ↑ 0.05
EURO	89.79 ↓ 0.03
GOLD	₹77,665 ↑ ₹1046
SILVER	₹95,783 ↑ ₹3335

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Jajpur Road on dated 9th December 2024, I, Awindra Kumar Singh, Address : Mahavir Colony, Kanheipur, Jajpur Road, Dist.- Jajpur, Odisha- 755019 declare that I have changed my name from Awindra Kumar Singh to Awanindra Kumar Singh. Henceforth, I shall be known as Awanindra Kumar Singh for all purpose. Awanindra Kumar Singh

By virtue of Affidavit No. - 2356, dtd. 6.12.2024 before the Executive Magistrate, Jajpur Road, I, Jayesh, S/o-Awanindra Kumar Singh, At - Mahavir Colony, Kanheipur, Jajpur Road, Dist. - Jajpur hereby declare that I have changed my name from Jayesh to Jayesh Singh. Henceforth, I shall be known as Jayesh Singh for all purposes. I further declare that my father's name has been changed to Awanindra Kumar Singh from Awindra Kumar Singh. Henceforth, my father shall be known as Awanindra Kumar Singh for all purposes. Jayesh

₹509cr for two rly flyovers in Odisha



Indian Railways approves major projects in Cuttack and Rayagada to enhance train operations and reduce congestion

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: In a significant boost to operational efficiency, the Ministry of Railways has sanctioned ₹509 crore for the construction of two major railway flyovers in the Cuttack and Rayagada districts of Odisha.

The initiative is part of the Energy, Mineral, and Cement Corridor Scheme of Indian Railways, aimed at enhancing train movements and mitigat-

ing traffic congestion on key railway lines.

During a recent visit to Odisha, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, who also oversees the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Electronics & IT, announced the approval of these critical rail infrastructure projects.

The first project involves the construction of a 10.89 km rail flyover in Cuttack district, linking Rajathgarh, Radhakishorepur, and Machhapur Railway Stations. This infrastructure will facilitate simultaneous train movements without the delays caused by cross-traffic, with a total estimated cost of ₹268.92 crore.

The second project is a 5.50 km rail flyover at Singapur Road Station in Rayagada district, designed to ease traffic congestion on the Raipur-Vizianagaram Rail Line. The estimated cost for this development

is ₹239.83 crore. This flyover will enable uninterrupted train operations at the station, eliminating delays from cross-traffic.

These new flyovers will allow trains to move simultaneously from different directions, enhancing the efficiency of train operations in the region. By removing cross-traffic, which currently causes significant delays at crucial junctions such as Singapur Road, Rajathgarh, Radhakishorepur, and Machhapur, these projects will lead to smoother and faster travel times.

The infrastructure upgrades will alleviate congestion in the Nergundi-Cuttack-Barang-Rajathgarh corridor and the Rayagada-Singapur Road section. This will result in a substantial reduction in wait times for trains and an improved travel experience for passengers.

Currently, the Khurda Road and Waltair divisions face severe traffic bottlenecks due to cross-movements at key stations. Up and down trains are often delayed while waiting for clearance, but the new flyovers will establish dedicated paths, ensuring uninterrupted operations.

With a combined cost of ₹508.75 crore, these projects are a significant step toward enhancing the operational capacity of Indian Railways, reducing delays, and boosting train movement. The Indian Railways continues to prioritise infrastructure development to accommodate the growing demands of train traffic and provide a smoother, more efficient experience for travelers.

PURI BEACHES 'Urgent microplastic cleanup drives needed'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has been informed that various measures, including immediate microplastic cleanup drives and prohibiting high-risk plastic items, were needed to curb microplastic contamination across sea beaches in Puri.

The green body was also informed that the Swargadwar Beach was "a microplastic hotspot needing urgent mitigation". The NGT, while hearing a matter regarding alarming levels of microplastics in Puri beaches, had sought a response from the Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB).

The OSPCB reply dated December 6 said it operated a coastal management cell under the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Programme (ICZMP), headed by the chief environmental scientist cum nodal officer.

"The coastal management cell conducted an inspection November 6. During the inspection, samples of microplastic contamination in seawater and beach sediments of Puri sea beach had been collected and analysed in the board's central laboratory," the reply said.

The board conducted a study

about quantitative analysis of microplastics in seawater and sediment samples, along with the characterisation of microplastic types, following which a technical report was prepared.

The report recommended several "prioritised actions" such as immediate microplastic cleanup drives, deployment of fibre filters in urban runoff channels, regular seawater sampling to monitor and track pollution levels and local bans on high-risk plastic items like microbeads, straws, and disposable cutlery, the OSPCB reply said.

The report, which was annexed to the reply, said the highest microplastic density in sediments was found in the Golden Beach because of heavy tourist activity and localised plastic degradation.

The highest microplastic density in seawater was found in the Swargadwar Beach because of continuous tourist activities and plastics received from land.

The dominant microplastic type across locations were fibres, followed by fragments, pellets, films and foams, the report said.

Microplastic fibres are of various types, including the common polyethylene terephthalate (PET) and polyethylene (PE).

Potato supply faces consumer resistance

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: The Odisha government's effort to sell potatoes at reduced prices has met with consumer reluctance in Capital city. Potatoes sourced from Uttar Pradesh and sold at ₹30 per kilogram have not been well-received due to quality issues.

In collaboration with the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED), the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department aimed to address the potato shortage and ease the crisis. Despite this, many sellers in various markets continue to sell potatoes at ₹40 per kilogram, as consumers avoid the Uttar Pradesh supply, which reportedly rots quickly.



The first phase of the initiative saw 60 tonnes of potatoes transported to Bhubaneswar in three trucks. These were sold at strategic locations, including near the Additional District Magistrate's office and government fair price shops. Initially, the affordable supply is set to be available at government retail outlets in major cities, such as Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Rourkela, and others, with a fixed price of ₹30 per kilogram.

Kabiraj Swain, president of the Unit-I Vegetable Traders Association, pointed out that the poor quality of the UP potatoes has turned consumers away. He mentioned that while sellers were instructed to charge between ₹30-35, some are still pricing at ₹40.

City to host 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas Convention in January

While Modi will inaugurate the event, President Droupadi Murmu will attend the closing session and present the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: Odisha is preparing to host the prestigious 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) Convention, set to take place from January 8 to January 10, 2025. The event will celebrate the invaluable contributions of the global Indian diaspora and highlight their role in building a 'Viksit Bharat' or developed India.

In anticipation of the convention, the state government conducted a Bhumi Pujan ceremony at Janata Maidan here Monday, marking the beginning of the arrangements for the significant event. The

ceremony was attended by key officials, including, department of Industries principal secretary Hemant Sharma, and IPICOL and IDCO managing director Bhupendra Singh Poonia, among others.

"The convention, themed 'Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat', will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The event will feature a special youth edition in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, designed to engage young leaders from the diaspora. President Droupadi Murmu is scheduled to preside over the valedictory



State government officials conduct a Bhumi Pujan ceremony at Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar, Monday

session, during which she will present the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards to distinguished members of the Indian diaspora.

Sharma, speaking to the media, outlined the event's structure and anticipated participation. He noted that the convention is expected to draw

between 7,000 and 10,000 delegates, including international dignitaries and senior Indian officials, all within a framework of stringent security measures. "This grand event will showcase Odisha's rich cultural heritage to a global audience and is particularly aimed at mobilising the youth diaspora to contrib-

ute towards India's progress," he said.

Poonia detailed the comprehensive preparations underway, highlighting the collaborative efforts of various departments to ensure the event's success. "We are working diligently to make this event memorable. With attendees arriving from around the world, provisions for accommodations, seamless mobility, and effective traffic management are being put in place. This convention is set to be a significant milestone for Odisha," he added.

The PBD convention serves as a platform for strengthening ties between India and its global community, celebrating their critical role in the country's growth and development.

Bhubaneswar Vibes In parallel, Bhubaneswar is

gearing up for the convention through the Bhubaneswar Vibes initiative. Launched Sunday at the Unit-II Market Building and Master Canteen Square, the programme aims to infuse the City with cultural and community spirit. The event was inaugurated by BMC Mayor Sulochana Das and Commissioner Rajesh Pravakar Patil, along with other senior municipal officials.

The programme featured vibrant musical performances that captivated attendees, fostering a lively and festive atmosphere. The event attracted a diverse audience, showcasing the city's vibrant community spirit. With the PBD convention approaching, Bhubaneswar is poised to host more such engaging activities, promising an enriching experience for its residents.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-909090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

Truck stuck on NH for 3 days due to Google Maps goof-up

POST NEWS NETWORK

Daringbadi, Dec 9: A truck has been stranded for the past three days at Gajalabadi Ghat on National Highway 59 in Kandhamal district, causing major traffic disruptions. The driver of the truck landed in trouble after allegedly following incorrect directions provided by Google Maps. The truck, traveling from Sorada in Ganjam towards Rayagada, took a narrow, unpaved road leading to the Gajalabadi Ghat. Due to the vehicle's size and mechanical issues, it got stuck, blocking traffic and leaving numerous vehicles, including passenger buses, stranded. Efforts to clear the truck using an earthmover have allowed some vehicles to pass, but traffic movement remains severely hampered. The driver later revealed that



he had followed a route suggested by Google Maps, believing it to be a quicker alternative to the longer, standard road. However, the narrow, difficult terrain of the ghat caused the truck to become trapped. Locals have criticised the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), saying that although a warning board was placed to prevent heavy vehicles from using the route, no substantial action was taken to avoid such incidents. The NHAI has also been unable to begin road expansion work, which has been delayed for various reasons. Meanwhile, the road continues to be blocked for heavy vehicle traffic.

AI to turn saviour of elephants in Rourkela

The project is being hailed as a significant step forward in improving safety for both elephants and humans

RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

Rourkela, Dec 9: Five elephants that ventured dangerously close to railway tracks were Sunday saved thanks to an innovative pilot project led by the Forest department, harnessing artificial intelligence (AI) technology to safeguard jumbos. The initiative involves the installation of four solar-powered towers, each equipped with 360-degree cameras that provide real-time information to a control room. When elephants approach the railway tracks, the system automatically alerts the control room, which can then notify the railway staff at Bondamunda as well as Forest teams. "We've installed these AI-enabled towers with cameras that



can detect elephants within a 500-metre radius of the tracks,"

said Jasobanta Sethi, the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Rourkela. "This is the first time such technology is being used in Odisha," he added. The towers, which were set up at a total cost of ₹2.9 crore, are positioned at four strategic locations in Chandiposh, Mahipani, Dolakudar, and Sonakhan. The cameras, imported and installed by a vendor from Delhi, are designed to detect elephants and send alerts to the control room. The system has already proven effective — on its first day of operation, the tower at Dolakudar near Lathikata prevented a potential mishap, saving two adult elephants and three calves Sunday. "This technology not only helps save elephants from fatal injuries caused by train

hits, but it will also assist in preventing forest fires and illegal poaching activities," Sethi added. Environmentalist Satya Behera expressed optimism about the project's success, noting, "From day one, the tower at Dolakudar saved these elephants, demonstrating the system's potential." The project is being hailed as a significant step forward in protecting wildlife and improving safety for both elephants and humans. The DFO also mentioned that efforts are underway to treat an injured elephant at Rajgangpur, with the team ready to intervene if necessary. This pilot project marks a promising new approach to conservation and safety in sensitive wildlife zones.

Brown sugar, ₹25L cash seized; Woman detained

BHADRAK: Acting on a tip-off, police seized substantial quantity of brown sugar and cash worth ₹ 25 lakh during a raid on a rented house at Elkha area under Town police limits in Bhadrak, Monday. A woman of Puruna Bazar, Mirzapur area living in the house on rent was also detained in this connection for her alleged involvement. The operation, led by Bhadrak tehsildar Priyadarshi Sangram Keshari Khuntia in the presence of a magistrate, commenced at 2pm. According to the Town police officials, the raid was ongoing at the time of filing this report. The police team, acting on instructions from the Superintendent of Police (SP) Madkar Sandeep Sampaad following reliable intelligence input about rampant drug trafficking in the area, conducted a sudden raid on the premises. During the search, a substantial quantity of brown sugar was recovered. A machine was used to count the seized cash, which exceeded ₹25 lakh. Investigations are underway to ascertain the source of the cash and its intended use, the SP said. The case has been registered under the NPS Act, and further investigations are expected to shed light on the entire operation. Additional SP Arup Abhishek Behera, Additional SP (DIB) Anshuman Dwivedi, Town police IIC Ajay Sudarshan Bage, and Rural police station officer Anitabh Das participated in the raid.

Electric scooter catches fire, burns 4 other vehicles

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 9: An electric scooter caught fire while charging in a residential building near Sundargarh Government College, leading to a blaze that destroyed four other vehicles and furniture. The incident occurred Sunday around 9:30pm when the owner of the scooter fell asleep while it was charging. Locals suspect that the fire may have been caused by overheating or a short circuit. The flames quickly spread, engulfing three other scooters, including one electric, and a motorcycle. The fire also caused damage to furniture in the building, which housed a beauty parlour and other tenants. Fortunately, no injuries or fatalities have been reported, but the incident caused widespread panic and significant property damage. The fire department is investigating the cause of the fire, with a short circuit during the charging process being considered a likely factor. This incident is part of a growing number of electric scooter fires, raising safety concerns among consumers. Authorities are continuing their investigation to determine the exact cause and assess the full extent of the damage.

5 awarded life term in 14-yr-old murder case

THE INCIDENT IS STATED TO BE FALLOUT OF AN INTER-GANG RIVALRY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 9: A local court here Monday handed down life imprisonment to five persons after convicting them in the murder case of one Dhira Samal, 14 years after the crime was committed. The convicts were identified as Kalia Sethi, 39, of Sriram Nagar Lane-6, P Krushna Chandra Patra, 48, Pinku Patra, 40, Sanjay Pradhan, 43, and Sanyasi Rout, 41 of Jagannath Vihar in Berhampur. District and Sessions Judge Rupashree Choudhury pronounced the verdict after examining the statements recorded by the witnesses and other evidences, while also acquitting three others for want of sufficient evidence. Cadre Public Prosecutor Trilochan Parida said. The acquitted persons were identified as Santosh Patra, 57, alias Rangin Santu, Rinku Patra, 44, and Manglu Behera, 51, from the Silk City. The incident is stated to be fallout of an inter-gang rivalry. On that fateful day, victim Dhira Samal was talking with two of his friends -- Santosh Tripathy and Rajiv Behera -- at Sriram Nagar Square under Ba-



da Bazar police limits, July 22 morning in 2010 when miscreants launched a sudden attack and hurled bombs at him. Dhira tried to run away to save his life but the miscreants chased and attacked him with swords inside a godown premises. On being informed, Dhira's younger brother Bhalu, mother Bijaylakshmi and wife Jhuli rushed to the spot. They rescued Dhira in a critical condition and admitted him to MKCG Medical College and Hospital here, where doctors declared him dead after exam-

Protesters block NH-53 in Jajpur

Completion of highway expansion and second Brahmani bridge among demands

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jajpur, Dec 9: Hundreds of people from various social organisations, including college students under Sachetan Nagarika Manch (SNM), Monday blocked NH-53 near Kabatabandha village in Jajpur district demanding construction of a second bridge over Brahmani river and early completion of the highway stretch between

Chandikhole and Duburi. The protesters also urged the Chief Minister's intervention, claiming that the delay in the four-lane expansion work was leading to frequent accidents. They also warned that they would continue their demonstration until they received a written assurance from the NH authorities. "The Chandikhole-Duburi stretch has turned into a death trap due to the non-completion of the expansion works for the past couple of years. We are staging this demonstration with seven charter demands, including the expedited completion of the widening of NH-

53, construction of a second Brahmani bridge, a written assurance of when both will be completed, a traffic system for the safe commute of college students, and the illumination of the Brahmani bridge near Kabatabandha," said SNM convener Saroj Kumar Behera. Former finance minister Prafulla Chandra Ghadei, who participated in the protest, emphasised the importance of the NH-53 for the local community, stating, "The urgency of the local residents' call for action underscores the community's reliance on the NH-53 not only for daily commutes but also for economic activities.

Song for environment, wildlife protection out

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec 9: A song "Aasa Lagaiba Gachha" composed and designed by Prakruti Bandhu Trilochan Sahoo to promote forest conservation and wildlife protection has been released by Abhay Kumar Dalai, Sub-Divisional Forest Officer and Ashok Kumar Biswal, Assistant Conservator of Forests at the Keonjhar Wildlife Division office in Anandapur. Through the song, Sahoo has given importance to wildlife conservation and forest and environment protection.



Sahoo said widespread public awareness is necessary in this direction. While Bapi Bhuyana has lent his voice for the song, the music was directed by Dayanidhi Dash. The song is available on the Kalinga Film Production YouTube channel, Sahoo said. Sahoo has been working for environmental protection and wildlife conservation for over a decade.

Released in Similipal, tigress 'Zeenat' strays into J'khand



Members of Rapid Response team leaving STR to rescue Zeenat from Jharkhand jungle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Baripada, Dec 9: Three-year-old tigress 'Zeenat', which was released into the wild in Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Mayurbhanj district, has entered adjoining Jharkhand, a top Forest officer said Monday. The tigress, which was brought from Maharashtra, was released into the wild in STR November 24. Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF)-cum-Field Director of STR, Prakash Chand Gogineni, said that the tigress was in good health and has entered a forest in Jharkhand which is linked with STR in the north. "The tigress Zeenat is now located roaming in Jharkhand after leaving Similipal area. She entered a forest in Jharkhand Sunday and her movement is being monitored by a team,"

Gogineni said, adding that Forest officials of Jharkhand have also been informed and they are also keeping track of the movement of the tigress. Zeenat was brought to Similipal from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in Maharashtra November 15 and was kept in an enclosure before being released into the wild. A special team of STR was keeping a vigil on her movement in the forest though a radio collar fitted to her neck. Asked about the other tigress 'Jamuna', which was also brought from Maharashtra October 27, Gogineni said, "Tigress Jamuna has been roaming in STR area for about one month. She is in good health." As per the All Odisha Tiger Estimation (AOTE) 2023-24 report, Similipal has around 27 tigers and 12 cubs.

Fit India Week-2024 concludes at FM varsity

BALASORE: The sixth Fit India Week-2024 celebration at Fakir Mohan University here concluded Sunday. Vice-Chancellor Prof Santosh Kumar Tripathy presided in the valedictory function where Olympian Dutee Chand joined as chief guest. Chand spoke on importance of fitness in today's world and distributed certificates to winners of the games held on this occasion. Chairman of PG Council, Prof Bhaskar Behera, Registrar Kulkarni Das, Director Student Welfare Dr. Nihar Ranjan Raut, Director Sports Council Dr Pabitra Mohan Nayak and PEO Sangram Bisoyi were present during the function. The programme which commenced December 2, 2024, with a grand inauguration by the Vice Chancellor aimed at fostering creativity, fitness, and mental well-being, and drew over 350 participants from among students, faculty, and staff. Arun Kumar Naik (Dept. of Geology, Nodal Officer), Biswajit Parida, Biswajit Parida, Dipankar Jena, Avaya Naik, and Chinmay Kumar Das coordinated the programme.

Bank of India Zonal Office : Star House, 1/1D, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015		POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule-8(1)] of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules-2002	
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of India, Sastri Nagar Branch under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower in the loan account given below to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice plus interest & expenses thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Bank of India, Sastri Nagar Branch for an amount mentioned below with interest & expenses thereon. The Borrowers' attention is invited to the provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.			
SASTRI NAGAR BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower Borrower : Mr. Chinmaya Kumar Swain, S/o.: Fakir Charan Swain, At: Sorbha, P.S.: Gop, Dist.: Puri, PIN-752107	Liabilities due as per Notice ₹ 25,59,487.57 + interest & expenses thereon	Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession 12.03.2024 / 07.12.2024	Description of the Property All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Duplex No.: D/07, Banadurga Enclave, located at Khata No.: 240/1678, Plot No.: 583/1921, Area: Ac.0.0410 Dec, Mouza: Nijagarhi Kuruki, SRO/PS-8, East: Road left by vendor, West: Revenue Plot-581
Tahasil: Pipili, Dist.: Puri, Standing in the name of Mr. Chinmaya Kumar Swain , Bounded by North: Sub Plot No.: 6, South: Sub Plot No.:			Chief Manager & Authorised Officer Bank of India
Date: 10.12.2024			

Bank of Maharashtra ZONAL OFFICE : BHUBANESWAR First Floor, Door Sanchar Bhavan, Unit-IX, Near Rupali Square, Bhubaneswar -751022, Email: dzmbbsr@mahabank.co.in		VEHICLE AUCTION / SALE NOTICE	
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower that the below described Vehicle Hypothecated/charged to the Bank of Maharashtra, the possession of which have been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Maharashtra , will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis on Auction Date mentioned hereunder, for recovery of balance due to the Bank of Maharashtra from the Borrower as mentioned in the table. Details of Borrower, amount due, short description of the Vehicle, possession type, reserve price, earnest money deposit and Bid increment amount are also given as under.			
Branch Name/ Branch Manager Name / Contact No. BERHAMPUR BRANCH, Mr. Satyajit Rout, Mob.: 6370704853	Name & Address of the Borrower/ Amount Due (Rs.) Borrower: Mr. Jagannath Tripathy, At/PO.: Jamuni, Via: Purushottampur, Near Ashok High School, Berhampur, Ganjam-761018, Odisha / Amount Due: ₹8,93,409.72 + Future Interest w.e.f 06.12.2024	Vehicle Details / Possession Type Make: Tata, Model: Nexon, Chassis No.: MAT627129MLH 62940, Engine No.: REVTRN11 HYKK80289, Regd. No.: OD07AK2552, Year of Manufacturing: 2021 / Physical	Reserve Price / EMD/Bid Increment Amount ₹5,60,000/- / ₹56,000/- / ₹25,000/-
Visiting Address for the Vehicle Inspection Bank of Maharashtra, Berhampur Branch, Dharma Nagar, Near Lohia Motors, Berhampur, Dist: Ganjam, Odisha-760002			
Date & Time of E-Auction: 27.12.2024 between 1.00 PM to 5.00 PM with auto extension for 5 minutes in case bid is placed within last 5 minutes			
Last Date & Time for Submission of Bid / Deposit of EMD & Proof: 27.12.2024 upto 1.00 PM			
Date & Time of Inspection of Vehicle: on or before 24.12.2024 during banking hours on any working day between 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM			
Note: This Notice is treated as 15 days Notice for Concerned Borrower. The Auction Sale will be online E-Auction/Bidding through Website https://baanknet.com. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in the Bank's website https://www.bankofmaharashtra.in and E-Auction website https://baanknet.com			
Place : Bhubaneswar Date: 10.12.2024			Authorised Officer Bank of Maharashtra

EAST COAST RAILWAY Tender No. eT-M-KUR-ANGL-ROH-291-24 NAME OF WORK : REPAIR OF WAGONS DURING ROUTINE OVERHAULING AT ROH SHED, ANGUL FOR A PERIOD OF 01 (ONE) YEAR. Advertised Value : ₹ 3,25,47,060.03, EMD : ₹ 3,12,700/-, Cost of Tender Document : ₹1,800/-, Period of Completion: 12 Months. Bidding Start Date : 13.12.2024 Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1530 Hrs. of 27.12.2024. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Complete information including e-tender documents and corrigendum is available in website www.ireps.gov.in Sr. Divl. Mechanical Engineer(Frt)/ PR-787/P/24-25 Khurda Road	
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

EAST COAST RAILWAY No. Comml/SBP/IREPS/Catg./24/6 Dtd. 03.12.2024 CATERING-GENERAL MINOR UNIT (GMU) SL. NO. 7 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (GENERAL MINOR UNIT) AT SAINTALA STATION "E" CATEGORY (SFC) / PLATFORM - 01 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. SL. NO. 2 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (GENERAL MINOR UNIT) AT MAHASAMUND STATION "D" CATEGORY (MSMD) / PLATFORM - 01 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. SL. NO. 3 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (GENERAL MINOR UNIT) AT NAWAPARA STATION "D" CATEGORY (NPD) / PLATFORM - 01 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. SL. NO. 4 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (GENERAL MINOR UNIT) AT BADMAL STATION "E" CATEGORY (BUDM) / PLATFORM - 01 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. SL. NO. 5 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (GENERAL MINOR UNIT) AT ATTABIRA STATION "E" CATEGORY (ATS) / PLATFORM - 01 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. SL. NO. 6 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (GENERAL MINOR UNIT) AT SAMBALPUR CITY STATION NEAR FOOT OVER BRIDGE "D" CATEGORY (SBPY) / PLATFORM - 2/3 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. SL. NO. 7 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (GENERAL MINOR UNIT) AT JHARSUGUDA ROAD STATION "D" CATEGORY (JSRG) / PLATFORM - 01 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. CATERING-SPECIAL MINOR UNIT (SMU) SL. NO. 8 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF REFRESHMENT ROOM (SPECIAL MINOR UNIT- OTHER BACKWARD CASTE) AT SAMBALPUR CITY STATION "D" CATEGORY (SBPY) RAILWAY STATION / PLATFORM - 01 (FIRST FLOOR) FOR 05 YEARS. SL. NO. 9 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (SPECIAL MINOR UNIT-MINORITY) AT JUNAGARH ROAD STATION "D" CATEGORY (JNRD) / PLATFORM - 01 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. SL. NO. 10 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (SPECIAL MINOR UNIT-SCHEDULE TRIBE) AT BISSAM CUTTACK STATION "E" CATEGORY (BISCU) / PLATFORM - 01 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. SL. NO. 11 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (SPECIAL MINOR UNIT-SCHEDULE TRIBE) AT HARISANKAR ROAD STATION "D" CATEGORY (HSK) / PLATFORM - 01 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. SL. NO. 12 - ASSETS DESCRIPTION : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (SPECIAL MINOR UNIT-PHYSICAL HANDICAP) AT BALANGIR STATION "B" CATEGORY (BLGR) / PLATFORM - 02 (BARGARH END) RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. Auction Start Date & Time : 20.12.2024, 1100 hrs. (for all SIs. Nos.) Auction Close Date & Time : 20.12.2024, 1320 hrs. (for all SIs. Nos.) Complete details are available at website: www.ireps.gov.in Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager / PR-784/P/24-25 Sambalpur	
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

FOCUS G77

FUTURE OF MULTILATERALISM



The G77 actively sought to advance a new global economic order, focusing on key areas like energy, food and agriculture, water, trade, technology, and South-South cooperation

the bloc's summits since 2000 have largely focused on broader themes such as security, justice, and democracy.

Moreover, the G77's internal dynamics have changed over time. By 2019, more than 30 of the group's members had graduated to middle-income status. As Singapore, South Korea, India, and Brazil edged closer to joining the ranks of the world's rich economies, their priorities began to diverge from those of most G77 countries. The G77 policy forum in October reflected this shift. Reaffirming the bloc's traditional emphasis on group solidarity, democratisation of global economic governance, and a shared commitment to sustainable development and social justice – speakers from countries like Brazil, Indonesia, Algeria, and Cuba articulated a clear message: the Global South's aspirations must be recognised. G77 diplomats translated these principles into a series of concrete demands: debt relief, preferential trade access for Global South countries, food security, fulfillment of aid commitments, adequate financing for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and stronger regional development banks. They also addressed systemic inequities, calling to limit the power of Western credit-rating agencies and end the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

Regrettably, Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election threatens to derail efforts to foster effective multilateralism and bolster development funding, underscoring the critical importance of the G77's mission. Given its proven ability to forge global coalitions, the group is uniquely positioned to lead the international resistance to Trump's unilateralist agenda.

The writer is a professor at the University of Pretoria.
©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Colonial Countries and Peoples, a landmark UN resolution that became a cornerstone of the decolonisation movement. During this period, an unspoken Afro-Arab alliance emerged, as African countries supported the Palestinian struggle for statehood and Arab governments backed Black South Africans in their fight against white settler rule.

In its quest to challenge Western-dominated systems, the G77 has also cultivated a unique and enduring alliance with China. This relationship, shaped by heated North-South debates in the UN General Assembly, deepened after the G77 played a pivotal role in Taiwan's 1971 expulsion from the UN, clearing the way for the People's Republic to take its seat. Although not formally part of the G77, China remains the only permanent member of the Security Council to be regularly invited to its meetings.

But the G77, with its sprawling, diverse membership, has faced difficulties maintaining internal unity. The Sino-Soviet split and the 1962 Sino-Indian War, in particular, raised doubts about the non-alignment of countries hosting foreign military bases, testing the bloc's cohesion.

With its 1973 oil embargo,

which nearly quadrupled oil prices, OPEC introduced a powerful new weapon of the weak, spurring the G77 to call for the establishment of a new international economic order. This ambitious vision involved restructuring the global economic system to transfer resources and technology from the Global North to the South, fostering self-sufficiency through intra-regional trade, infrastructure investment, and industrialisation.

The G77 actively sought to advance a new global economic order, focusing on key areas like energy, food and agriculture, water, trade, technology, and South-South cooperation. But after the end of the Cold War, the group adopted a less adversarial approach. This pragmatic turn can be at least partly attributed to the "lost decades" of the 1980s and 1990s, which left many developing countries deeply indebted and increasingly dependent on Western-dominated financial institutions.

Consequently, while the G77 has continued to push for comprehensive reforms of multilateral institutions and remained steadfast in its support for Palestinian liberation and the lifting of the US trade embargo against Cuba,

In today's shifting geopolitical landscape, few multilateral alliances are as steadfast – or as essential – as the Group of 77 (G77). Since its founding in 1964, the bloc has expanded to include 134 countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, collectively representing 80% of the world's population and two-thirds of the United Nations' member states.

But the G77 has struggled to define its role in a rapidly changing world. This was evident at the group's recent policy forum in New York, commemorating its 60th anniversary. I had the privilege of speaking at this event, hosted by its Ugandan chair, which highlighted the G77's long-term challenges while showcasing its immense potential and growing global influence.

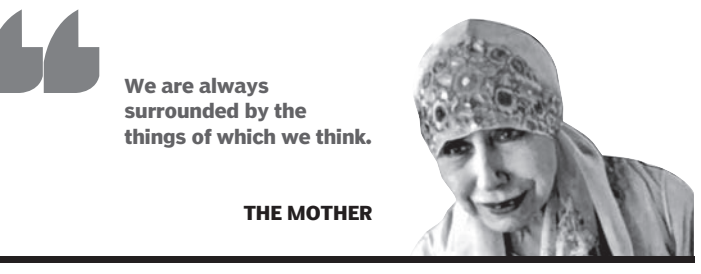
Formed as a coalition of the world's poorest countries, the G77 was conceived as a "weapon of the weak," initially seeking to leverage its large membership to amplify the Global South's voice in multilateral institutions. Yet, despite its size, the group has been unable to reshape the Westphalian state system and US-dominated postwar economic order – structures established long before many developing countries gained their independence. The Non-Aligned Movement, established in 1961, emerged as a natural ally to the G77, with many overlapping members and shared objectives. Both groups drove transformative advances in international law, championing the principle of self-determination – especially in Palestine and Western Sahara – while affirming the legitimacy of decolonisation and armed resistance in Algeria, Mozambique, South Africa, and Vietnam. They denounced South Africa's apartheid system as a "crime against humanity."

These efforts were inspired by the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to



Adekeye Adebajo

FORMED AS A COALITION OF THE WORLD'S POOREST COUNTRIES, THE G77 WAS CONCEIVED AS A 'WEAPON OF THE WEAK'



We are always surrounded by the things of which we think.

THE MOTHER

Whither Goes France

French President Emmanuel Macron is fast running out of options to prevent France from plunging into financial and political chaos following the toppling of the Centre-Right Prime Minister Michel Barnier whom he had appointed only three months ago. It is a poor reflection of his leadership that he has to choose four Prime Ministers in the span of a year to run the government. Macron remains in denial mode refusing to take responsibility for the crises. He sensed the public mood well when saying "some people are tempted to blame me for this situation," and instead held political forces inimical to him responsible for the mess. This has prompted critics to use the two-word expression to slam the President's diagnosis: "flagrant denial."

Fact remains that France finds itself without a functioning government for the second time in six months as a result of Macron's disastrous decision to hold snap legislative elections in the summer. Having squandered his relative majority, and handed unprecedented kingmaker status in the Assemblée to Marine Le Pen's Far-Right MPs, the President is now looking for a fourth Prime Minister in the space of a year. Whoever is chosen, there is no reason to suppose the next one will find it easier than Barnier to control a parliament divided into warring blocs. The markets have already tumbled and there is no budget in place for 2025. This happened because of Marine Le Pen's refusal to endorse an austerity budget that targeted pensioners – a constituency crucial to her chances of success in the next presidential election.

Macron now has two options: to choose a new PM within days from amongst Centrist or Centre-Right figures which is sure to make him once again vulnerable to manipulations by Marine Le Pen.

A more durable and ethical solution would be for Macron to sink his differences with the Leftwing alliance – the New Popular Front (NPF) which narrowly won the July snap polls and prevented Marine Le Pen from emerging the winner. The NPF alliance includes the Socialist party and Jean-Luc Mélenchon's France Unbowed. He had not chosen a PM from the broad Left fearing that an NPF-led government would attempt to reverse parts of his legacy, including the deeply unpopular plans to raise the retirement age. The decision was not only undemocratic, but it turned the largest parliamentary bloc of MPs against him. It was wrong of Macron to forget that his political career has been built on the back of 'republican' votes loaned to him to ward off the threat of a Le Pen presidency. In July, the first Far-Right government in post-war history was only averted by a similar mobilisation and the hasty formation of the NPF alliance.

If Macron is to avoid a lame duck presidency that may even lead to his own humiliating resignation, he needs to recognise that he cannot dictate terms at this stage. Instead of seeking help from Marine Le Pen to bail him out and prop up the next government, it might be prudent for Macron to start building bridges with the Left.

WISDOM CORNER

It is good to express a thing twice right at the outset and so to give it a right foot and also a left one. Truth can surely stand on one leg, but with two it will be able to walk and get around.
FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair.
CS LEWIS

My mind rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation.
ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1768: Encyclopædia Britannica first published. The first part of the first edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica, the oldest continuously published and revised work in the English language, was published and advertised for sale in Edinburgh on this day in 1768.

1884: American author Mark Twain's classic novel Adventures of Huckleberry Finn was first published, appearing in the United Kingdom and Canada; it was released in the United States the following year.

1901: The first Nobel Prizes were distributed, marking the fifth anniversary of the death of Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, who founded and endowed the awards through his will.

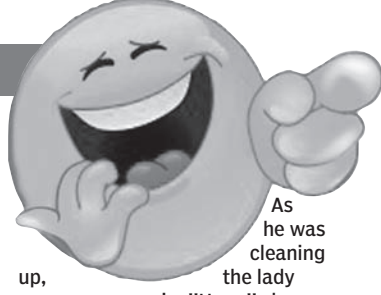
1909: Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf became the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature, cited for "the lofty idealism, vivid imagination and spiritual perception that characterize her writings." 1948 UN General Assembly adopts Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The document proclaimed, for the first time, fundamental human rights were to be universally protected.

1962: The British historical film Lawrence of Arabia, which was directed by David Lean and starred Peter O'Toole as T.E. Lawrence, had its world premiere; it became one of the most celebrated epics in the history of cinema.

LOL

INSTALLING A CARPET

A carpet layer had just finished installing carpet for a lady. He stepped out for a smoke, only to realize he'd lost his cigarettes. In the middle of the room, under the carpet, was a bump. "No sense pulling up the entire floor for one pack of smokes," he said to himself. He proceeded to get out his hammer and flattened the hump.



As he was cleaning up, he was in. "Here," she said, handing him his pack of cigarettes. "I found them in the hallway." "Now," she said, "if only I could find my parakeet."

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

The surge in India's external debt

According to the World Bank's International Debt Report 2024, India's external debt increased by \$31 billion, reaching \$646.79 billion in 2023. The report highlights a significant rise in interest payments, from \$15.08 billion in 2022 to \$22.54 billion in 2023. This development highlights the evolving dynamics of India's financial obligations amidst global economic uncertainties.



SN Tripathy

RISING BORROWING COSTS CAN STRAIN FISCAL RESOURCES, POTENTIALLY DIVERTING FUNDS FROM DEVELOPMENTAL PRIORITIES

The report indicates that long-term debt stocks surged by 7 per cent, aggregating \$498 billion in 2023. In contrast, short-term debt stocks experienced a slight decline, amounting to \$126.32 billion. This shift suggests a preference for more stable, longer-term borrowing to finance development projects and infrastructure needs. However, it also signals a potential rise in debt servicing obligations, given the higher interest costs associated with long-term loans.

India's external debt stock constituted 80 per cent of its exports in 2023, reflecting a moderate reliance on external borrowing relative to its trade

performance. Debt servicing accounted for 10 per cent of exports, indicating increased pressure on export earnings to meet financial obligations. While these figures remain manageable, they highlight the importance of sustaining robust export growth to balance external debt liabilities.

The International Debt Report also sheds light on capital inflows. Net debt inflows reached \$33.42 billion in 2023, suggesting a steady influx of external financing. Meanwhile, net equity inflows were significantly higher, amounting to \$46.94 billion, showcasing investor confidence in India's economic prospects. This balance between debt and equity inflows reflects India's efforts to maintain a healthy mix of foreign investments. The rise in global debt during Q3 2024 marks the third-largest quarterly increase on record, following sharp surges in Q2 and Q4 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, where increases exceeded \$11 trillion per quarter.

The sharp increase in interest payments is a matter

of concern. Rising borrowing costs can strain fiscal resources, potentially diverting funds from developmental priorities. Policymakers must address this by implementing measures to enhance foreign exchange reserves, promote export diversification, and manage external vulnerabilities effectively.

Moreover, India must balance leveraging external borrowing for growth and ensuring debt sustainability. Investments in export-oriented sectors, technology, and manufacturing could help generate foreign exchange and reduce reliance on external debt.

To lower the external debt-to-export ratio, India should focus on diversifying its export basket and exploring new markets, particularly in emerging economies. Encouraging foreign direct investment in high-potential industries like renewable energy, digital technologies, and infrastructure can reduce reliance on debt-based financing.

Strengthening the rupee through monetary and fiscal measures can alleviate the

burden of servicing external debt denominated in foreign currencies. Emphasis on concessional loans and multilateral financing with favourable terms can reduce overall debt servicing costs. Expanding domestic debt markets can provide an alternative to external borrowing, reducing exposure to global financial volatility.

India's external debt trajectory reflects the opportunities and challenges of a rapidly growing economy. While the rising debt levels underline the nation's expanding global engagement, they also necessitate careful policy measures to ensure sustainability. By addressing the rising interest costs and focusing on export-led growth, India can manage its external debt effectively and bolster its economic resilience. This strategic approach will maintain investor confidence and ensure long-term financial stability.

The writer is a former Professor of Economics at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune.

Sustainable transportation

Sir, India is set to revolutionise green transit with its first hydrogen-powered train, scheduled for trials on the Jind-Sonapat route in December 2024. Developed by the Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO), the train uses fuel cell technology to generate electricity from hydrogen and oxygen, emitting only water vapor. With regular operations planned for 2025, this innovation aligns with Indian Railways' goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. The train, featuring eight coaches and a capacity of 2,638 passengers, operates at speeds up to 110 km/h with a range of 1,000 km per tank. It eliminates harmful emissions, reduces noise pollution by 60%, and lowers maintenance costs, offering a cost-effective, sustainable alternative to diesel trains. As part of the ₹2,800 crore "Hydrogen for Heritage" project, 35 hydrogen trains will be deployed on heritage and hilly routes, backed by dedicated hydrogen storage and refueling infrastructure. This initiative positions India alongside global leaders like Germany, Sweden, and China in advancing hydrogen technology in railways. By adopting this clean, efficient innovation, Indian Railways is setting a new standard for sustainable transportation while enhancing India's role in the global hydrogen revolution.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Man for all seasons

Sir, After the massive Mahayuti win in Maharashtra, there was little doubt that Devendra Fadnavis would head the new state government although the delay in naming him gave rise to considerable speculations. When the BJP high command decided to go with Fadnavis as its chief ministerial preference in October 2014, some sceptics doubted the soft-spoken and amiable Fadnavis' ability to withstand the pulls and pressures that come to be associated with the tough job. But Fadnavis, as the second youngest CM of one of India's largest and important states, proved that the high command's decision was a masterstroke. He has the knack of deftly balancing the twin tasks of providing an able and transparent administration as well as keeping allies with different ideologies in good spirits. A go-getter and a canny tactician who knows his limits, the loyal BJP man appears destined for bigger things.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 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



ALARM OVER BIHAR'S ABYSMAL SEX RATIO AT BIRTH

Female foeticide: A ticking time bomb

Bihar is among the worst-performing states, with an SRB of 882. While the sex ratio at birth was 894 in 2022-23, it was 914 in 2021-22



Female foeticide is also a moral and social issue. We appeal to people to save the girl child. The NDA government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is trying to bring about a shift in the way our society looks at the girl child

MANGAL PANDEY | HEALTH MINISTER, BIHAR

Patna, Dec 9: The Bihar government is alarmed over the state's abysmal "sex ratio at birth" (SRB) which has been flagged in the latest report of the Centre, and decided to strictly implement measures for checking female foeticide, according to a senior minister. The SRB - the number of female births per 1000 male births - has been declining in the state, according to the Health Management Information System (HMIS) report of the Ministry of Health for 2023-24. The report kept Bihar among the worst-performing states, with an SRB of 882. While the sex ratio at birth was 894 in 2022-23, it was 914 in 2021-22. "The declining sex ratio in the state is a matter of serious concern. The state government has initiated a range of welfare measures to improve the

gender disparity in the state," Bihar Health Minister Mangal Pandey told PTI. "The state's Mukhyamantri Kanya Utthan Yojna covers the period of a girl's life from birth to graduation. The objective of this scheme is to promote the birth of girl child, prevent female foeticide and gender imbalance," Pandey said. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme was launched

by the PM in 2015 to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of women empowerment over a life-cycle continuum, the minister said. An emphasis on mindset change through training, sensitization, awareness raising and community mobilization is on the ground, said the minister adding the Bihar government will further intensify its campaign to check the declining

trend of sex ratio at birth in the state. As per the HMIS report, Vaishali is the worst-performing district where the SRB is below 800 in 2023-24, followed by Bhojpur (801), Saran (805), Gopalganj (837), Arwal (844), Jamui (845), Jehanabad (852), Nawada (858), Patna and Sheohar (862 each), West Champaran (864) etc. In 2022-23 also, the SRB was low in these districts - Vaishali (819), Bhojpur (811), Saran (821), Gopalganj (848), Arwal (884), Jamui (884), Jehanabad (859), Nawada (896), Patna (889), Sheohar (884) and West Champaran (875). Chief Secretary Amrit Lal Meena recently held a meeting of the departments concerned over the issue and instructed senior officials and district administrations across the state to ensure that 'Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994' is enforced strictly. Meena also directed the officials to ensure that several other initiatives taken by the government to check gender disparity, including creating awareness among the masses, are enforced effectively. The meeting was attended by officials of the state Social Welfare Department too. Talking to PTI, Harjot Kaur

Bamhrah, Additional Chief Secretary of the Social Welfare Department and Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Women & Child Development Corporation, said, "A letter has already been sent to all DMs across the state to ensure strict enforcement of the PC-PNDT Act in their respective areas and effective implementation of the schemes meant to check gender disparity and empower women in the state. This includes intensifying awareness campaigns in the state." The PC-PNDT Act was enacted with the intent to prohibit prenatal diagnostic techniques for the determination of the sex of the fetus leading to female foeticide, she added. "Districts have been asked to organise awareness campaigns at mass-level to save the girl child. People should celebrate the birth of the girl child. We should be equally proud of our daughters," said Bamhrah. Despite the overall decline in SRB, there are certain districts in the state which have shown an increase in the figures. These districts include Siwan (from 857 in 2022-23 to 881 in 2023-24), Sheikhpura (from 880 to 892 in 2023-24), Banka (from 898 to 909), Bhagalpur (from 917 to 925) and Kishanganj (from 926 to 929 in 2023-24).

Mahayuti govt wins confidence motion



The BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP 'Mahayuti' coalition has a commanding majority of 230 seats in the 288-member assembly, where the majority mark is 145

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Maharashtra leads states in FDI

Maharashtra Governor CP Radhakrishnan Monday said the state has emerged as the number one among all the states in attracting foreign direct investment. Addressing a joint session of the state legislature in Mumbai, the Governor said Maharashtra contributes more than 14 per cent to the country's GDP. The state is a preferred destination for FDI, he added. "In 2023-24, Maharashtra topped in the country in FDI with Rs 1,25,101 crore investment, and has again topped in the country in the first two quarters, from April to September of the year 2024-25 with FDI of Rs 1,13,236 crore, which is more than 90 per cent of last year's total FDI," he said. The government has set a very ambitious target of making Maharashtra the first state in the country to achieve the target of becoming a USD one trillion economy by the year 2027-28, he said.

Mumbai, Dec 9: Five days after assuming office, the Mahayuti alliance government in Maharashtra led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Monday comfortably won a confidence vote in the state Assembly. The trust motion, tabled by Shiv Sena MLA Uday Samant and others, was passed by a voice vote on the last day of the three-day special Assembly session. Speaker Rahul Narwekar, elected unopposed for a second straight term earlier in the day, announced that the trust motion has been approved by the newly-constituted House. The BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP 'Mahayuti' coalition has a commanding majority of 230 seats in the 288-member assembly, where the majority mark is 145. "The confidence motion has been passed with a majority," Narwekar said. BJP leader Fadnavis was sworn-in as the chief minister for a third time December 5 at a grand ceremony in Mumbai's Azad Maidan. Eknath Shinde (Shiv Sena) and Ajit Pawar (NCP) took oath as deputy CMs at the ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The 15th assembly officially began its tenure December 7, two weeks the poll results were announced. With the BJP-led alliance enjoying a super majority in the lower House, the floor test was a mere formality. Shiv Sena leader and former minister Samant, BJP legislator

Sanjay Kute, former minister Dilip Walse Patil (NCP), and independent MLA Ravi Rana tabled the proposal for a confidence motion in the lower House. With Narwekar's appointment as Speaker, the ruling coalition now enjoys the support of 229 MLAs, including small parties and independent MLAs. Narwekar (47), the BJP MLA from Mumbai's Colaba seat and a lawyer by training, was elected unopposed as the Speaker of the 15th assembly. Opposition alliance Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), which has less than 50 MLAs, did not put up a candidate. Fadnavis, in his congratulatory speech, highlighted that Narwekar is only the second member of the lower House to be re-elected to the post since the state's formation in 1960.

Google Maps mishap: Family on way to Goa ends up in Karnataka

AGENCIES

Patna, Dec 9: A family from Bihar, who were travelling to Goa following directions from Google Maps, found themselves stuck in a thick forest zone in Khanapur taluk, Belagavi district, Karnataka. The family were then forced to spend a harrowing night trapped in their car until they were rescued by local police with the help of villagers Friday, police said. Khanapur police inspector Manjunath Nayak said the family of six-seven people, including children, was stranded approximately 8 kilometres inside the forest. He said, "The family, led by Rajdas Ranjittas from Bihar, had been following Google Maps for their journey to Goa. After passing through Khanapur town, the map directed them to a path between Shirodaga and Hemmadaga villages, leading them 7 kilometres into the Bhinghad wildlife zone on Thursday. With no mobile network in the area, the family spent the night in the car, isolated and unable to contact anyone for help." He said, "The family, unaware of how to get out of the forest, spent the entire night in their locked car surrounded by wildlife. The next morning, the family retraced their route for about 3 kilometers, where they regained mobile network coverage. They immediately called the police helpline to report their situation." "The Belagavi police control room passed the information to

SIMILAR EVENTS

This is not the first such incident linked to Google Maps' guidance. On November 24, three people were killed in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly district when their car, following Google Maps directions, plunged from a partially constructed bridge into the Ramganga river

Another recent incident in the same district saw a car swept away into a water canal after they followed a route indicated by the app

the Khanapur police, who used GPS coordinates to locate the family and reach them with the help of villagers," he said. Inspector Nayak said that the family was fortunate to have been stranded in a location where they could eventually get a mobile signal as the forest zone is known for its wildlife, and recently, a farmer in the same area lost part of his leg due to a bear attack. "To avoid animal attacks, villagers often travel in groups and armed for protection," he said. This is not the first such incident linked to Google Maps' guidance. On November 24, three people were killed in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly district when their car, following Google Maps directions, plunged from a partially constructed bridge into the Ramganga river. Another recent incident in the same district saw a car swept away into a water canal after they followed a route indicated by the app.



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar with sport players during the 'Mashaal' program for the discovery of sports talents at Patliputra Sports Complex, in Patna, Monday

Maha seeks UNESCO tag for Lonar Lake

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 9: The Maharashtra government plans to submit a proposal to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to include the famous Lonar Lake in Buldhana district in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list, officials have said. The move aims to elevate the site as a global hub for tourism and research, besides boosting its conservation, they said. Amravati Divisional Commissioner Nidhi Pandey recently met officials from various departments at Lonar to discuss the proposal. "This proposal will soon be presented, marking a significant step towards achieving recognition," Pandey told PTI. Buldhana District Collector Kiran Patil said the proposal is in its final stage. "We will submit it once it is polished. Unlike other UNESCO sites, Lonar Lake presents a unique mix of several categories. It is a geographical and scientific wonder, formed from a meteor impact," he said. The official said the lake in Lonar, about 460 km from Mumbai, is home to several temples, some dating back over 1,200 years. The proposal highlights the lake's geological importance and the urgent need for conservation efforts, he said. "We are cataloguing biodiversity, gathering data about the temples, and documenting rare findings from excavations and research on the meteor impact conducted by various scientists," Patil said. After reaching ASI, the pro-



posal will undergo a detailed review before being submitted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. A UNESCO tag will ensure that the lake, spread over 113 hectares, has "outstanding universal value". Local activist Gajanan Kharat, who advocates for the lake's conservation, said a few senior bureaucrats are keen on supporting the UNESCO recognition for the impact crater. However, a lot is to be done. "Despite local appeals, the government has yet to instal signboards along national highways or the Nagpur-Mumbai Samruddhi Expressway. We have been urging their installation on these roads to attract more visitors," he said. Kharat said the government should encourage investment in the hospitality sector to enhance tourist experiences. Improved services would draw more visitors, creating job opportunities for locals, he said. Collector Patil said the old residential area in Buldhana requires significant upgrades,

including basic facilities like a proper bus stand. Steady progress has been made in these areas over the past few years through review meetings, said the official. "There is another temple in Buldhana called 'Daitya Sudan'. It features beautiful stone construction and artistic designs, making it a significant attraction for tourists primarily visiting Lonar Lake. Some encroachments around the temple have already been cleared, and we are working on repairing and widening the access road for smoother vehicle movement," he said. Lonar Lake, the world's largest basaltic impact crater, was formed approximately 50,000 years ago by a high-velocity meteor strike. Its saline-alkaline waters and surrounding ecosystem have attracted extensive research from institutions such as the Smithsonian, the United States Geological Survey, and the Geological Society of India. A government report, part of the UNESCO submission, states that the area hosts 15 ancient temples, some over 1,200 years

old, blending rich cultural history with its scientific significance. This geological wonder has a diameter of more than 1.8 kilometres and a depth of 150 metres. In recent years, rising water levels have submerged five temples inside the crater.

Mumbai records lowest temperature in 9 years

Mumbai: Mumbai experienced its coldest December morning in nine years Monday, with temperatures plummeting to 13.7 degrees Celsius at the Santacruz observatory, 5.1 degrees below normal. The last time the city witnessed such low temperatures was December 24, 2015, when mercury dipped to 11.4 degrees Celsius. This sharp drop in temperature comes just days after Mumbai experienced its hottest December day in 13 years, with temperatures soaring to 37.3 degrees Celsius December 4. The Colaba observatory registered a minimum temperature of 19.2 degrees Celsius. Maximum temperatures remained moderate, with Santacruz recording 32.2 degrees Celsius, 0.9 degrees below normal, whilst Colaba reached 30.3 degrees Celsius, 2.4 degrees below typical readings. Meteorologists expect temperatures to maintain these levels for the next few days before seeing a gradual increase. The city's air quality showed improvement as well. The Central Pollution Control Board indicated an air quality index of 112 across 20 of the 30 monitoring stations, with PM10 (particulate matter of size 10 micrometers per cubic metre) identified as the primary pollutant.

"e" Procurement Notice for Building Works

Identification No. Online Tender/03/PSB/2024-25

1 Name of the Work	Construction of Additional Class Room at Govt. Upper Primary School, Bhogad, Under Begunia Block in the district of Khordha for the year 2024-25
2 Total Number of Works	01 No.
3 Estimated Cost	Rs. 12,26,644.00
4 Class of Contractor	D & Equivalent
5 Period of Completion	04 Calendar Months
6 Availability of Tender	Dt. 09.12.2024 at 11.00 A.M. to dt. 21.12.2024 at 5.00 P.M.
7 Last date & time of seeking Tender clarification	Dt. 17.12.2024 at 5.00 P.M.
8 Date & time of opening of Tender	Dt. 23.12.2024 at 11 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tenderodisha.gov.in

Sd./-
Block Development Officer
Begunia

OIPR-19302/11/0002/2425



Along with technology and other sectors, it is needed that our youngsters lead our country in politics too because we cannot leave it to those who believe only in dynasty politics

Noida Int'l Airport Passes Validation Flight

The first validation test flight for the upcoming Noida International Airport was conducted successfully Monday, with an Airbus 320 of IndiGo receiving a ceremonial water cannon salute upon the maiden landing at the greenfield facility, officials said



of the day quote

Key initiatives such as issuing soil health cards and launching schemes like the PM Fasal Bima Yojana and PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana have significantly benefited the farming community



YOGI ADITYANATH | CM, UTTAR PRADESH

A large number of investors have come here for the summit and I can say that in the coming times, the kind of possibilities there are in Rajasthan in every field, we will be successful in making Rajasthan a leading state



BHAJANLAL SHARMA | CM, RAJASTHAN

Heartiest congratulations to Congress' Parliamentary Party chief and former Congress President Sonia Gandhi on her birthday today and best wishes for her good health and long life.



MAYAWATI | BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

Himachal receives season's first snowfall

Shimla: Himachal Pradesh witnessed its first snowfall of the season which led to the closure of at least 87 roads in the state, including Atari-Leh National Highway 3 near Manali's Rohtang Pass, the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) said.

Three killed in explosion in WB

Kolkata: At least three persons were killed and a few others injured in an explosion when they were allegedly manufacturing illegal crude bombs in Murshidabad district of West Bengal, police said Monday.

Seven killed as two cars collide

Junagadh: Seven persons, including four college students, headed to a village to appear for an exam, were killed when two cars collided in Gujarat's Junagadh district Monday, police said.

Army jawan killed in mine blast

Poonch/Jammu: An Army jawan was killed in a mine blast during patrolling along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district Monday, officials said.

WEST BENGAL OBC CASE

Reservation can't be on basis of religion: SC

The high court had struck down the OBC status of several castes in West Bengal granted since 2010, holding as illegal the reservation for them in public sector jobs and state-run educational institutions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: Reservation cannot be on the basis of religion, the Supreme Court observed Monday while hearing a batch of pleas challenging the Calcutta High Court verdict that struck down the OBC status of several castes in West Bengal granted since 2010.

The pleas, including the one filed by the West Bengal government, challenging the high court's May 22 verdict came up for hearing before a bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan.

"Reservation cannot be on the basis of religion," Justice Gavai observed.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the state government, said, "This is not on the basis of religion. This is on the basis of backwardness."

The high court had struck down the OBC status of several castes in West Bengal granted since 2010, holding as illegal the reservation for them in public sector jobs and state-run educational institutions.

In its verdict, the high court said, "Religion indeed appears to have been the sole criterion for declaring these communi-



The top court said it would hear the detailed submissions January 7

ties as OBCs."

The high court further said the "selection of 77 classes of Muslims as backward is an affront to the Muslim community as a whole".

Deciding the petitions challenging the provisions of the state's reservation law of 2012 and reservations granted in

ervation given between April, 2010 and September, 2010.

It also struck down 37 classes for reservation as OBC given under The West Bengal Backward Classes (Other than Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) (Reservation of Vacancies in Services and Posts) Act, 2012.

During the hearing Monday, the top court asked the lawyers appearing in the case to give an overview of the matter.

While referring to the high court's verdict, Sibal said the provisions of the Act were struck down.

"So these are very serious issues involved. It affects rights of thousands of students who are aspiring to be admitted to universities, people who are wanting jobs," he said.

Sibal therefore urged the bench for some interim order to be passed and an ex-facie stay on the high court order.

The bench also heard submissions of other lawyers, including senior advocate PS Patwalia, who was representing some of the respondents in the matter. The top court said it would hear the detailed submissions January 7.

The high court, in total, struck down 77 classes of res-

UPSC civil services main exam results declared

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: The Union Public Service Commission Monday declared the results of the civil services (main) examination for the selection of candidates for the IAS, IPS and other Central services of Group A and B posts.

Around 2,845 candidates cleared the civil services (main) examination. Out of over 13.4 lakh candidates, as many as 14,625 cleared the civil services (preliminary) exam, 2024, held June 16.

In a statement, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) said the results were declared based on exams held from September 20 to 29.

The UPSC said the successful candidates in the main examination have qualified for the personality test for selection to the Indian Administrative Service, Indian Foreign Service, Indian Police Service and other Central Services (Groups A and B).

The candidature of these aspirants is provisional subject to them being found eligible in all respects, it said in the statement. The candidates will be required to produce the original certificates in support of their eligibility/reservation claims such as age, educational qualifications, community, econom-



ically weaker section, Person with Benchmark Disability (PwBD) and other documents such as TA form at the time of their interview.

The candidates have been advised to keep the said documents ready with them. Those seeking reservation/relaxation benefits available for SC/ST/OBC/EWS/PwBD/Ex-servicemen etc., must also produce original certificates issued by the closing date of the application of the civil services (preliminary) examination - March 6, 2024. Dates of interviews of these candidates will be notified in due course. It will be held in the UPSC office at Dholpur House in New Delhi. The Schedule for the personality tests will be made available accordingly.

The e-summon letters of personality tests of the candidates will be made available in due course and it may be downloaded from the UPSC's websites www.upsc.gov.in and www.upsonline.in.

Attacks on minorities concerning: India to B'desh

BANGLADESH SAYS NO COUNTRY HAS RIGHT TO INTERFERE IN ITS AFFAIRS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Dec 9: India Monday flagged "regrettable incidents" of attacks on minorities in Bangladesh, which Dhaka called "misleading and false information" and said no country should interfere in its internal affairs as their foreign secretaries met here for the first time since the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri told reporters that he conveyed India's concerns, including those related to the safety and welfare of minorities, during his meeting with his counterpart Mohammad Jashim Uddin.

"We also discussed some regrettable incidents of attacks on cultural, religious, and diplomatic properties," he said. "We expect, overall, a constructive approach on all these issues by the Bangladesh authorities, and we look forward to moving the relationship forward in a positive, forward-looking, and constructive direction."

Their meeting came amid a low in the relations between the two countries after Hasina fled to India August 5 following massive protests against her government.

India has repeatedly expressed concern over the tar-



geting of Hindus since the interim government of Muhammad Yunus took charge in early August.

Bangladesh's statement after Monday's talks, however, focused on "misinformation" in Indian media.

Jashim Uddin said the Bangladesh side expected Delhi's active cooperation to halt the "negative campaign" in India to build trust among the people of the two countries.

"We drew their attention and sought appropriate steps regarding dissemination of misleading and false information in Indian media about Bangla-

Indian official to visit Bangladesh since the takeover by the interim government, expressed New Delhi's desire for a "positive, constructive and mutually beneficial" relationship with Dhaka.

'Don't think we will have lollipops when you come to occupy our land': Mamata

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday reacted strongly to reported statements by some Bangladeshi leaders that Bangladesh could occupy Bengal within days, calling them "absurd" and said, "when you will come to occupy our land, don't think we will have lollipops".

CUET-UG, PG set to undergo changes in 2025: UGC chief

THE UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION HAS CONSTITUTED AN EXPERT COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE CONDUCT OF CUET-UG AND PG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: The Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for admission to undergraduate and postgraduate courses is set to undergo several changes in the 2025 edition following a review by an expert panel, according to UGC Chairman Jagadeesh Kumar.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has constituted an expert committee to review the conduct of CUET-UG and PG.

"Based on the feedback from the past years, it is also essential to continuously improve the examination process to provide a better, more efficient and conducive environment for students taking CUET. In this spirit, the UGC has constituted

an expert committee to review the conduct of CUET-UG and CUET-PG for 2025," Kumar told PTI.

"The committee has examined various aspects of the test, such as its structure, number of papers, duration of test papers, syllabus alignment and operational logistics. The commission considered these recommendations in a recent meeting," he added.

Kumar said the UGC will soon release a draft proposal detailing the revised guidelines for conducting CUET-UG and CUET-PG 2025, inviting feedback and suggestions from students, parents, teachers and institutions.

In the first edition of the exam in 2022, CUET-UG was



plagued by technical glitches. Also, as a result of tests for a

subject being conducted over multiple shifts, the scores had

By encouraging universities to adopt a single, national-level entrance test, CUET has streamlined admissions, reduced the reliance on varying cut-offs, and made the admission process transparent and technology-driven

JAGADESH KUMAR | UGC CHAIRMAN

to be normalised during the announcement of results.

The exam was conducted in hybrid mode for the first time in 2024. It was cancelled across Delhi a night before it was to be held citing logistical reasons.

CUET was introduced as a step towards standardising the admission process for undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) programmes across universities, Kumar said.

"CUET has provided a level playing field for students from diverse educational boards and socio-economic backgrounds, ensuring equal opportunity for all aspirants. Last year, 283 universities adopted CUET, and the number of registered candidates was 13,47,820."

"By encouraging universities to adopt a single, national-level entrance test, CUET has streamlined admissions, reduced the reliance on varying cut-offs, and made the admission process transparent and technology-driven," he said.

The UGC chief interacted with students from various degree colleges who cleared CUET-UG 2024 Monday to discuss potential changes in CUET-UG 2025.



The assistance is meant for the state, not just the LDF government. Everyone should stand for Kerala's cause, especially when other states are receiving support from the Centre

IYC LAUNCHES FIFTH PHASE OF 'YOUNG INDIA KE BOL'

The Indian Youth Congress (IYC) here Monday launched the fifth phase of its 'Young India ke Bol' programme, focusing on two of the most pressing problems in the country -- unemployment and drug abuse -- a spokesperson said



Missile frigate INS Tushil inducted into Indian Navy in Russia



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: Indian Navy's Russian-manufactured guided missile frigate INS Tushil was commissioned into the force at Russia's coastal city of Kaliningrad Monday.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi and several other senior Indian officials were present at the commissioning ceremony.

INS Tushil is expected to significantly bolster the Indian Navy's operational capability in the Indian Ocean, a region that has witnessed increasing forays by China's PLA Navy in the last few years. The warship has been constructed in Russia as part of an over USD 2.5-billion deal that New Delhi had inked with Moscow in 2016 for four stealth frigates for the Indian Navy.

Under the deal, two ships were to be built in Russia, while the other two were to be manufactured in India.

In his remarks at the ceremony, Singh described the commissioning of the warship as a proud testament to India's growing maritime strength and significant milestone in long-standing ties with Russia.

"The ship is a big proof of the collaborative prowess of Russian and Indian industries. It exemplifies India's journey towards technological excellence through jointmanship," he said.

Singh said India and Russia will enter a "new era" of cooperation by taking advantage of each other's expertise in areas such as artificial intelligence, cyber security, space exploration and counter-terrorism.

The ship's construction was closely monitored by an Indian team of specialists from the 'Warship Overseeing Team' stationed at Kaliningrad.

The 3,900-tonne ship with a length of 125 metres packs a lethal punch and is an impressive blend of Russian and Indian cutting edge technologies and best practices in warship construction. The ship's new design provides it with enhanced stealth features and better stability characteristics, officials said.

With the collaboration of Indian naval specialists and Severnoye Design Bureau, the indigenous content of the ship has been enhanced to an impressive 26 per cent, the officials said.

The major Indian defence firms involved in the project were BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited, Bharat Electronics Limited, Keltron, Nova Integrated Systems from Tata, Elcome Marine, Johnson Controls India and others.

40 Delhi schools get bomb threat mail

Sender demands \$30,000; police says 'nothing suspicious found'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: Around 40 schools in Delhi received a bomb threat mail Monday morning with the sender demanding \$30,000, prompting a multi-agency search of the premises but "nothing suspicious was found", a police official said.

The threat was sent in a single e-mail marked to the some of the city's prominent schools including DPS RK Puram; GD Goenka, Paschim Vihar; The British School, Chanakyapuri; The Mother's International, Aurobindo Marg; Modern School, Mandi House; DPS Vasant Kunj; Delhi Police Public School, Safdarjung; DPS East of Kailash and Salwan Public Schools.

Most schools that received the threat suspended classes and sent students back home.

Officials said the premises of the schools that received the threat were thoroughly checked and nothing suspicious



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

was found. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Surendra Choudhary said the e-mail was received by four school located within his district as well.

"Soon after getting the information, we conducted a thorough check of the school premises. Nothing suspicious was found. I request parents to not panic."

A Delhi Fire Services (DFS) official said they received the first alerts about the bomb threats from GD Goenka, Paschim Vihar, (6.15 am), and DPS

RK Puram (7.06 am). He said bomb detection teams, fire officials, local police and dog squads responded immediately and conducted searches at the schools.

Sources said the email was delivered on the schools' id at 11.38 pm Sunday -- when the schools were closed -- from scottielanza@gmail.com.

The email read, "I planted multiple bombs inside the building. The bombs are small and hidden very well. It will not cause very much damage to the building, but many people will be injured when the bombs detonate."

It also read, "You all deserve to suffer and lose limbs. If I do not receive \$30,000. The group =E2=80=9CKNR=E2=80=9D is behind this attack (sic)."

In a message to parents, Mother Mary's School, Mayur Vihar, said, "An email was received this morning regarding a bomb threat in school.

As such, the students are being dispersed immediately as a precautionary measure. You are requested to kindly collect your wards from your respective bus stops."

While taking his daughter back from the school, Harish, one of the parents, told PTI Videos, "I received a message about an emergency from the school. This is the failure of the government as the schools are getting such threats regularly."

AAP slams Centre

The ruling AAP Monday voiced concern over the bomb threats received by several schools in Delhi and accused the BJP-led Centre of failing to ensure the safety of residents in the national capital. Around 40 prominent schools in Delhi received bomb threats Monday morning, a police official said. Most schools that received the threat suspended classes and sent students back home. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supreme Arvind Kejriwal said in a press conference, "The situation of law and order in Delhi is getting worse every day. Now our children are not safe, as bomb threats are received in many schools and this is not the first time."

There has been a blast outside a CRPF school in Rohini, so it is not that only threats are being received, he added. "I want to ask Union Home Minister what is he doing to tackle this law and order situation. I would also request him to meet the people of Delhi and assure them of safety and security," he said. Chief Minister Atishi charged that the Centre has failed in its only responsibility of providing safety to the people of Delhi. In a post on X, she said that from routine crimes of extortion, murders, and shootings, now the schools are receiving bomb threats.

The Delhi Police Special and Crime Branch have started the probe.

Most schools that received the threat suspended classes and sent students back home

India calls for stability, unity, territorial integrity of Syria

Assad fled the country after the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) took control of Damascus, marking the end of his family's 50-year rule

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: A day after rebel forces overthrew President Bashar Assad's authoritarian government in Syria, India Monday joined leading nations to call for stability and preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Arab nation.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said it is monitoring the unfolding developments in Syria and advocated a peaceful and inclusive Syrian-led political process going forward in that country.

The Syrian government collapsed Sunday as the rebels seized control of the capital Damascus after capturing several other prominent cities and towns.

Assad fled the country after the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) took control of Damascus, marking the end of his family's 50-year rule.

"We are monitoring the situation in Syria in the light of



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ongoing developments. We underline the need for all parties to work towards preserving the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria," the MEA said in a statement.

"We advocate a peaceful and inclusive Syrian-led political process respecting the interests and aspirations of all sections of Syrian society," it said. The MEA said the Indian embassy in Damascus is in contact with the Indian community in Syria for their "safety and security".

Hours after the rebels captured power, official sources in Delhi Sunday said all Indian nationals in Syria are safe.

Russian state media reported that Assad is in Moscow and will be given asylum. His nearly 14-year tenure was marked by civil war, bloodshed and brutal crackdown on his political opponents. Gandhi asked the party mem-

MOCK 'INTERVIEW' ON PARLIAMENT PREMISES

Rahul takes dig at PM, Adani

The protest took place in front of the steps of Parliament's Makar Dwar and not on the steps leading to it following an advisory by the Lok Sabha Secretariat not to protest on the steps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: Leaders of some INDIA bloc parties Monday protested in Parliament complex over the Adani row, with Rahul Gandhi conducting a mock 'interview' over the issue with Congress members wearing masks of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and industrialist Gautam Adani

Standing outside the Makar Dwar of Parliament, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge along with MPs of other Opposition parties raised slogans of "Modi, Adani ek hain" and "we want justice".

After sloganeering, Rahul Gandhi conducted the mock 'interview' with Congress leaders wearing masks of Modi and Adani.

Gandhi asked the party mem-



ber sporting mask of Adani why Parliament was not being allowed to function to which the Congress MP (posing as Adani) said "we'll have to ask Amit bhai...that man is missing".

Asked by Gandhi about the relationship between the two, the Congress MP said, "We are together".

The Congress leader sporting mask of Adani also said, "He does whatever I say and want be it airport or anything else."

On why Modi was silent, the Congress MP posing as Adani said, "this man is in tension

these days", evoking laughter around.

Asked what was his next plan and what he proposed to buy now, the Congress MP wearing the Adani mask said, "we have not decided yet. We have a meeting this evening."

The Trinamool Congress, Samajwadi Party and Aam Aadmi Party were not part of the protest.

However, Samajwadi Party leader Ram Gopal Yadav said nothing much should be read into the absence of some leaders and asserted "all is well" in the Opposition bloc.

NMC unveils norms to spot fake patients during college audits

According to the guidelines, admission of large numbers of patients on the day of inspection or the previous day, admission of multiple patients from the same family or the admitted patients having no or minor problems which can be treated on OPD basis with oral medications, could be a parameter for identifying 'fake patients'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: The National Medical Commission (NMC) has issued guidelines for identifying "fake patients" in medical colleges and facilities seeking approval for setting up new institutes or for increasing the number of UG and PG seats.

This is the first time that the Commission has come up with such guidelines. The guidelines come after instances of some medical institutions or colleges admitting fake patients (person who does not require any treatment or in-patient treatment) to fulfil the requirement of bed occupancy and investigation.

According to the guidelines, admission of large numbers of patients on the day of inspection or the previous day, admission of multiple patients from the same family or the admitted patients having no or minor problems which can be treated on OPD basis with oral medications, could be a parameter for identifying "fake patients".

Patients, who are admitted

without any evidence of investigations like X-ray, blood tests etc. (before or after admission) or treatment which is generally done for admitted patients like intravenous (IV) fluid, injections, catheterization, giving medicines etc can also be an indication.

Another parameter assessors should keep in mind is if most of the admitted children are found to be playful and joyous without any significant problem in the paediatric ward or if they observe that patients were admitted in large numbers through preventive health checkups or camps.

The NMC has laid down the guidelines while inviting applications for establishment of new medical college/institution intending to offer undergraduate course and increase in the number of UG seats in an established medical/institutions for the Academic year (AY) 2025-2026.

The Commission said "fake patient practice" will be considered as a serious violation and will invite punishment as



per the regulations.

For the purpose of training the students, certain minimum clinical exposure of patients have been defined in the number of UG seats in an established medical/institutions for the Academic year (AY) 2025-2026.

The Commission said "fake patient practice" will be considered as a serious violation and will invite punishment as

The NMC has laid down the guidelines while inviting applications for establishment of new medical college/institution intending to offer undergraduate course and increase in the number of UG seats in an established medical/institutions for the Academic year (AY) 2025-2026

will be conducted for one or more day and for PG courses, assessment will be conducted for one or more day.

The assessor/assessors will conduct the assessment to examine the infrastructure, quality of medical education, faculty, AEBAS data, clinical material and other clinical indicators, and financial status of the college to ensure compliance with latest NMC guidelines.

It may also conduct interviews with staff and all students during the assessment. Medical colleges established by the state or central government, registered for additional PG seats may be exempted from physical inspection based on

self declaration and analysis of documents furnished by the medical college.

The college will have to follow guidelines of attendance of the faculty and other staff and preparation of the documents issued by NMC or respective boards from time-to-time. Required number of faculties as mentioned in MSR guidelines of respective boards (UG or PG) should be available throughout the year and for any given period of time.

As it is a minimum requirement document, no relaxation will be permitted except in special circumstances in larger interest by following due procedures.

of the day quote

Today, when you will be on a tour to Haryana and Rajasthan, I hope that you will definitely try to understand the struggle of the farmer who provides food to the nation. Farmers are pleading for justice because your government has betrayed them again and again

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

We have proposed the name of Rabindra Nath Mahato for the post of the Speaker. We hope he will be elected unanimously

HEMANT SOREN | CM, JHARKHAND

India can demonstrate to the world that the way to live on planet Earth is through development that respects nature and avoids indiscriminate growth and unchecked technological advancement

AS KIRAN KUMAR | FORMER ISRO CHAIRMAN

POST OF THE DAY

The BJP is making a mockery of our country as if it is their private fiefdom. They have the support of 38% of the 65% voters who voted, and they are running a coalition government. If JDU and TDP pull out, the government will fall. Where does their vulgar arrogance come from???

@JhaSanjay

SHORT TAKES

CM Soren takes oath as Assembly member

Ranchi: Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren Monday took oath as a member of the Jharkhand Assembly on the first day of the four-day session of the House. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Radhakrishna Kishore, Revenue and Land Reforms Minister Deepak Birua and Labour Minister Sanjay Prasad Yadav were among the ministers in the Hemant Soren cabinet who also took oath as members of the Assembly. The CM and the ministers were among 80 elected representatives who were administered the oath as MLAs by the Assembly's pro-tem Speaker Stephen Marandi.

Sarma effects major reshuffle in Cabinet

Guwahati: A major reshuffle of portfolios was effected by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Monday, and four newly inducted ministers were assigned their departments. Sarma will hold Home, Public Works Building and National Highways, Public Works Roads, and Medical Education and Research departments, with some portfolios assigned to other ministers. He will also be in charge of Personnel and any other department not assigned to other ministers, an official notification said.

Manipur withdraws mobile internet ban

Imphal: The Manipur government Monday withdrew the temporary suspension of mobile internet services in nine districts, according to an order issued by the state Home Department. The decision was taken after reviewing the prevailing law and order situation in Imphal West, Imphal East, Bishnupur, Thoubal, Kakching, Jiribam, Churachandpur, Kangpokpi and Pherzawl districts and its correlation with internet services, it said.

international



Since August 5, the attacks on minorities, places of worship of Hindus, Christians and Buddhists have been rampant. Bangladesh is now under the grip of a fascist regime where people's democratic rights have been obliterated. SHEIKH HASINA | DEPOSED PM, BANGLADESH

CORRUPTION TRIAL
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is set to take to the witness stand Tuesday for the first time in his trial on corruption allegations, a pivotal point in the drawn-out proceedings that comes as the leader wages war in Gaza and faces an international arrest warrant for war crimes charges



of the day quote

A troop contingent from one country or another could be present in Ukraine for as long as it isn't part of NATO. But for that we need to have a clear understanding of when Ukraine becomes an EU member and when a NATO member
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

We must do a good job in people's livelihood protection and security and stability to ensure the stability of the overall social situation
LI QIANG | PREMIER, CHINA

Recognising the security of one of us affects the security of both of us, the treaty provides that Nauru and Australia will jointly agree to any engagement by other countries in Nauru's security, banking and telecommunications sectors
ANTHONY ALBANESE | PM, AUSTRALIA

DAWN OF NEW ERA Blow to Iran's 'Axis of Resistance'

Only a few years ago, the Islamic Republic was ascendant across the wider Middle East. Its "Axis of Resistance" was at a zenith but Assad's fall triggers dramatic reversal in Iran's regional might

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manama (Bahrain), Dec 9: For Iran's theocratic government, it keeps getting worse.

Its decades-long strategy of building an "Axis of Resistance" supporting militant groups and proxies around the region is falling apart. First came the crushing Israeli campaign in Gaza triggered by the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel by Iranian-backed Hamas.

That war spawned another in Lebanon, where Israel has mauled Iran's most powerful ally, Hezbollah, even as Israel has launched successful airstrikes openly inside of Iran for the first time.

And now Iran's longtime stalwart ally and client in Syria, President Bashar Assad, is gone. As dawn broke Sunday, rebel forces completed a lightning offensive by seizing the ancient capital of Damascus and tearing down symbols of more than 50 years of Assad's rule over the Mideast crossroads.

Ali Akbar Velayati, a key adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, once called Assad and Syria "the golden ring of the resistance chain in the region".

"Without the Syrian government, this chain will break and the resistance against Israel and its supporters will be weakened."

That break in the chain is literal. Syria was an important geographical link that allowed Iran to move weapons and other supplies to Hezbollah in



Lebanon. Its loss now further weakens Hezbollah, whose powerful arsenal in southern Lebanon had put Iranian influence directly on the border of its nemesis Israel.

"Iran's deterrence thinking is really shattered by events in Gaza, by events in Lebanon and definitely by developments in Syria," a senior diplomat from the United Arab Emirates, Anwar Gargash, said at the International Institute for Strategic Studies' Manama Dialogue in Bahrain.

Iran still holds the card of its nuclear programme. Though it denies that intention, it can use the potential for building a weapons capability to cast a shadow of influence in the region.

"Iran remains a critical regional player," Gargash said. "We should use this moment to connect and speak about what's

next in my opinion." Hezbollah in Lebanon stood up against Israel. Assad appeared to have weathered an Arab Spring uprising-turned-civil war. Iraqi

Iran in contact with Syria's new leadership

Dubai: Iran has opened a direct line of communication with rebels in Syria's new leadership since its ally Bashar al-Assad was ousted, a senior Iranian official told Reuters Monday, in an attempt to "prevent a hostile trajectory" between the countries. The lightning advance of a militia alliance spearheaded by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a former al-Qaeda affiliate, marked one of the biggest turning points for the Middle East in generations. Assad's fall as president removed a bastion from which Iran and Russia exercised influence across the Arab world. Hours after Assad's fall, Iran said it expected relations with Damascus to continue based on the two countries' "far-sighted and wise approach" and called for the establishment of an inclusive government representing all segments of Syrian society. There is little doubt about Tehran's concern about how the change of power in Damascus will affect Iran's influence in Syria, the lynchpin of its regional clout. But there is no panic, three Iranian officials told Reuters, as Tehran seeks diplomatic avenues to establish contact with people whom one of the officials called "those within Syria's new ruling groups whose views are closer to Iran's". "The main concern for Iran is whether Assad's successor will push Syria away from Tehran's orbit," a second Iranian official said. "That is a scenario Iran is keen to avoid."

insurgents killed US troops with Iranian-designed roadside bombs. Yemen's Houthi rebels fought a Saudi-led coalition to a stalemate.

Syria, at the crossroads, played a vital role. Early in Syria's civil war, when it appeared Assad might be overthrown, Iran and its ally, Hezbollah, rushed fighters to support him — in the name of defending Shiite shrines in

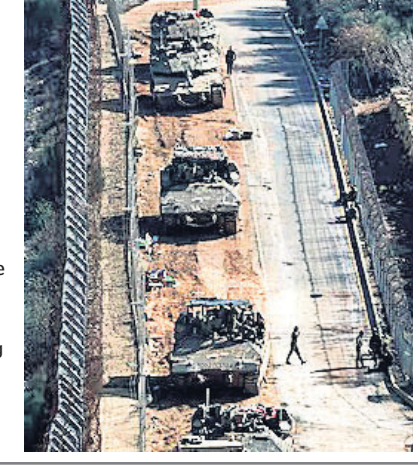
Syria. Russia later joined with a scorched earth campaign of airstrikes.

The campaign won back territory, even as Syria remained divided into zones of government and insurgent control.

But the speed of Assad's collapse the past week showed just how reliant he was on support from Iran and Russia — which at the crucial moment didn't come.

Israel aims Syria's heavy strategic weaponry

Jerusalem: Israel will step up airstrikes on Syrian stores of advanced weaponry, Israeli officials said Monday, and keep a 'limited' troop presence on the ground, hoping to head off any threat that could emerge in the fallout of president Bashar al-Assad's overthrow. Israel has watched the upheaval in Syria with a mixture of hope and concern as it weighs the consequences of one of the most significant strategic shifts in the Middle East in years. Defence Minister Israel Katz said the military would "destroy heavy strategic weapons throughout Syria, including surface-to-air missiles, air defence systems, surface-to-surface missiles, cruise missiles, long-range rockets, and coastal missiles". A senior Israeli official said airstrikes would persist in the coming days, while Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said Israel had no interest in interfering in internal Syrian affairs and was concerned only with defending its citizens. "That's why we attack strategic weapons systems like, for example, remaining chemical weapons or long-range missiles and rockets in order that they will not fall into the hands of extremists," Saar told reporters in Jerusalem.



SHORT TAKES

Blow for Le Pen

Paris: Days after orchestrating the downfall of the French government, Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally (RN) has lost a seat in a by-election in northeastern France. RN critics pounced Sunday's narrow defeat as a sign of voter condemnation of the party's push last week to topple former Prime Minister Michel Barnier's government over his 2025 budget bill. In a further blow for the RN, there were signs France's next government may be led by the left, after President Emmanuel Macron Monday met with leftist leaders as he seeks to name a new prime minister.

Choppers collide

Ankara: Two Turkish military helicopters collided in midair Monday, causing one of them to crash and killing six military personnel on board, officials said. The second helicopter landed safely. Five of the victims died at the site of the accident while a sixth died of his injuries at a hospital, the defense ministry said. The crash occurred in the southwestern province of Isparta during regular training flights, according to the region's governor, Abdullah Erin.



In this handout photo provided by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, an explosive eruption occurred at the summit vent of Kanlaon volcano, as seen from Mansalanao, Negros Occidental province, Philippines Monday PTI PHOTO

Indian-American family to press charges against racist abuse

AGENCIES

New York, Dec 9: An Indian-American family plans to press charges against the woman who hurled racist slurs at them on an airline shuttle bus, saying their generation is different from that of their parents and they won't just put their head down and keep quiet. The

incident took place in November onboard a United Airlines shuttle when photographer Pervez Taufiq, 50, was travelling with his wife and three kids from Mexico to Los Angeles. Taufiq posted online a video of his family's ordeal that shows the woman racially abusing them, using expletives and making derogatory gestures at them. "Your

family is from India, you have no respect. You have no rules," the woman says. In an interview, he recalled that barring one man, nobody on the bus came out in support of the family. "It was pretty brutal to have nobody. And the silences, as they say, was incredibly deafening." But as the video went viral, Taufiq said he is grateful for the out-

pouring of support that he and his family have received on and off social media. "We have had calls and text messages from people in China, France, UK, Australia, all over the world who have seen this video... and have reached out to say, "we just want you to know we're with you. That is the most touching thing that could ever happen," he said.

LEADERSHIP CRISIS DEEPENS

Travel ban for SK's Yoon after martial law fiasco

REUTERS

Seoul, Dec 9: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol has been banned from leaving the country over a failed attempt at imposing martial law, a justice ministry official said Monday, amid growing calls for him to step down and a deepening leadership crisis.

Yoon has apologised for the botched attempt and said he was leaving his political and legal fate to his ruling People Power Party (PPP) but has not resigned. He has become a subject of criminal investigation, according to local media reports.

On Monday, the defence ministry said Yoon was still legally commander in chief, but growing dissent among senior military officers against the president has thrown into question his grip on power.

Oh Dong-woon, the head of the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials, said he had barred Yoon from foreign travel, when asked



- Defence ministry says Yoon still commander in chief
- Colonel says troops had orders to block lawmakers
- Yoon survives impeachment vote, faces constitutional crisis
- Oppn plans to reintroduce impeachment motion against Yoon

at a parliament hearing what actions have been taken against the president.

A justice ministry official, Bae Sang-up, told the committee the travel ban order had been executed.

The panel was established in 2021 to investigate high-ranking officials including the president and their family members but it does not have authority to prosecute the president. Instead it is by law required to refer the matter to the prosecutors' office.

While Yoon survived an impeachment vote in parliament

Saturday, his party's decision to delegate presidential authority to the prime minister has plunged the key US ally into a constitutional crisis.

Yoon has refused calls, including some from within his own ruling party, to resign, but his future looked more uncertain over the weekend when Yonhap news agency reported he was under criminal investigation for alleged treason.

Prosecutors Sunday arrested ex-defence minister Kim Yong-hyun over his alleged role in the declaration of martial law December 3, Yonhap reported.

Trump suggests Canada, Mexico become US states

AGENCIES

Washington, Dec 9: Claiming that the US is subsidising its two neighbours Canada and Mexico to the tune of \$100 billion and \$300 billion, respectively, incoming US President Donald Trump Sunday said that if that is the case then these two countries better be a part of America.

on a Sunday talk show after winning the November 5 presidential elections.

"We're subsidising Mexico, we're subsidising Canada, and we're subsidising many countries all over the world. All I want to do is have a level, fast, but fair playing field," he asserted.

Trump refuted the observations by some American CEOs that tariffs would cost the US and increase the cost of common commodities thus putting a strain on American people.

"They cost Americans nothing. They made a great economy for us. They also solve another problem. If we were going to have problems having to do with wars and having to do with other things, tariffs, I have stopped wars with tariffs by saying, you guys want to fight, it's great, but both of you are going to pay tariffs to the United



States at 100 per cent. They have many purposes (for), tariffs if properly used. I don't say you use them like a madman. I say properly used," he said.

"But it didn't cost this country anything. It made this country money. We never really got the chance to go all out because we had to fight Covid in the last part. We did it very successfully. When I handed it

over to Biden, the stock market was higher than it was just previous to Covid coming in. It was higher. Tariffs, if properly used, are a very powerful tool, not only economically, but also for getting other things outside of economics," he said.

"Are you going to impose these tariffs, or are they a negotiating tactic?" Trump was asked.

We're subsidising Canada to the tune of over \$100 billion a year. We're subsidising Mexico for almost \$300 billion. We shouldn't be subsidising these countries? If we're going to subsidise them, let them become a state (of the US)

DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT-ELECT, US

British Indian student elected as prez of historic Cambridge Union

AGENCIES

London, Dec 9: A British Indian student has been elected president of the University of Cambridge's historic Cambridge Union Society, among the world's oldest debating societies which prides itself as a defender of free speech since 1815. Anoushka Kale won 126 votes to be elected uncontested for the next Easter 2025 term in an election held recently.

As the serving Debates Officer of the society, Kale ran on a platform of strengthening ties with cultural societies of the university such as the India Society. "I am absolutely delighted and honoured to have been elected as President of the Cambridge Union Society for Easter 2025 and grateful for the membership's support,"



said Kale. "For my term, I will seek to expand diversity and access at the Union through greater collaboration with cultural groups, like the university's India Society. I am also especially passionate about continuing to host international speakers and global debate motions, as I did as Debates Officer of the society," she said.



Bima Sakhi is expected to garner new business of five times of our spending. So we are hoping that they can bring ₹4,000 crore new business in the first year
SIDDHARTH MOHANTY | LIC MD AND CEO

AIR INDIA TO BUY 100 MORE AIRBUS AIRCRAFT

Private carrier Air India Monday announced placing an order to purchase 100 more Airbus aircraft, comprising 10 wide-body A350 and 90 narrow-body A320 family aircraft including A321neo. These 100 new aircraft are in addition to the orders of 470 aircraft that Air India had placed with Airbus and Boeing last year, Air India said in a statement.



of the day quote

Across our businesses, we are committed to scale up our investments. I foresee our group investing ₹50,000 crore in the next few years spanning cement, renewables, telecom and retail
KUMAR MANGALAM BIRLA | ADITYA BIRLA GROUP CHAIRMAN



The only way to restore the dollar to its status as the world's currency is to stop using it and its conductive financial infrastructure as a sanctions tool
IGOR SECHIN | ROSNEFT CEO



The track segment is growing faster and (also) has a larger premium play with the customers yet to figure out the right applications of tracks in construction and mining, which means there is a lot of scope for higher penetration in the track segment. So, between the two, tyres and tracks, the latter is more attractive, where CEAT will focus on growth
ARNAB BANERJEE | CEAT MD AND CEO



Auto retail sales up 11.21% in Nov: FADA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: Retail sales of vehicles across categories in India grew by 11.21 per cent at 32,08,719 units in November, as compared to 28,85,317 units in the same month last year riding on two-wheeler demand, Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) said in Monday.



Retail sales of two-wheelers were at 26,15,953 units last month, as compared to 22,58,970 units in November 2023, a growth of 15.8 per cent buoyed by the festive spillover.

registrations into November, affecting the month's sales trajectory, Vigneshwar added.

On the other hand, passenger vehicle (PV) retail was down 13.72 per cent at 3,21,943 units, as against 3,73,140 units in the year-ago month. The PV segment faced notable headwinds, FADA said in a statement.

On PV retail, he said, "Dealers cited weak market sentiment, limited product variety and insufficient new launches, compounded by the shift of festive demand into October."

"While November was initially expected to build on its prior momentum, particularly due to the marriage season, dealer feedback suggests that this segment underperformed overall expectations," FADA President, CS Vigneshwar said in a statement.

Vigneshwar further said, "Although rural interest was present, it failed to significantly improve sentiment. Inventory levels have reduced by about 10 days, but to remain high at around 65-68 days."

He further said, "Although rural markets offered some support, primarily in the two-wheeler category, marriage-related sales remained subdued." The late occurrence of Deepawali at the end of October also caused a spillover of festive

He reiterated FADA's request to Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to further rationalise inventory so that the industry can enter the new year on a healthier footing, reducing the need for additional discounts.

In the commercial vehicles segment, FADA said retail sales were at 81,967 units last month as compared to 87,272 units in November 2023, down 6.08 per cent.

Vigneshwar said factors such as restricted product choices, older model issues, limited financier support, and the absence of major festivals in November following a strong October impacted CV uptake.

"External elements such as elections, a slowdown in coal and cement industries, and weak market sentiment also weighed heavily on this category," he added.

FADA said three-wheeler sales in November were at 1,08,337 units, as against 1,03,939 units in the year-ago month, up 4.23 per cent.

On the overall near-term

outlook, FADA said, "While the near-term outlook for December is not overwhelmingly strong across segments, it leans towards stability with pockets of potential growth, underlining a sentiment that overall remains cautiously optimistic."

With prospects of a bumper Kharif harvest likely to temper food inflation, the broader macroeconomic environment appears set to improve, potentially aiding consumer sentiment in the months ahead. However, the immediate December outlook derived from dealer feedback is mixed, it added.

In the two-wheeler segment, FADA said, "Dealers suggest that while some buyers remain hesitant either awaiting new-year models or influenced by subdued post-festive sentiment others could be drawn by potential year-end discounts and stable rural demand."

As for the PV category, heavy discounting and improved product availability are expected to help offset weak consumer sentiment and a general year-end lull.

"While some customers are deferring purchases for new-year models, overall interest could pick up due to aggressive offers and end-of-year promotions. This sets a tone of cautious optimism, with a moderate chance of improved sales compared to November," it added.

CCI seeks SC hearing to speed up Amazon, Flipkart cases

REUTERS

New Delhi, Dec 9: India's antitrust body has asked the Supreme Court to hear legal challenges to an investigation of Amazon and Walmart's Flipkart e-commerce platforms, saying those challenges, filed by Samsung, Vivo and others at Indian high courts, were aiming to scuttle the probe.

In a filing December 3, reviewed by Reuters and not released publicly, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) asked the court to hear 23 challenges, filed by Samsung, Vivo, and several vendors on the Amazon and Flipkart platforms, to enable the case to be decided quickly.

Amazon declined to comment, while Flipkart, Samsung, Vivo and the CCI did not respond to requests for comment.

The investigation is a major regulatory challenge for Amazon and Flipkart in a market where e-commerce sales are set to exceed \$160 billion by 2028, up from \$57 billion to \$60 billion in 2023.

The commission's investigation unit concluded in August that Amazon and Flipkart breached India's antitrust laws by favouring selected sellers on their websites. It also found that smartphone companies such as Samsung and Vivo broke those laws by colluding with the two e-commerce companies to exclusively launch products online.

Since the findings, almost two dozen lawsuits across five Indian high courts have been filed by some Amazon and Flipkart vendors, as well as by Samsung and Vivo, to block the investigation as they want to "debilitate and scuttle" the process, the commission said.

The separate lawsuits, if allowed, "will lead to absurdity since it will interfere with the flexibility of the (commission's) Director General to carry out investigation in any matter."

Amazon and Flipkart have faced criticism from smaller retailers for years over their business practices, saying they have suffered due to deep discounts and preferential treatment meted out by the platforms.

Amazon and Flipkart deny any wrongdoing. A Reuters investigation, opens new tab in 2021, based on Amazon internal documents, found the company gave preferential treatment for years to a small group of sellers and used them to bypass Indian laws.

The current commission investigation started back in 2020 but has faced many delays.

Most of the 23 lawsuits filed across India in the latest challenge to the case accuse the commission of not following due process during its investigation. The commission's filing asking for the 23 cases to be transferred to the Supreme Court is likely to be heard this week, a lawyer familiar with the proceedings said.

Copper demand rises 13% in FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: India's copper demand grew by 13 per cent annually to hit 1,700 kilo tonnes in FY24, driven by the rapid pace of infrastructure development and building constructions, the International Copper Association India said Monday.

industry body said. It further said that the demand for the commodity will continue to rise in the next financial year as well, fuelled by rapidly growing infrastructure and building construction sectors in the country.

Traditionally, building construction and infrastructure account for 43 per cent of copper demand while contributing 11 per cent to GDP, International Copper Association India said in a statement.

As per the latest GDP data, the infrastructure and construction sectors grew by 9.1 per cent and 6.8 per cent, respectively, in the first half of the ongoing financial year.

As per the study undertaken by the International Copper Association India, the copper demand in the country witnessed a 13 per cent year-on-year growth in FY24, reaching 1,700 kilo tonnes (kt).

"The trends reflect robust growth in copper demand, aligning with India's GDP growth trajectory. The growth is fuelled by public and private sector investments, higher consumer spending, and advancements in key sectors like building construction, infrastructure, transportation, industrial and consumer goods wherein copper demand grew by double-digits," International Copper Association India Managing Director Mayur Karmarkar said.

This surge is attributed to overall economic expansion. After the Covid pandemic, the average annual copper demand increased by 21 per cent between FY21 and FY24, the

PSB loan write off in H1 FY25 at ₹42,000cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: Public sector banks have written off loans worth ₹42,000 crore in the first six months of the current fiscal, Parliament was informed Monday.

State Bank of India (SBI) wrote off loans worth ₹8,312 crore, Punjab National Bank (Rs 8,061 crore), Union Bank of India (Rs 6,344 crore) and Bank of Baroda (Rs 5,925 crore) during the April-September period.

"Such write-off does not result in waiver of liabilities of borrowers and therefore, it does not benefit the borrower. The borrowers continue to be liable for repayment and banks continue to pursue recovery actions initiated in these accounts through various recovery mechanisms available to them," Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said.



The loans written off by public sector banks during April-September of the current fiscal stood at ₹42,035 crore, while recovery of ₹37,253 crore was made.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Chaudhary said in 2023-24 public sector banks wrote off loans worth ₹1.14 lakh crore, down from ₹1.18 lakh crore in the year-ago period.

Sensex falls 200 points on selling in FMCG, PSU banks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 9: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower Monday, dragged down by selling in blue-chip stocks Reliance Industries, Hindustan Unilever, Axis Bank amid mixed global trends.

After oscillating between highs and lows during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 200.66 points or 0.25 per cent to settle at 81,508.46. During the day, it moved between a high of 81,783.28 and a low of 81,411.55.

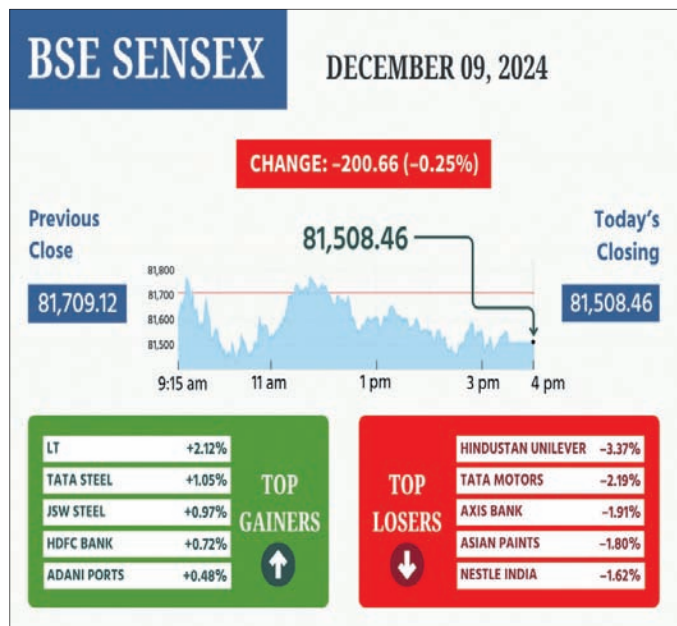
The NSE Nifty dropped 58.80 points or 0.24 per cent to close at 24,619.

From the 30-share pack, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Steel, Axis Bank, Nestle India, Asian Paints, ITC, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, IndusInd Bank and State Bank of India were among the laggards. Larsen & Toubro, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, HDFC Bank, Adani Ports, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharti Airtel and PowerGrid were among the gainers.

"Markets witnessed a range-bound session and mostly languished in negative territory due to lack of investors' enthusiasm after last week's rally," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.46 per cent and mid-cap index gained 0.32 per cent.

"The rise in oil prices amid tensions in the Middle East, along with investors caution ahead of key economic data like India & US CPI data and ECB



policy this week, impacted the sentiment," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Among sectoral indices, FMCG plunged the most by 1.93 per cent, followed by Energy (0.65 per cent), Auto (0.64 per cent), Healthcare (0.37 per cent), Oil & Gas (0.34 per cent), Bankex (0.28 per cent) and Consumer Discretionary (0.27 per cent).

Capital Goods, Industrials, Services, Telecommunication, Consumer Durables, Metals, IT and Power were among the gainers.

Shares of Godrej Consumer Products plunged 8.72 per cent to close at ₹1,127.90 after the company issued a weak commentary on its business saying the demand conditions in India

have been subdued for the past few months.

On the other hand, tyre maker CEAT rallied over 10 per cent to settle at ₹3404.45 after the company said it has entered into a definitive agreement with Michelin to acquire its Camso brand's Off-highway Tyres (OHT) and tracks business for about USD 225 million (₹1,905 crore).

During the day, CEAT shares advanced 12.10 per cent to hit 52-week high of ₹3,466.40 on the bourse.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Shanghai settled lower, while Tokyo and Hong Kong ended in the green.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.89 per cent to USD 71.75 a barrel.

Indians lead Global South in adapting to tech revolution: Report

More than 70 per cent of Indian professionals are actively seeking opportunities to upskill, according to Riyadh-based Global Labor Market Conference

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Dec 9: With a majority of Indian professional actively seeking opportunities to upskill, the country has emerged as the global leader in technological adaptation, according to a report.

dynamic nature of India's job market, where artificial intelligence, machine learning, and automation are becoming integral. "While global trust in governments to support upskilling remains low at 20 per cent, Indian respondents (31 per cent) and those in Saudi Arabia (35 per cent) demonstrated significantly higher confidence in their governments. In contrast, countries like the USA (15 per cent) and UK (12 per cent) reported markedly lower trust levels. Indian respondents also expressed 49 per cent trust in



businesses, further emphasizing the private sector's role in

workforce development," the report claims.

The report by GLMC, a forum for workforce development and labour market insights, also highlighted how rapidly evolving technologies are reshaping global employment.

The report underscores India's pivotal role in the Global South's response to artificial intelligence and automation, showcasing the country's workers as frontrunners in skill development and technological adaptation.

The report also said the urgency to reskill due to technological advancements is a

shared concern among Indian workers, with 55 per cent fearing that their skills could become partially or fully obsolete within the next five years.

"This places India in line with the global trend, where similar concerns are expressed by 61 per cent in Brazil and 60 per cent in China, compared to lower levels in developed markets such as the UK (44 per cent) and Australia (43 per cent)," it said.

GLMC will host the second edition of its annual meeting in Riyadh on January 29-30, 2025.

Shami draws first blood

As debate rages as to when he should be sent to Australia, Bengal pacer snubs critics with all-round show



Since his return to competitive cricket, Mohammed Shami has bowled 64 overs and taken 16 wickets. Indian skipper Rohit Sharma still not keen on Shami's inclusion.

first spell of three overs, he went for only 11 runs which included one lofted boundary by Manav Vohra and a streaky four by Amrit Lal Lubana, who was hurried into a stroke that became a Chinese cut.

In all, Shami has now played nine domestic games – one Ranji Trophy (42.3 overs) and eight SMAT T20 games (31.3 over). He has bowled a total of 64 overs and taken 16 wickets.

Shami looks pretty much fit as of now. However, the question is whether he can bowl a minimum of 20 overs a day and be on field for 100 overs. He looks in good condition, but then only time will tell.

While Shami had claimed that he had fully recovered, Rohit had suggested that the pacer wasn't 100 per cent fit for an assignment as big as the Australia series. The comments, as per a report in *Dainik Jagran*, had triggered a heated debate between the two.

After the conclusion of the Adelaide Test, Rohit said that although the door is open for Shami to make a return to the team, the management isn't keen on rushing him.

"We want to be more than 100 per cent sure with him because it has been a long time. We don't want to put pressure on him to come here and do the job for the team when he has not fully recovered," Rohit had stated Sunday.

LIREN COMES BACK IN STYLE



India's D Gukesh contemplates his next move during the game Monday PTI PHOTO

Gukesh loses 12th game allowing the Chinese player to restore parity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, Dec 9: Indian challenger D Gukesh lost the 12th game against defending champion Ding Liren of China to allow his opponent bounce back and level the scores in the World Chess Championship match here Monday.

The 18-year-old Gukesh was ahead by one point after he notched his second win of the match Sunday, which came after seven consecutive draws, but Liren's win Monday has brought things on an even keel. The two players are now tied at six points each with just two games left in the 14-round classical time control format, still shy of 1.5 points in order to win the title. The remaining two games will be played Wednesday and Thursday, after a rest day Tuesday.

Irrespective of what happens in the next game Wednesday, the match will go the distance (14 games) and more likely there will be tiebreaker – where

games are of shorter duration – to determine the winner.

The 32-year-old Liren had won the opening game before Gukesh emerged victorious in the third game. The second and the fourth to 10th games were drawn.

In what was the first victory for Liren with white pieces, Gukesh's preparation did not come as good as the other 11 games that he played here.

The start was an English opening by the Chinese and much to the surprise of the fans Gukesh went for a position that led to a Benoni defense with colours reversed.

Gukesh started to miss out creating counter play in the middle game as white played just normal developing moves. By the 15th move though less on time on the clock, white had a small advantage as a central breakthrough looked inevitable, giving Liren the space advantage.

Gukesh's 17th move did not help his cause as white was able to get the desired break in the centre. Five moves later, another error by Gukesh gave Liren a huge advantage.

Liren then sacrificed a rook which helped him win the match in 39 moves.

IN FULL FLIGHT: Mohammed Shami bowls during the SMAT game against Chandigarh, Monday

PTI PHOTO

AGENCIES

Bangalore, Dec 9: With reports that not all is well between him and Indian skipper Rohit Sharma, pacer Mohammed Shami decided to let his bat and ball do all the talking. Showing no signs of rust, Shami carried Bengal into the quarterfinals of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) by smashing a game-changing 17-ball-32 and bowling 13 dot balls in his four overs that paved way for his team's

thrilling three-run win against Chandigarh, here Monday.

With no clarity over his international comeback, the 34-year-old played his eighth SMAT T20 game in 16 days. He has bowled his full quota in almost all the games.

On the day, he first used the long handle to good effect, taking 19 runs off seasoned Sandeep Sharma's final over as Bengal reached 159 for nine after tottering at 114 for eight. He hit two sixes and three fours,

and the last wicket stand of 21 off 10 balls with Sayan Ghosh proved crucial.

Ghosh (4/30), who is known to be a death overs specialist, bowled a brilliant final over where 11 runs were required as Nikhil Sharma's planning went all awry. Chandigarh were restricted to 156 for nine.

Having already warmed up nicely by facing 17 deliveries, Shami bowled a very good first spell and removed opener Arsalan Z Khan off the very third

delivery, caught by Shakir Habib Gandhi.

Compared to his first Ranji Trophy game against Madhya Pradesh where he looked overweight and slightly paunchy despite bowling 42 overs, Monday's Shami looked leaner and the famous upright seam presentation was very much there.

Shami bowled at an average speed of 135 clicks with one delivery cranking in the range of 139 kmph. During the

SHORT TAKES

Nine wins in a row for Atletico Madrid

Madrid: Atletico Madrid conceded three goals in a Spanish league game for the first time this season here Sunday but still managed to beat Sevilla 4-3 with Antoine Griezmann's double helping to make it nine wins in a row in all competitions for Diego Simeone's in-form side. Third-place Madrid restored their three-point lead over fourth-place Athletic Bilbao, who beat Villarreal earlier Sunday. The other goals for Atletico were scored by Rodrigo De Paul (10th) and Samuel Lino (79th). Sevilla may have led 3-1 till deep into the second half of the game, but Atletico showed great resilience to come back.

India go down to 3rd in WTC table

Dubai: South Africa replaced Australia at the top of the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) table Monday after their massive 109-run over Sri Lanka while India are now in the third place following their defeat in the Adelaide Test. South Africa now have 63.33 percentage points after 10 matches in the cycle and they are followed by Australia (60.71 PTC). India were leading the WTC table, heading into the Adelaide Test after their massive win in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy opener in Perth. However, now with 57.29 percentage points, they are third.

Maini's unique feat

Abu Dhabi: Indian driver Kush Maini made history by clinching the F2 Constructors' race here, making him the first from the country to win a FIA Constructors' World Championship. The monumental achievement Sunday adds to a stellar year for Maini, who earlier became the first Indian to claim a F2 pole position. Despite the ups and downs of the season, Maini played a pivotal role in Invicta Racing's success, securing five podiums, including a race win in Hungary. His pole position in Jeddah set the tone for the team's dominant campaign, culminating in their victory by a 34.5-point margin over Campos Racing, Maini's former team.

ICC 'disciplines' Siraj, Head



Indian pacer fined while Australian batter escapes with 'sanction'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Adelaide, Dec 9: Mohammed Siraj was fined 20 per cent of his match fees, while Australian batter Travis Head was also 'sanctioned' by the ICC for indulging in a heated exchange of words during the just-concluded day-night Test here. Siraj and Head were held guilty of breaching the world body's code of conduct following a disciplinary hearing Monday. "Siraj has been penalised 20 per cent of his match fees after being found guilty of breaching article 2.5 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Play-

er Support Personnel," the ICC said in a statement.

The cited rule relates to 'using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon dismissal'.

The ICC said Head too was 'sanctioned' for breaching Article 2.13 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel. However, he escaped a fine for breaching the rule that relates to the 'abuse of a player, player support personnel, umpire or match referee during an international match'.

Siraj and Head also received one demerit point each on their disciplinary records, marking their first offence in the last 24 months. "Both admitted their offences and accepted the sanctions proposed by match referee

I only celebrated and he abused me and you saw that on TV too. It's a huge lie what Head is saying now

MOHAMMED SIRAJ

Ranjan Madugalle," the ICC said. Head and Siraj had a brief showdown on day two of the match which Australia won by 10 wickets Sunday. Head had struck a splendid 141-ball knock of 140 before being castled by Siraj, who went on to give him an aggressive send-off following an exchange of words.

Head later claimed that he had merely said 'well bowled' to Siraj and that he was disappointed at how the visiting bowler had responded. Siraj disputed that claim, asserting that Head had abused him.

"I only celebrated and he abused me and you saw that on TV too. I only celebrated at the start, I didn't say anything to him," Siraj told broadcaster *Star Sports*.

"What he (Head) said in the press conference wasn't right, it's a lie that he only said 'well bowled' to me. It's there for everyone to see that that's not what he said to me," Siraj added.

Delhi lad Aarit creates history

Youngest-ever Indian to beat a chess GM

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: Nine-year-old Delhi boy Aarit Kapil has become the youngest Indian to beat a chess Grandmaster (GM) as he emerged victorious against Raset Ziatdinov of United States in the ninth and penultimate round of the KIIT International open tournament here Sunday.

At nine years, two months and 18 days, Aarit is the youngest Indian and third in the world to beat a GM under the classical time control.

The youngest player in the world to beat a GM is Indian-origin Singapore boy Ashwath



Kaushik who won against Jacek Stupa of Poland when he was just eight years and six months old earlier this year.

Ziatdinov, 66, is certainly past his prime if the game was any indication. As is usually the case when an experienced GM plays against a youngster, Ziatdinov did many things right positionally to get the upper hand thanks to his better pawn structure.

To Aarit's credit, he fought on after standing slightly worse with his white pieces. It was a long-drawn endgame wherein Ziatdinov made the final mistake and lost a knight.

The resulting position just needed decent calculation and the young lad from Delhi had no troubles whatsoever in converting his advantage in to a well-deserved win. The game lasted 63 moves.

While the victory places Aarit among the elite young talents, it remains to be seen how he performs in upcoming tournaments. The next challenge awaits him in form of under-13 national championship to be held at Durgapur later this month, followed by his own age group event, the under-9 nationals in Pune.

SAVCHENKO TOPS IN KIIT CHESS FESTIVAL



Prize-winners of the different categories in the KIIT chess tournament pose with dignitaries

OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: Grandmaster (GM) Boris Savchenko emerged champion in the 'A' category of the 15th KIIT International Chess Festival 2024, which concluded here Monday. Along with the trophy, Savchenko also got a cash award of ₹3,00,000.

India's International Master (IM) Aronyak Ghosh finished as first runner-up while GM Nguyen Van Huy from Vietnam was the second runner-up. Aronyak went home richer by ₹2,00,000 while Nguyen got ₹1,40,000 for his efforts.

More than 1,200 players from 30 countries participated in the tournament. Among them 70 had won titles in various tour-

naments across the world.

Among the Odisha players, KISS student Fakir Majhi secured first position while Tapan Badamundi secured second position respectively.

In the 'C' category Srivardhan Reddy Devareddy emerged champion and for his efforts along with the trophy he got a cash award of ₹1,00,000. Arijit Ghosh from Jharkhand became the first runner-up and received a cash award of ₹75,000.

Among the dignitaries present in the prize distribution ceremony were MLA Sofia Firdous, GM and former India player Pravin M Thipsay, Achyuta Samanta, Founder, KIIT, KISS & KIMS and Professor Saranjit Singh, Vice-Chancellor, KIIT.

Pooja shatters her own record

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: Haryana's international high jumper Pooja improved upon her own U-18 national record on the third day of the 39th National Junior Championships at the Kalinga Stadium here Monday. The 17-year-old Pooja scaled 1.85m to improve her own jump national record during heptathlon competition. Her previous national record of 1.83m was during the World U-20 Athletics Championships in Lima, Peru in August.

Jay Kumar had been impressive this season in the 400m and he continued to dominate. En route to the gold medal in the men's U-20 400m race, he clocked 46.29 seconds to better the meet record of 46.59 seconds.

Neha wants to lead by example

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 9: Odisha Warriors captain Neha Goyal is all set to embark on a historic journey as she leads her team in the first-ever Women's Hockey India League (WHIL) 2024-25. Neha was part of the Indian squad that recently triumphed at the Asian Champions Trophy.

Neha underscored the importance of WHIL for the next generation of players. "We've been waiting for a platform like this for years, and now that it's finally here, it feels surreal. It's a huge opportunity for young girls to showcase their talent on a national stage," Neha asserted.

Neha is eager to take on the new responsibility as captain. "This is my first major tourna-



ment as a captain, and while there's a sense of pressure, I'm excited about the challenge. I've been part of the Indian setup for a while, so I have the experience. I will try to lead by example," Neha stated.