



ONE WORLD

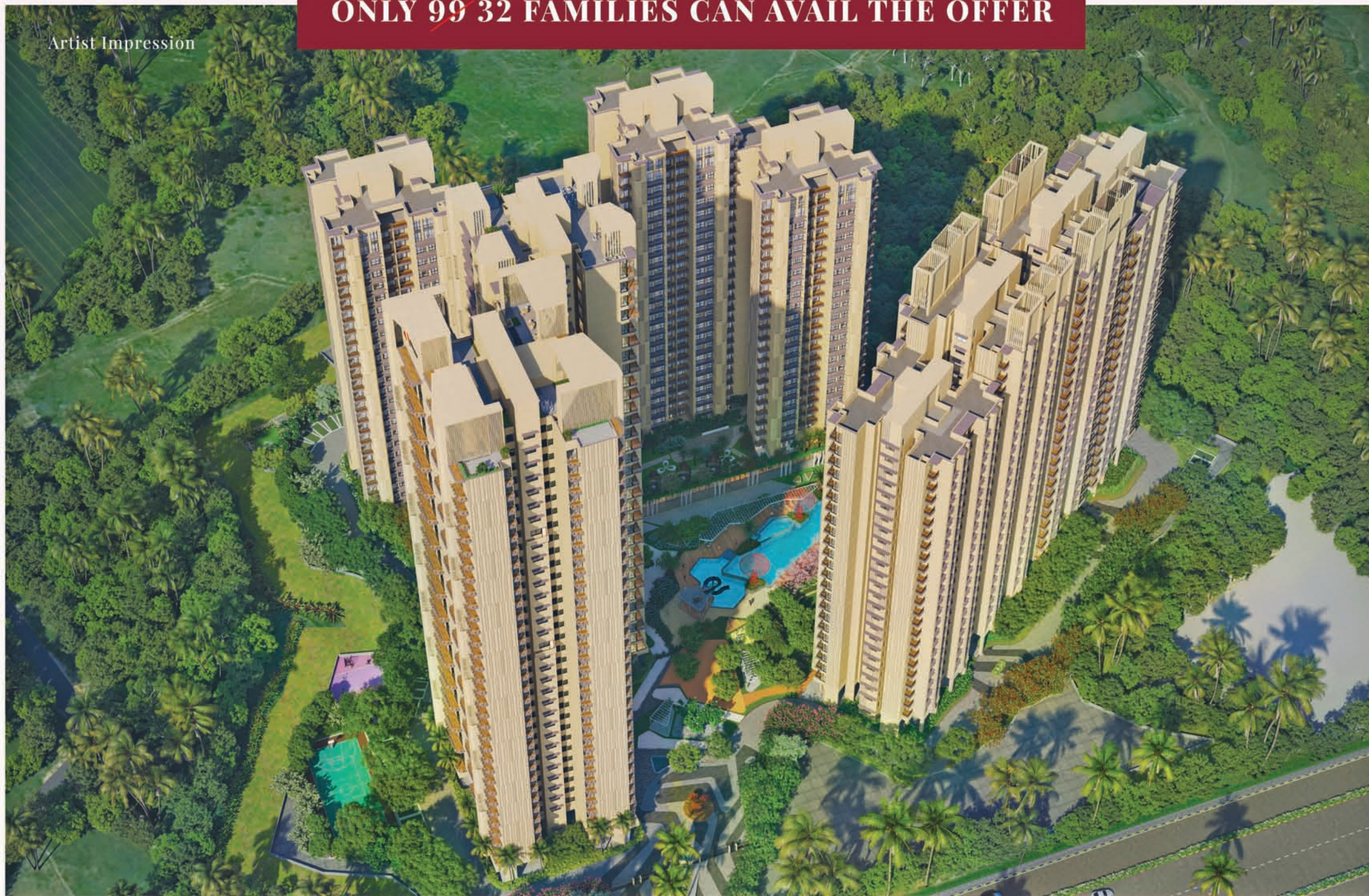
A World Within

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leisure



CHRIS MARTIN TALKS ABOUT EMPTY NEST SYNDROME

Lead singer of *Coldplay* Chris Martin has spoken about becoming an empty nester, a parent whose children have grown up and left home. Both of Martin's children, Apple (20) and Moses (18), leave for college, the singer said that life at home has undergone a significant change.

SADIE SINK RUMOURED AS TOP CHOICE FOR MCU PROJECTS

Sadie Sink, known for her role in *Stranger Things*, is reportedly the top contender to play Jean Grey in the MCU's upcoming *Avengers: Doomsday*. Insider sources suggest Marvel is aiming for a younger *X-Men* cast, with the film potentially releasing in late 2027.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You are likely to give in to the demands of your children today. Ganesh says it is for times like this that you labour so hard. You will finish the tasks that you have been postponing for a long time. It is a good day for people in the medical field and in the public sector.

TAURUS
Ganesh finds this an excellent day for managers and administrators. If you are one, the results you will achieve by the end of the day will far exceed the efforts you put in. This is mainly because your subordinates will be enthusiastic, compliant and cooperative. You will be focusing on the elements of leadership and team work and will use them resourcefully. It is a great day for showcasing your managerial qualities.

GEMINI
You will listen to your heart over your head, swept away as you will be in a flood of emotions today. This could mean that you will be unable to distinguish between good and bad. However, looking back upon your day in the evening, you are unlikely to regret any of the decisions you made, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will be involved in a team effort and associated with work like inspection and examination. You will base your opinions on your friends' choices. So select good friends, says Ganesh. You will spend time with close circle.

LEO
Your natural self-confidence and capability will help you attain a position of strength today. As a result, all your tasks will be completed easily and you will reap rewards greater than your expectations, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
You will be faced with serious financial problems today. You may even have to pay through your nose to get what you desire. Later in the evening, you might accomplish some short-term goals. Ganesh predicts that some vital business agreements will end your day in high spirits.

LIBRA
Ganesh says you will be able to improve your relations abroad. There will be good news coming from friends or relatives living abroad. Your working ability and efficiency will make you popular in the office today. In the day today you shall have a variety of good and bad experiences.

SCORPIO
An electric wire of 440 volts is apt to describe you today. According to Ganesh, you are in a belligerent mood today and can burst like a fireball. Meditation and yoga is likely to improve the situation. Remember, treat others the way you want to be treated by them.

SAGITTARIUS
Ganesh foresees a day full of promises. People in the creative field, especially artists are going to benefit more. Radio jockey and television anchors can make a note of this day in their diary, as it may serve as a memorable day, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You have projected yourself as a confused individual. You may have a tendency to remain in a double mind. But, today you'll come up with a very specific plan that will surprise many of the people around you. Be clear about what you want to do in life, how you want your life to be and make sincere efforts to achieve it, guides Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
You are disappointed and you seek solace in spirituality. Don't run away from the problems; rather face them with strength and confidence, advises Ganesh, to bring your life back on track. With patience and belief in the Almighty, you will sail through the storm.

PISCES
You will display kindness and generosity today and will do your best to help anyone in need. At work you will receive praise for the efforts that you've put in and your dedication will be validated. Even though you intend to give utmost importance to your family, this intention will trail in the shadow of pending work which will require long hours.

'Diverse roles help break mental blocks'



MUMBAI: TV actress Bhumika Gurung, who is currently playing Shagun in the show *Bas Itna Sa Khuwab*, recently shared her thoughts on how taking on diverse roles has played a significant part in breaking mental blocks and pushing her boundaries as an artiste.

Bhumika is playing a layered character in Zee TV's show, and the role of Shagun also represents her personal growth. Speaking about the same, the actress shared, "I've realized I don't want to be confined to just lead roles. A character can stand out even with minimal screen time if performed with authenticity. It's about breaking mental blocks and embracing diversity in roles."

Gurung also revealed that her character of Shagun breaks away from the conventional protagonist mold. She is modern, practical, and unapologetically confident in her choices—completely different from the typical 'sacrificing daughter-in-law' often portrayed in Indian television.

"Shagun isn't a Komolika or a villain. She has feelings, makes mistakes, and owns her decisions. She's human. That's what sets her apart," Bhumika explained.

The show airs on weeknights.



Varun wants Bollywood to reinvent

MUMBAI: It has been over a decade since Varun Dhawan entered Bollywood. In a recent interview, the actor said that the industry is in dire need of reinvention.

"We will all have to go ahead. People who are in the powerful positions right now, there is an age limit, those who are doing the same thing for years. They are only at the helm. I am not sure if they recognise it but it is important to change with time. We all will have to do it or we'll lose relevance, including me. It is difficult because you don't want to change," he said.

He added, "The upcoming stars or the ones who are still aspiring have these circles but those who are already on that stature, they don't have these people around them. Stars like Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, Aamir Khan, they are not delusional! They are aware of what's happening".

Varun feels there is a need for diverse representation in the industry. He wondered why it is not happening these days, saying entering the film industry has become "a bit tough" as people have many options to explore and decide whether they want to become an actor or an influencer or go the OTT way.

ANANYA

on navigating negativity

MUMBAI: Year 2024 was a decisive year for actress Ananya Pandey.

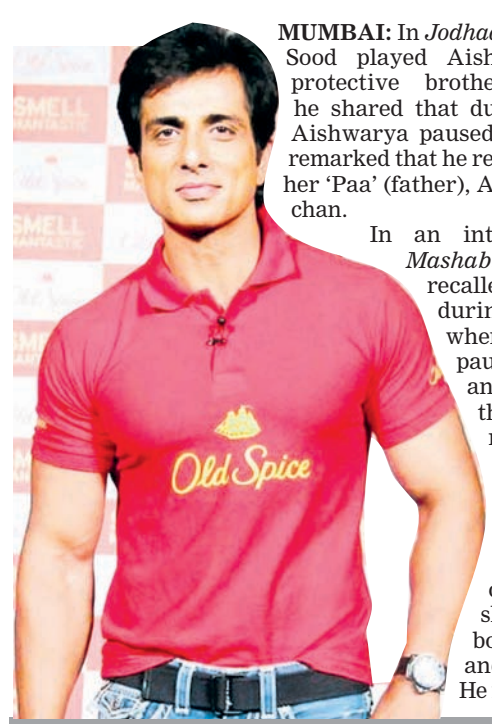
"I've had the chance to work on some incredible projects and grow as an actor. I'm grateful for the opportunities and love I've received for all my work this year. *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan* came last year, *Call Me Bae*, and *CTRL* came out this year, and the love they've received has been overwhelming," shared Ananya.

However, she didn't taste success overnight. She had to face a lot of hurdles, negativity in particular, to reach here, said the actress. However, she found a way to overcome it.

"In the beginning, negativity was hard to handle. It did affect my confidence and self-esteem some times. Over time, I've learned to navigate it better. Seeking support, including therapy, has been a big part of that journey," shared the Liger actress.

"I've also come to understand that while I can't control everyone's opinions of me, I can control how I respond. I've learned not to take it personally and to focus instead on my growth and the work I believe in. Nothing beats just putting your head down and doing the good work and I'm happy to now see all the overwhelming love I've been receiving for the characters I've played," concluded Ananya.

When Sonu reminded Ash of her 'Paa'

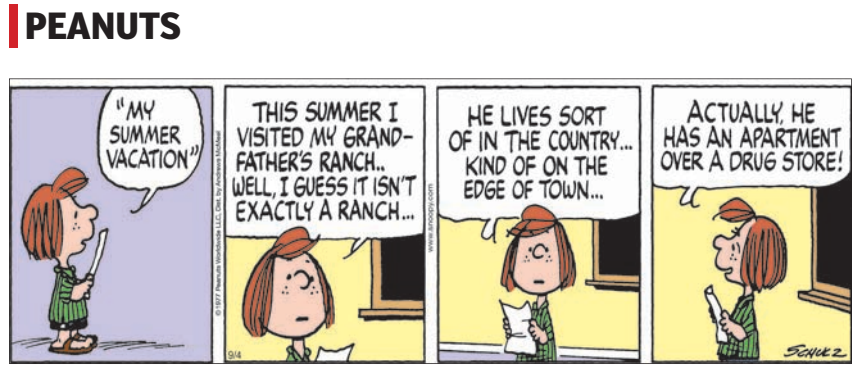


MUMBAI: In *Jodhaa Akbar*, Sonu Sood played Aishwarya Rai's protective brother. Recently, he shared that during filming, Aishwarya paused a scene and remarked that he reminded her of her 'Paa' (father), Amitabh Bachchan.

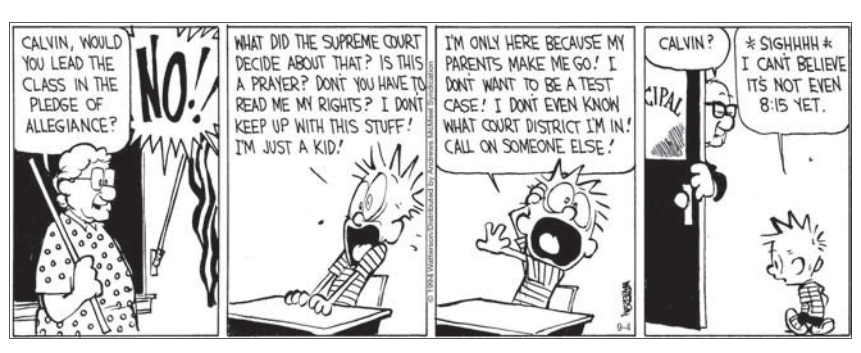
In an interview with *Mashable India*, Sonu recalled a moment during filming when Aishwarya paused a scene and mentioned that he reminded her of Amitabh Bachchan. He described Aishwarya as a sweet co-star and shared a strong bond with her and her family. He mentioned his



PEANUTS



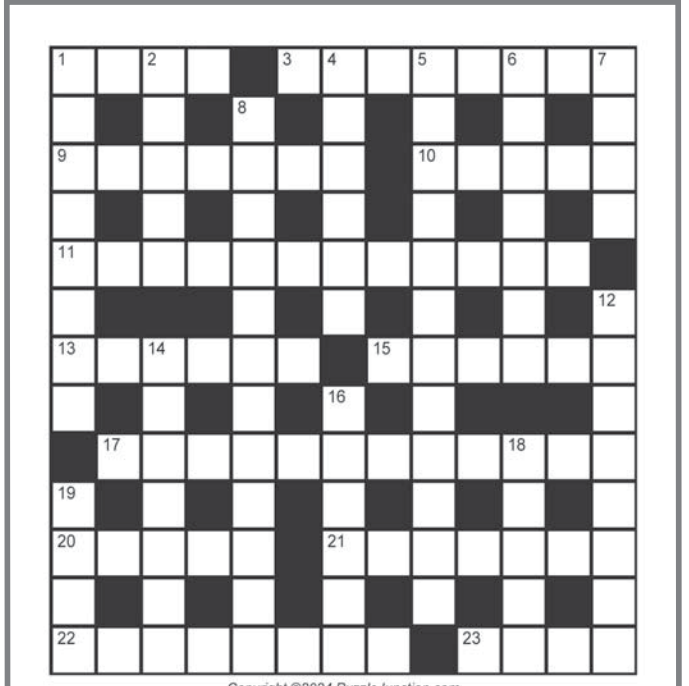
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



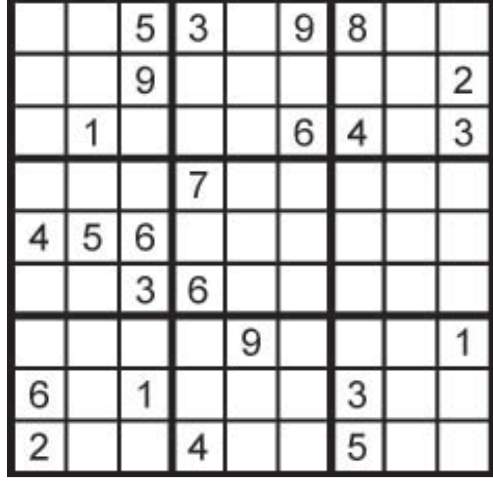
FUN POST CROSSWORD



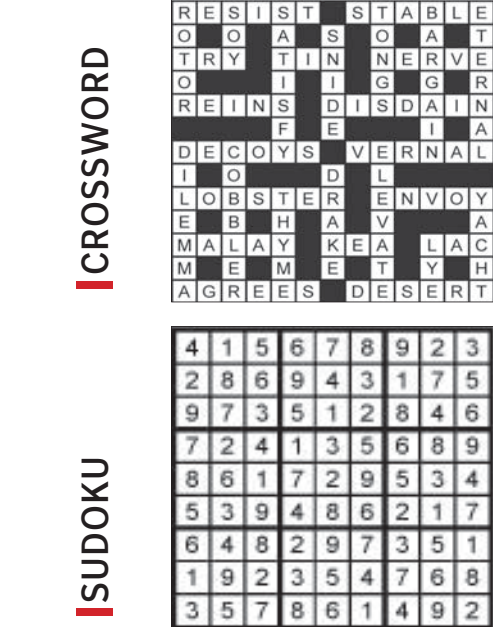
- Across**
- 1 Give the heave-ho
 - 3 Like few diamonds
 - 9 Recipe
 - 10 Large low horse-drawn wagon
 - 11 Sweet rolls with spices and raisins (3,5,4)
 - 13 Get back
 - 15 Canada neighbour
 - 17 Carnival city (3,2,7)
 - 20 G-rated
 - 21 Scammed
 - 22 Take another look
 - 23 Highlands hillside
 - 4 Be a go-between (4-8)
 - 6 Missions, maybe
 - 7 Hebrides isle
 - 8 Environment
 - 12 Kit's partner
 - 14 Grotesque product of the imagination
 - 16 Expels
 - 18 Lay to rest
 - 19 Operation reminder
- Down**
- 1 Some drilling sites
 - 2 Small fatty European fish

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

Biswa's ₹82L frozen

ED freezes ₹82 lakh deposits and shares of 'Biswa' in Odisha as part of a bank fraud-linked money laundering probe

DOWNTOWN | P2

Food crisis

More than 40 million people struggle to feed themselves across West and Central Africa

INTERNATIONAL | P8

Market crash

Equity investors become poorer by ₹18.43L crore in five days of market crash as Sensex tanks 4,091 points

BUSINESS | P9

Konstas in BGT

Sam Konstas gets a maiden call as Australia drop opener Nathan McSweeney for final two Tests of Border-Gavaskar Trophy

SPORTS | BACK PAGE

Minor girl gangraped in Rourkela; 3 arrested

PNN & AGENCIES

Rourkela, Dec 20: A minor girl was allegedly raped by three persons in Rourkela city, police said Friday.

The three accused have been arrested, the police said.

The incident took place three days ago when the girl, 15, was roaming in the Rourkela bus stand area after a quarrel with her family, the police said.

The three accused promised the girl work and took her to a house in the Bisra area. During the stay, they raped her, police said quoting the complaint lodged by the girl.

Friday morning, the trio dropped the girl at the bus stand. A policeman on duty suspected their movements and also spotted the girl in very shabby condition. He immediately raised the alarm and the trio was caught and taken to Udit Nagar police station.

Rourkela Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Nirmal Chandra Mohapatra said, "The girl has been handed back to the family after her medical examination. The trio was also medically examined at Rourkela Government Hospital."

"The girl has identified one of the persons and then we caught hold of others," the police officer said.

The three accused were booked for gangrape under Section 70 (2) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and POCSO.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Your MPs are in here, sir. That room is occupied by the falling Rupee

5-time Haryana CM Om Prakash Chautala dies



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gurugram, Dec 20: Indian National Lok Dal president and five-time Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala died here Friday at the age of 89.

Chautala, who was former Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal's son, suffered a cardiac arrest at his house here and was immediately rushed to a hospital but could not be saved, a party spokesperson told PTI.

He breathed his last at around 12 noon in Medanta hospital, a senior police officer said. Chautala, who came from a prominent political family in Haryana and was face of a prominent regional outfit, had been facing age-related health issues in the recent past.

He is survived by two sons and three daughters. His wife Sneha Lata had passed away over five years ago.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini were among a host of leaders who condoled the demise of Chautala.



HIGHWAY HORROR: Rescue operations underway after an LPG tanker collided with multiple vehicles on Jaipur-Ajmer highway, in Jaipur, Friday

PTI PHOTO

11 dead after LPG tanker crashes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Dec 20: An LPG tanker collided with a truck Friday, sparking a massive fireball that turned a stretch of the Jaipur-Ajmer highway into an inferno in which 11 people were killed and 37 vehicles engulfed in flames.

State Health Minister Gajendra Singh Khimsar said that nearly half of the injured were "very critical."

"A total of 11 people have died. Five were brought dead to SMS hospital. Five succumbed during treatment. One death was reported from Jaipuria hospital," Dr Deepak Maheshwari, Principal, SMS Medical College, said.

Jaipur Police Commissioner Biju George Joseph, who was at the crash site, said an outlet nozzle of the LPG tanker was damaged in the collision, leading to a gas leak that caused the blaze. The crash occurred around 5.30 am, when it was still dark, in front of a school, according to authorities.

"Vehicles behind the tanker were engulfed in flames. Other vehicles coming from the opposite directions also caught fire and the vehicles collided," Joseph said.

The gas leak spread the fire in a flash, leaving no scope for those in nearby vehicles to come out. People were seen rushing and taking off clothes engulfed in flames.

Parl productivity down

Chaos, protests, allegations and counter-allegations, and scuffles marked what can be termed as one of the most unproductive sessions of the Parliament in recent times even as two landmark Bills on simultaneous elections were introduced. As if disruptions over the Adani and George Soros issues weren't enough, the alleged insult to BR Ambedkar saw Parliamentarians stoop to new lows of political animosity with Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi facing a police case over alleged injuries caused to two MPs. With a productivity of nearly 58 per cent in the Lower House and about 40 per cent in the Upper House, the Winter Session of the Parliament that began November 25 was adjourned sine die by the government's initiative December 20

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 20: Parliament was adjourned sine die Friday, capping off a tumultuous session as the overhang of mutual bitterness involving the ruling NDA and Opposition parties following Thursday's spat persisted, forcing Speaker Om Birla in Lok Sabha to ad-



journal the House within three minutes without even the customary summing up of the Session's highlights.

It was only a little better in Rajya Sabha as Opposition parties, which have been protesting against Home Minister Amit Shah's alleged insulting comments for BR Ambedkar, agreed to let Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar read out his valedictory remarks before adjourning the House sine die.

The Lok Sabha's productivity was nearly 58 per cent, according to its secretariat, a far cry from days when it hovered around 100 per cent and even beyond.

During the Session, five Bills were introduced in Lok Sabha, which passed four of them. The Rajya Sabha passed three Bills. A special session was also held in the 'Samvidhan Sadan' to commemorate the Constitution Day, November 26.

If Thursday's pushing and shoving involving MPs of rival parties, which left two BJP members hospitalised and led to a police case against Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, was the low point of the Session, a spirited discussion on the 'Glorious journey of 75 years of the Con-

stitution of India' for two days in each House reflected the best of parliamentary debate.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's sharp denunciation of the Congress, especially the Nehru-Gandhi family, for its "mutilation" of constitutional values was heard by Opposition benches in the Lok Sabha without any serious disruption, and so was Shah's reply to the debate in Rajya Sabha.

However, Opposition parties seized on a couple of sentences of Shah's reply to accuse him of insulting Ambedkar, the architect of India's Constitution, and launch protests inside and outside Parliament.

The BJP-led NDA MPs led counter protests, accusing the Congress of slighting Ambedkar and ignoring his legacy during its long decades in power.

As Modi led Shah's defence and counterattack on the Congress, both sides turned up political heat, which blew up in an ugly spat on Parliament premises Thursday. Both sides lodged police complaints against each other, and an FIR was registered against Gandhi, blamed by the BJP for injuries to two of its MPs.

PRE-BUDGET MEET WITH FM

CM proposes new industrial townships

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi at a pre-Budget consultation meeting with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Jaipur, Friday, proposed the establishment of new industrial townships at Gopalpur and Jharsuguda to boost economic growth in southern and western Odisha.

He also urged the Centre to allocate at least 60 per cent of total funds under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SACI) 2025-26 to the state. Majhi emphasised the need for predictable fund flow and enhanced utilisation for capital expenditure (Capex).

The CM expressed his gratitude to the Union Finance Minister for providing a platform for states to present their suggestions and priorities for the upcoming Union Budget. He highlighted that the SACI allocation in the Union Budget 2024-25 was enhanced to ₹1.50 lakh crore, benefiting all states, including Odisha.

The CM also noted that Odi-



sha's urbanisation rate is significantly lower than the national average. Citing cities as engines of growth, he stressed the need for substantial capital investment to accommodate the inevitable migration of rural populations to urban areas.

Majhi urged the Union government to consider launching a new scheme to support urbanisation of states like Odisha, which have lower urbanisation levels.

The CM emphasised the need for a ₹10,000-crore investment to develop world-class tourism infrastructure in Odisha and requested a special package for tourism development in the Budget.

Swimming mouse among 27 species discovered in Peru

REUTERS

Lima, Dec 20: An 'amphibious mouse' with partially webbed feet that eats aquatic insects was among 27 new species discovered during a 2022 expedition to Peru's Amazon, according to Conservation International.

Scientists also discovered a spiny mouse, a squirrel, eight types of fish, three amphibians and 10 types of butterflies, Trond Larsen, head of Conservation International's Rapid Assessment Program, told Reuters. He added that another 48 species found by investigators were potentially new, but needed further study.

The new species were found in Alto Mayo, a protected area with several ecosystems, Indigenous territories and villages. "Discovering so many new species of mammals and verte-



PICT: CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

brates is really incredible, especially in such a human-influenced landscape as Alto Mayo," Larsen said. The expedition between June and July 2022 was made up of 13 scientists plus

local technicians and members of Indigenous groups.

"It was really fantastic to work so closely with the Awajun people. They have extensive traditional knowledge about

the forests, animals and plants they live side-by-side with," Larsen said.

Among the new species, Larsen highlighted the spiny mouse that has stiff fur, the amphib-

ious mouse, and a dwarf squirrel that measures 14 cm (5.5 in).

"(The squirrel) fits so easily in the palm of your hand. Adorable and beautiful chestnut-brown colour, very fast," Larsen said. "It jumps quickly and hides in the trees."

Another favourite discovery was the blob-headed fish, a type of armored catfish, he said.

A total of 2,046 species were recorded during the 38-day expedition using camera traps, bioacoustic sensors and DNA sampling. Among them, 49 were classified as threatened, including the yellow-tailed woolly monkey and the tree monkey.

Larsen said the discoveries reinforced the need to protect the area. "Unless steps are taken now to safeguard these sites and help restore parts of the landscape... there's a strong chance they won't persist in the long term," Larsen said.

14-year-old stabs classmate in school

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, Dec 20: A 14-year-old student of a government-run school in Kendrapara district allegedly stabbed his classmate Friday, police said.

The incident took place in a classroom of Telengabasant Nodal Upper Primary School, under the jurisdiction of Patamundai Rural police station, an officer said.

The Class VIII student has been detained after the headmistress filed an FIR, inspector-in-charge Padmalaya Pradhan said.

The victim has been hospitalised but is reported to be out of danger. The blood-stained knife has been seized, and the police are investigating the motive behind the attack, he said.

Such violent acts involving minors, especially in schools, raise concern among parents.

BISWA FRAUD

ED freezes ₹82L deposits, shares

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Deposits and shares worth Rs 82 lakh were frozen after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted raids against a social welfare organisation related to the deceased brother of a BJD MLA in Odisha as part of a bank fraud-linked money laundering probe.

The searches were undertaken December 18 at four locations in Sambalpur and Delhi in connection with an investigation against Bharat Integrated Social Welfare Agency (Biswa) run by late Khirod Chandra Mallick, the federal agency said in a statement issued Friday.

Mallick is the brother of former minister and BJD legislator Pramila Mallick.

There was no immediate response from Pramila Mallick, 61, who represents the Binjharpur constituency (Jajpur district) in the Assembly and has served as the Revenue and Disaster Management minister in the Naveen Patnaik government. "Biswa was being run in



the guise of financing self-help groups (SHGs) and joint liability firms. Khirod Chandra Mallick misutilised the funds and also started accepting deposits from the public, which was not allowed under the RBI guidelines," the agency alleged.

The group, according to the ED, was also involved in a bank loan fraud of more than Rs 200 crore.

The agency also claimed that 505 suspected benami accounts of individuals and SHGs, and signed and unsigned chequebooks were recovered during the searches.

"More than Rs 72 lakh kept in the 505 bank accounts and shares worth Rs 10 lakh have been frozen. A number of incriminating documents like sale deeds, chequebooks and digital devices have also been

Niranjan's 5 places raided

Bhubaneswar: ED sleuths Friday raided the residence of former OPCC chief Niranjan Patnaik here and four other places across the state. The ED officials, accompanied by CRPF personnel, conducted the raids for over 10 hours. According to reports, around 8-10 ED officials, began the raid at Patnaik's Nayapalli residence around 7am. The probe was underway at Patnaik's business establishment in Mancheswar area, a farmhouse in Sisupalagarh area, and his office complex in Rourkela. Though it is unclear as to why the raids were conducted, an alleged irregularity in financial transactions is suspected to be the reason. Sources said the officials have several documents from Patnaik's residence in connection with the probe.

seized," the ED said. The money laundering case of the ED stems from an FIR of the Odisha Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) and another such complaint filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation.



IN SYNC: Artistes perform during 'Pratihwani Nrityautsav 2024' organised by Guru Deba Prasad Nrutyadhara, Singapore at GKCM Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneswar, Friday

PICT: BIKASH NAYAK

LOPAR TRIGGERS SHOWERS

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Parts of the state received light rains Friday under the influence of a well-marked low-pressure area over the Bay of Bengal which later intensified into a depression, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in the evening.

A 'Yellow' warning for heavy rainfall was issued for parts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur till Saturday, it said.

The IMD also forecast a dip in the night temperature by 2-4 degrees Celsius from December 23. Bhubaneswar has been experiencing cloudy sky and light rain since Thursday, which brought down the day temperature by 9 degrees Celsius at 2 pm, officials said.

Meanwhile, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Deorajan Kumar Singh wrote to the District Collectors, stating fishermen should be advised not to venture into the sea along the coast at the Andhra Pradesh-Odisha border Saturday.

He also asked the Collectors of Ganjam, Gajapati, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur to keep administrative machinery ready to deal with any eventuality. Squally weather, with surface wind speeds reaching 40 to 50 kmph and gusting up to 60 kmph, is expected to prevail over parts of the west-central



'Yellow' warning for heavy rainfall was issued for parts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur till Saturday

Bay of Bengal, as well as along and off the coasts of north Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha.

Meanwhile, shallow fog was reported in isolated areas of Sundargarh and Kalahandi districts in interior Odisha.

The IMD also noted a marked rise in minimum temperatures in some areas of south interior Odisha, with an appreciable rise in a few other parts of interior Odisha. Elsewhere, there was no significant change.

Minimum temperatures were markedly above normal in a few areas across the state, appreciably above normal in many parts of coastal Odisha, and slightly above normal in some interior Odisha districts.

The highest maximum temperature of 30.1 degrees Celsius was recorded in Malkangiri, while the lowest minimum temperature of 10.6 degrees Celsius was observed in Sundargarh.

IMD reported that the well-marked low-pressure is likely to continue moving northwards and intensify into a depression over the west-central Bay of Bengal within the next 12 hours. Subsequently, it is expected to move north-north-eastwards while maintaining its intensity over the following 24 hours.

18.5 ft-long rock python rescued

Kendrapara: An 18.5-foot-long adult Indian rock python, which had strayed into Rajendranarayanpur village near Bhitarkanika National Park in this district, was rescued by Forest officials Friday. On spotting the huge reptile, locals alerted the Forest department, which swiftly responded to rescue the animal. The python had sustained some injuries and is currently being treated by veterinarians. Forest officials confirmed that the snake will be fully recovered into the wild once it is released back. While pythons are generally not considered dangerous to humans, large specimens possess enough strength to kill an adult if provoked. However, pythons typically do not attack humans unless in self-defence, Forest officials said.

Young climate leaders share insights on COP29

Bhubaneswar: Youth4Water Plus, with support of UNICEF Odisha, organised a state-level COP29 event at the Press Club of Odisha here to share experiences and key takeaways from the global event held in Baku recently. The programme highlighted the importance of involvement of youth in tackling climate change and promoting sustainable development. The meeting marked a significant milestone in youth-led climate action and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) advocacy in Odisha.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	22.7°	22.0°
Min Temp	20.4°	17.8°
Humidity	67%	84%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST Generally Cloudy Sky with Light Rain.		

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VALUE	CHG
SENSEX	78041.59	↓ 1,176.4
NIFTY	23587.50	↓ 364.20
DOLLAR	85.07	↓ 0.11
EURO	88.38	↓ 0.30
GOLD	₹76,540	↑ ₹89
SILVER	₹88,365	↑ ₹1,178

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

I, Bishnupriya Sabat, W/o Brundaban Sabat, resident of Ram Mandir Sahi, Boipariguda, P.O./P.S.- Boipariguda, Dist.-Koraput, PIN- 764043 declare by this affidavit No.2086, dtd.12.12.2024 that now onwards I shall be known as BISHNU PRIYA SABAT for all future purposes.

I, Jhilirani Sahoo(41 yrs), W/o Rangadhar Sahoo, Vill - Panaspada, PS- Chandabali, Dist- Bhadrak, declare that I have Nominee of my fathers LIC policy bearing no.- 588447723. I have changed Nominee name in this policy from Hemalata Sahoo to Jhilirani Sahoo. Hence Jhilirani Sahoo and Hemalata Sahoo, W/o Rangadhar Sahoo & D/o- Gadadhar Sahoo same and one person.

PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS 2025

IMPCC holds preparatory meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Ahead of the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas which will be hosted by Odisha for the first time from January 8-10, 2025, the Inter Media Publicity Coordination Committee (IMPCC) - Odisha Region held its monthly meeting Friday at the PIB office here to strategise communication and publicity activities for the mega event.

The meeting, chaired by ADG, PIB and CBC Bhubaneswar Akhil Kumar Mishra, emphasised the vital role of IMPCC - a forum under the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting - in ensuring coordinated communication strategies for the government events.

Deba Prasad Dash, Joint Secretary of the Odia Language, Literature & Culture department outlined the state gov-

ernment's collaborated efforts with the Ministry of External Affairs in ensuring the smooth conduct of the event. He said a range of cultural activities, like Adivasi Mela, Mukteswar Dance Festival, and Rajarani Music Festival would be held to showcase the state's rich cultural heritage. Extensive logistical, protocol and security arrangements have been made as over 7,000 delegates are expected to attend the event, he added.

Prof Anand K Pradhan, Regional Director of IIMC Dhenkanal, stressed the importance of strategic communication in such high-profile events.

Santosh Kumar Das; Additional Director DIPRO I&PR department Laxman Kumar Bhera; Head RNU Doordarshan Dr Abhishek Mishra and Deputy Director AIR Prakash Dash were among the key attendees at the meeting.

Wandering 'Zeenat' leaves J'khand, enters Bengal

AGENCIES

Kolkata/Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Three-year-old tigress 'Zeenat', which had escaped from Similipal Tiger Reserve some days ago and entered the Jharkhand border, is now believed to be roaming in West Bengal forests, sources said Friday.

Forest personnel of West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha are closely monitoring the movement of the tigress that has been roaming the contiguous forest belt of the three states since escaping from STR 10 days ago, according to Forest officials.

"'Zeenat', is currently believed to be in Bengal territory. Her movements are being tracked via a radio collar, and a special squad of Bengal forest officials is on constant watch," they said.

Movement of 'Zeenat', the full-grown adult big cat, is constantly being monitored through radio collar fitted on her as a special squad of Bengal forest officials are on constant vigil with camouflaged cages with trap door kept ready and cattle kept as bait, Minister of



State for Forest (Independent charge) Birbaha Hansda told PTI Friday.

"Forest personnel from Jharkhand and Odisha are also accompanying our team. People are being told not to venture deep into the forest to collect firewood, saal leaves or for any other reason. We are tracking every movement of the tigress but there is no cause to be panicky," Hansda said.

A senior forest official said the tigress has now been spotted

in a forested part of Junglemahal area in West Bengal but refused to divulge the place. People in pockets like Belpahari have been asked not to remain in open space after dusk and not to harm if they spot any such animal, he said.

imal, he said.

The tigress had covered not less than 40 km after straying from Similipal in Odisha but such behaviour is normal for tigers who wander several kilometres in search of a new territory, the official said.

"Probably the forest belt of three neighbouring states, having similar habitat, became a corridor for her and she is trying to set up a base. We are at work to drive her away to Simlipal through the same route or if she is captured, release her back into the reserve forest in Odisha. We are hopeful there is no man-animal conflict," the senior state forest official said.

"The prey base is low in the areas where 'Zeenat' is presently located. So, we hope she turns back to the reserve since there is more prey there," he said.

The tigress has been spotted in a forested part of Junglemahal area in West Bengal but forest officials refused to divulge the location

ORERA launches new website



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Odisha Real Estate Regulatory Authority (ORERA) launched its new website ORERA Version 2.0 (https://rera.odisha.gov.in) at a ceremony here Friday.

ORERA chairperson Sidhanta Das in presence of members Pradeep Kumar Biswal and Gopal Chandra Patnaik, and other officials unveiled the website.

Das, in his address, emphasised that the occasion marked a historic day for ORERA in promoting transparency, efficiency and accountability in the system. He congratulated all the officials and team members for successful roll out of the new software in a record time. Das also expected that the website would be user friendly and helpful for the stakeholders.

ORERA secretary Sravani Patnaik delivered the welcome address and Finance joint di-

rector Dipak Kumar Beshra extended the vote of thanks.

The application was developed by CSM Technology—a city-based IT company with new features like dashboard and chatbot. Promoters, home buyers, real estate agents and lawyers will be benefited from the new system through seamless transactions.

ORERA has also dedicated a helpdesk 0674-2570757 for providing necessary assistance to the users. There is also an interactive chatbot in the system to meet the queries raised by the public.

Key feature in the website includes end-to-end grievance redressal with online complaint filing, real-time tracking, and online hearing schedules. For promoters, the system enables online submission of quarterly progress reports, payment gateway integration, digital signatures, and a mobile app for site engineers and architects.

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UGC recognition eludes DDU

Growing demand to run Dharanidhar Autonomous College separately

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec 20: Dharanidhar University (DDU) in Keonjhar district is yet to get the University Grants Commission (UGC) status despite passage of one and a half years since its establishment.

Earlier, the state government upgraded Dharanidhar Autonomous College to DDU but could not take steps following the guidelines of UGC to obtain the sanction leading to its rejection, sources said.

Consequently, there are growing concerns among the guardians and alumni about the future of the students studying here as the varsity is yet to be accorded the UGC status. According to sources, the UGC had earlier rejected the application for recognition as the ordinary gazette notification had been fixed.

As per the UGC rule, it will require an extraordinary notification. After the notification, the state Assembly needs to pass the Bill. The UGC will grant recognition only after the Bill gets passed in the Assembly, which had not been done earlier. Now the extraordinary notification has been done and sent to the state Assembly.

"We are hopeful that it will soon materialise," said Dr Pratap Kumar Mohanty, Vice-Chancellor in-charge and Officer on Special Duty.

With the Bill not being tabled in the recently-concluded Winter Session of the Assembly, the students are a worried lot as UGC recognition eludes this university.

Parents and students are worried as they have not been



recognised by the UGC. Uncertainty remains over the validity of certificates if the students who pass out do not get UGC recognition, said Prasant Dalei, an activist who has written to different levels about the problems of the students.

On the other hand, with the Dharanidhar Autonomous College being upgraded into a university, educationists in Keonjhar district are unhappy with the closure of the heritage college. Barring the Government Women's College, the district is left with no other government college, they said expressing concern. Students will have to face problems in the field of higher education, especially with the degree course, they claimed.

As the fee structure of the university is higher than the college, it will be difficult for the poor students of the district to continue higher studies. There is growing demand that there should be a college along with the university here like other districts, said Sandeep Patnaik, an old student of the college.

The only government college in the district, which is very old, should be protected. With presence of both the university and colleges, the delivery of

higher education in the district can be strengthened. "We have also written to the chief minister and the education minister demanding protection of the heritage of the district," Prasant Dalei added.

Degree courses can continue in this university as well. The teaching will be done by an experienced faculty. Therefore, good education can be imparted to the students. However, more government colleges can be set up in the district like other districts, the VC added.

Meanwhile, president Babaji Charan Patra, secretary Sarat Chandra Patra, senior member Alekh Chandra Patra of the Nikhila Odisha Patra Tanti Samaj, Keonjhar have demanded separation of DD Autonomous College from DDU and submitted a memorandum to the chief minister in this regard.

Similarly, Gond Sanskrutika Sangathan and Milita Adivasi Kalyan Manch have also submitted a memorandum to the chief minister on this issue. Various tribal outfits in Keonjhar district have joined the chorus and submitted a memorandum to the chief minister demanding separation of DD Autonomous College from DDU in the district.

Ex-panchayat secy gets 3 years jail for misappropriation

Berhampur: A special Vigilance court here Friday sentenced a former gram panchayat secretary in Ganjam district to three years imprisonment for misappropriation of rice and cement. Rice was supplied to the panchayat under Sampurna Gramen Rozgar Yojana and National Food for Work Programme. Special Judge of the Vigilance court Arun Kumar Sahoo also imposed a fine of ₹25,000 on Bijay Pradhan (62), former secretary of Chandanpur gram panchayat, said Surendra Nath Panda, Special Public Prosecutor of the court. The court convicted Pradhan after examining 16 witnesses and verifying the documents, he said. After getting the allegations of misappropriation of the rice and cement received by the panchayat in different schemes, a Vigilance team had conducted a surprise check of the stock October 16, 2007. During their verification, they found the misappropriation of around 198 quintals of rice. They had also detected the misappropriation of 64 bags of cement. The Vigilance team had registered a case against Pradhan December 26, 2007 and started an investigation.



IIM-Sambalpur announces independent MBA admission

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: The Indian Institute of Management (IIM)-Sambalpur has announced a strategic shift in its admission process, deciding to independently conduct the exercise for the MBA programme in the 2025-2026 academic year, an official said.

The same admission process will be applicable for the newly launched course of MBA in Business Analytics, he said.

"This new admission process by IIM-Sambalpur exemplifies the institution's commitment to fostering a more holistic admissions experience through directly interacting with candidates," it said in a release.

"Through this process, candidates are provided with flexible options to participate in personal interviews in either



physical or virtual mode," it said.

IIM-Sambalpur ensures that the admissions are merit-based by using an aggregate of CAT 2024 scores, academic record, experience at work and gender balance, the release said.

"With the introduction of this new and independent admission process, IIM-Sambalpur has opted to conduct

its MBA admissions process independently similar to the earlier generation IIMs, allowing prospective candidates to be directly interviewed by the institute. Our aim is to offer a more tailored and seamless experience for applicants, in alignment with our vision to nurture talent and foster innovation," Director Prof Mahadeo Jaiswal said in a statement.

Elephant care centre soon in Chandragiri

The proposed facility will be the third elephant rescue-cum-care centre in state after Chandaka and Kapilash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Dec 20: An elephant care centre will soon come up in the Chandragiri reserve forest area in Ganjam district, local MLA Pradyumna Nayak said Friday.

Around 21 hectares of land have been earmarked for the Forest department by the facility near Beruabadi.

The proposal of the Ghumusar North Forest Division is under active consideration and it is likely to be approved soon, Nayak, the MLA from Bhanjanagar, said.

The legislator said he has already discussed the matter with Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Ga-



nesh Ram Singh Khuntia.

The proposed facility will be the third elephant rescue-cum-care centre in the state after Chandaka in Khurda district and Kapilash in Dhenkanal, Forest department sources said.

It will care for elephants that are aged, injured or ailing.

Besides the Ghumusar North Division, the centre will also look after jumbos in Ghumusar South, Berhampur, Paralakhemundi, Nayagarh, Boudh, Baliguda and Phulbani Forest

Divisions, the sources said. It will have a capacity to house at least eight elephants, said Himansu Sekhar Mohanty, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Ghumusar North.

He said the centre will include a quarantine and treatment unit, transition zone, water facilities, solar lighting and fodder cultivation area.

"Besides treating injured and ailing elephants, the centre will provide an environment for quick recovery, enabling them to get back to their active herds again," the DFO said.

The centre will entail an expenditure of around ₹3 crore, the sources said. There are over 70 elephants in the Ghumusar North Division, they added.

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FOCUS ECONOMY

QUEST FOR TAX JUSTICE



In India, the share of the bottom 50% of the population in total income has come down from 21% in 1990 to 13% in 2021, and that of the top 10% has increased from 32% to 57% during the corresponding period

25% in 1919. Besides, the potential for tax evasion is much higher with corporate tax than with personal IT, which is deducted from the source. Jaitley in his budget speech of 2017-18 gave a flavor of tax evasion by bringing out how after demonetization it was noticed only 1.72 lakh returns were filed with earnings of more than 50 lakh rupees, while 148 lakh people deposited more than 80 lakhs during demonetization.

In a stirring book "The Spirit Level" (2009) by Wilkinson and Pickett, they bring out the pernicious effect inequality has on society like eroding trust, increasing anxiety and illness, and how the index of health measured in terms of drug abuse, obesity, violence, and child well-being outcomes are significantly worse in more unequal countries, whether rich or poor. The SDG 10 specifically encourages the states to reduce income inequality and promote universal socioeconomic inclusion, ensure equal opportunity, and adapt fiscal and social policies that promote equality. The Indian Constitution at Article 38(2) also enjoins upon the state 'to reduce income inequality and eliminate inequality in opportunity'. Pickett's recent suggestions at the event in RIS is a reiteration of his earlier thrust of using public policy to usher in an era of tax justice in India. It is up to Nirmala Sitharaman, whether she would like to change the policy track from a debt-fuelled approach to fund the humungous needs of infrastructure or use progressive tax as an instrument, both to augment resources from the billionaires to fund social infrastructure and rev up quality of education, health care, access to technology and skill to the bottom 50% of Indians.

The writer teaches macro economics.

ginal tax rate from 70% to 50% in 1981. His protégé Donald Trump reduced corporate tax from 35% to 21% and feted Laffer. In a recent interaction at the World Knowledge Forum, Prof Abhijit Banerjee, the Nobel Laureate, debunked the pseudo-scientific contention that inequality is necessary for growth. He also said how after 1980 the growth momentum decelerated in the USA due to massive tax cuts on the super-rich corporates.

share of the bottom 50% of the population in total income has come down from 21% in 1990 to 13% in 2021 and that of the top 10% has increased from 32% to 57% during the corresponding period as per the World Inequality Report. It is not an accident of history but a conscious embracing of Reaganomics in the 90s when the tax rate on the highest income bracket came down from 50% in 1980 to 30% in 1997 by Chidambaram and the wealth tax was abolished by Arun Jaitley in the FY 2015-16. Both Chidambaram and Jaitley were from different political spectrums but had the same benign approach towards big business!

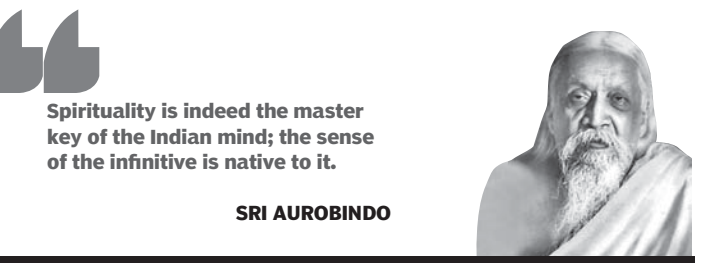
Another interesting fallout of the pro-corporate policy pursued by India manifests itself in the sharp reduction in the share of corporate tax as a proportion to GDP from 3.9% in 2010-11 to around 3% under the Modi regime. Further, the share of corporate tax in total direct tax collection has come down from 75% in 2010 to around 42% now, and that of personal income tax from 25% to 55% during the corresponding period. This is because of the soft tax policy of the government by reducing the corporate tax rate from 30% to

Speaking at an event organised by the Research & Development of System for Developing Countries (RIS), Thomas Piketty, the poster boy of the income inequality study "Capital in the 21st Century" (2013), recommends having a very ambitious plan for tax justice in India, asking the richest Indians who have benefitted the most in the past 20 years, post-economic liberalisation, to give back a part of their new wealth accumulation to pay for higher investment in India's public services, such as education and health. He recommends that even a 2% wealth tax on the very top billionaires will raise a lot of money to fund the rickety social infrastructure of India. He also contends that the total tax revenue in India has been stagnant at around 11.2% of its GDP over the last decade and is substantially less than both in developing countries like China (15.8%) and France (44%). There is a strong case for setting a target of 25% in the coming decade, for which a mix of wealth tax and higher progressive tax on the super-rich 'should be the direction India should go.' Mr. Nagewaran, the Chief Economic Advisor who participated in the event, was of the view that it will drive capital away.

The contrasting perspectives rooted in the ideological divide became very sharp when Milton Friedman, the high priest of neoliberalism, contended that 'inequality is inevitable and may even be beneficial. Social levelling leads to economic stagnation by removing incentives for hard work.' Arthur Laffer, economic advisor to Ronald Reagan, provided the intellectual ballast that a tax cut can lead to an increase in tax collection if the initial tax rate is above the optimal rate. Reagan brought down the highest mar-



Satya Narayan Misra
IN A RECENT INTERACTION AT THE WORLD KNOWLEDGE FORUM, PROF ABHIJIT BANERJEE, THE NOBEL LAUREATE, DEBUNKED THE PSEUDO-SCIENTIFIC CONTENTION THAT INEQUALITY IS NECESSARY FOR GROWTH



Spirituality is indeed the master key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinitive is native to it.
SRI AUROBINDO

SC's Frustration

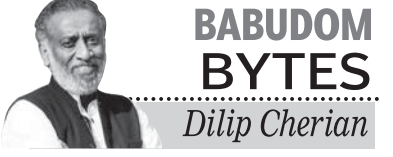
The appointment of Directors General of Police (DGPs) is one of the crucial issues the Supreme Court has, once again, had to remind states of their responsibilities. It's perplexing that certain states still appear to be choosing not to follow the landmark 2006 Prakash Singh judgment, almost 20 years after it was rendered.

The apex court recently asked for explanations of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal. These states and Jharkhand, who has since replied, were accused of flouting court-mandated procedures for selecting DGPs in a suit brought by the Jan Sewa Trust. The trust claims that there have been numerous infractions of the rules, including bypassing the requirement of a two-year fixed tenure for police chiefs and ignoring the mandate to select from a UPSC-prepared panel of three senior-most, eligible IPS officers.

The Prakash Singh guidelines matter. The 2006 verdict was a watershed moment aimed at insulating the police from political interference and ensuring merit-based leadership. Fixed tenures and structured selection processes are designed to enhance stability and professionalism in policing—a crucial factor for public trust and effective law enforcement.

Yet, states are dragging their feet or outright ignoring these directives. While the court has now given six weeks for responses and four weeks for rejoinders, one can't help but wonder—why the delay in following a 17-year-old mandate? Mere bureaucratic inertia, or something more deliberate?

The court's frustration is justified. With the current complex law-and-order challenges, shouldn't states prioritize fair and transparent police leadership? After all, police reforms aren't just about hierarchy—they're about justice, accountability, and public confidence. States ignoring these directives owe the nation an answer—and soon.



BABUDOM BYTES
Dilip Cherian

Public spats and missing files

Kerala's bureaucracy seems to have traded its famed decorum for a public display of accusations and counter-accusations. Suspended IAS officer N. Prasanth took to Facebook to lob serious allegations against senior colleague A Jayathilak, accusing his office of leaking sensitive information about missing files related to initiatives for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) empowerment.

At the centre of the storm is Unnathi, a project aimed at uplifting SC/ST communities. A newspaper report, allegedly sourced from a letter by Jayathilak to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, claims Prasanth failed to hand over critical documents to his successor, K Gopalakrishnan. Prasanth, however, fired back with claims of a conspiracy, accusing Jayathilak and Gopalakrishnan of tampering with digital records to frame him.

The allegations, which include a colourful reference to "time travel" in altering e-file dates, raise troubling questions about administrative propriety. While Prasanth has been charged with insubordination and tarnishing the government's image, the silence from Jayathilak's side only fuels speculation. Meanwhile, the Chief Secretary had earlier issued a memo against Prasanth for derogatory comments and vilification of colleagues, adding another layer to this bureaucratic soap opera.

This very public feud underscores a growing concern: Are digital tools meant for efficiency now being weaponised in turf wars? The IAS Officers' Association's intervention will be critical to restoring order and ensuring that bureaucratic spats do not overshadow governance. Surely Kerala deserves better than senior officials locked in virtual mudslinging while vital administrative initiatives hang in the balance. What is needed is accountability, professionalism, and a reminder that public service isn't meant to be a Twitter feud gone rogue.

Ajay Seth steps up amid Budget rush

Ajay Seth, Secretary of Economic Affairs, has been handed an extra set of responsibilities as the interim Revenue Secretary. According to the ACC order, he'll hold this dual charge until a permanent appointment is made or further instructions are given.

Seth, a Karnataka cadre IAS officer from the 1987 batch, is known for his steady hand in economic affairs. With a B.Tech in mechanical engineering and an MBA, he's been leading the Department of Economic Affairs since April 2021. And now, with the Union Budget right around the corner, he finds himself in the spotlight again.

The vacancy arose after Sanjay Malhotra, the outgoing Revenue Secretary, was named the new RBI Governor earlier this week. The timing left little room for delay—Budget preparations are at full tilt, and the Ministry needed someone who could hit the ground running.

Fortunately, Seth's no stranger to Budget discussions. Sources within the Ministry point out his extensive experience in financial policymaking, making him a natural fit for the role.

It's a high-stakes moment, no doubt, but Seth seems to have the chops for the challenge. With his deep understanding of the Ministry's workings, his appointment ensures there's no hiccup in the Budget process. The question now is: how long will he juggle these dual roles? For now, all eyes are on him to deliver under pressure.

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SPECTRUM PAKISTAN

Right medicine for an ailing economy



Aasim M Husain
THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT MUST RAISE TAX REVENUE BY 1% OF GDP ANNUALLY OVER FIVE YEARS TO BROADEN THE TAX NET

Pakistan's long history of fiscal mismanagement has saddled the country with a crushing debt burden. Interest payments on the public debt consume a staggering 60% of government revenue. And external-debt repayments coming due over the next five years amount to nearly \$70 billion, dwarfing the \$11 billion in foreign-exchange reserves held by the central bank.

No wonder that some experts have started calling for a default and restructuring. Many others are still urging strict adherence to the three-year austerity program approved by the International Monetary Fund in September to balance the books. Neither default nor austerity is likely to work, however, and both would inflict unnecessary pain.

External debt restructuring is the wrong medicine for Pakistan, because the problem is not the external interest burden but rather the volume of repayments falling due. Only 10% of interest payments go to private creditors, given that almost all—more than 85%—of Pakistan's external debt is owed to official creditors at concessional rates. So, even if the Pakistani government stopped paying inter-

est to external private creditors altogether, this would barely make a dent in its overall bill.

Restructuring domestic debt, on the other hand, could lower Pakistan's interest bill, but would cause severe economic pain. Nearly two-thirds of the government's domestic obligations are held by banks, where these securities comprise around 60% of assets. Even a modest haircut of 10% would wipe out the banking system's capital, though the impact would vary from institution to institution. Banks would be unable to repay depositors, triggering financial turmoil and a sharp economic contraction.

If restructuring won't help, what about the new IMF austerity program, which seeks to increase the tax-to-GDP ratio by three percentage points over three years?

To be sure, addressing the country's chronic revenue shortfalls is of paramount importance. Only around 1% of Pakistanis pay any income tax at all, and the government's revenue collection—at around 12% of GDP—is among the world's lowest. The agriculture, retail, and real-estate sectors, which constitute the bulk of the economy, are effectively outside the tax net. No country can function like this.

But the IMF program aims to raise the tax-to-GDP ratio by two percentage points in the first year alone—a breakneck pace that is wildly unrealistic. Pakistan has never achieved an adjustment of this scale in a single year. Even if, by some miracle, the government did manage it, the negative effects on economic activity and poverty rates would be crippling.

Nor is any relief in sight on the spending side. The government's non-interest spending relative to GDP is to be held below its average level over the past decade, which was already among the lowest of the world's emerging economies and insufficient to meet basic development needs. Even if this austerity could be achieved, its social and political sustainability is far from assured.

In short, restructuring is bad medicine, and the IMF program is good medicine, albeit at a lethal dose. But there is a third way.

For starters, the Pakistani government must raise tax revenue by 1% of GDP annually over five years by implementing aggressive structural reforms to broaden the tax net. Policymakers should channel half of the gains back into the economy through increased spending on

education, health care, poverty eradication, and climate-resilient infrastructure.

During this reform process, bilateral and multilateral creditors should temporarily extend new loans to Pakistan, instead of just rolling over the debt coming due. Liquidity relief would boost economic growth by increasing public investment and crowding in private investment. To ensure that these funds are well spent, creditors must condition their lending on reform progress and be involved in selecting and implementing public investment projects.

In its current form, the austerity program will almost certainly fail, causing Pakistan's economic conditions to deteriorate further and delivering a reputational hit to the IMF. But if policymakers reduce the dose now, and creditors provide more liquidity by enhancing coordination, Pakistan is more likely to grow out of its debt problem. Such an approach could then be broadened to address debt overhangs in other emerging economies.

The writer is a former Deputy Director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department at the International Monetary Fund.

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WISDOM CORNER

Death is not extinguishing the light; it is only putting out the lamp because the dawn has come.
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Ignorance is the curse of God; knowledge is the wing where-with we fly to heaven.
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The world perishes not from bandits and fires, but from hatred, hostility, and all these petty squabbles.
ANTON CHEKHOV

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1845:** The Battle of Feroz Shah began between British and Sikh forces during the First Sikh War.
- 1864:** General William Tecumseh Sherman captured Savannah, Georgia, during his "March to the Sea" in the American Civil War.
- 1898:** Having recently discovered polonium, future Nobel Prize winners Marie and Pierre Curie discovered the radioactive chemical element radium, a silvery white metal that would be used to treat cancer.

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

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B-15, Rasulgah Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

A wrong message

Sir, The different languages spoken and used in India are, needless to say, key features of the nation's "Unity in diversity." All languages are unique, and none of them is superior or inferior. Similarly, as a medium of communication, the importance of a language transcends beyond castes and religions. Unfortunately, languages like Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Urdu are often misrepresented and misunderstood. The Rajasthan government's decision to remove Urdu terms from police and court vocabulary was taken in line with such a wrong belief. Years of neglect and lack of patronage have caused Urdu to fall into decline. This move by the government smacks of bigotry and prejudice. By treating Urdu as a Muslim language and trying to reduce its importance, the government is giving a wrong message. The government must shed its narrow-mindedness and see things in the right perspective. It must revoke its decision and invest its efforts in the development of Urdu.
Venu GS, KOLLAM

Peace is a necessity

Sir, Apropos, "China highlights broader consensus." **Orissa POST**, Dec 20. The recent Special Representatives' meeting in Beijing between India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi marks a pivotal moment in bilateral diplomacy. Both sides committed to maintaining peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control, a critical step to prevent future conflicts. While the agreements signal progress, challenges still persist. The border dispute remains a complex and sensitive issue, compounded by historical grievances and mutual mistrust. The emphasis on confidence-building measures and 'step-by-step' resolutions demonstrates pragmatic diplomacy. However, translating these commitments into actionable change will require sustained political will and vigilance. The broader implications of this meeting cannot be overlooked. Collaborative initiatives in trade, technology, and multilateral platforms like BRICS could pave the way for a more stable and prosperous region. Yet, peace is only the starting point. These steps are essential to build trust and overcome the lingering shadows of conflict. The path to reconciliation is long, but this dialogue offers hope for a more harmonious future. For India and China, peace is not just an ideal but a necessity.
N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

CB to probe case against Rahul ED books BRS leader KTR

An FIR was registered Thursday against Rahul Gandhi at Parliament Street Police following BJP's complaint, accusing him of physical assault and incitement after MPs Pratap Chandra Sarangi and Mukesh Rajput were injured

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Delhi Police's Crime Branch will investigate the case against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in connection with a scuffle on the Parliament premises, which left two BJP MPs injured a day earlier.

On Thursday, an FIR was registered against Gandhi at Parliament Street Police following a BJP's complaint, accusing him of physical assault and incitement after MPs Pratap Chandra Sarangi and Mukesh Rajput were injured.

The FIR has been registered under sections 115 (voluntary causing hurt), 117 (voluntary causing grievous hurt), 125 (act of endangering life or personal safety of others), 131 (use of



PARL SCUFFLE

criminal force), 351 (criminal intimidation) and 3(5) (common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. "We have transferred the case from local police to the Crime Branch," a senior officer said, adding that police are likely to record the statements of Sarangi and Mukesh Rajput and may also call Gandhi for questioning. Meanwhile, police have sought legal advice on registering a separate FIR in response to a complaint filed

by the Congress, accusing BJP MPs of misbehaving with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge on the Parliament premises.

"We are taking legal opinion if the Congress leaders' complaint can be converted into the FIR," another police officer said, adding that a decision on this will be taken soon. Talking about the investigation in the case against Gandhi, the officer said police would seek access to CCTV footage of the area where

the incident occurred and also reach out to media houses to inquire about any video evidence they may have. Police will also recreate the scene of crime if required during the investigation, the source said. On Thursday, BJP MP Hemang Joshi, accompanied by party colleagues Anurag Thakur and Bansuri Swaraj, visited the Parliament Street police station and filed the complaint. The Congress strongly rejected the claim, alleging that BJP MPs pushed Kharge and "physically manhandled" Gandhi.

The Congress also lodged a complaint in connection with the matter Thursday. A delegation of Congress MPs, including Digvijaya Singh, Mukul Wasnik, Rajiv Shukla and Pramod Tiwari, filed the complaint visiting the station in person. After political protests turned ugly, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Thursday banned demonstrations by MPs and political parties at any of the gates of Parliament, sources said. "Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has issued strict instructions that no political party, Member of Parliament or groups of members will hold any dharna and demonstration at building gates of Parliament House," parliament sources said.

134 COPS BOOKED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, Dec 20: The Enforcement Directorate Friday filed a money laundering case against BRS leader K T Rama Rao and some others in a case linked to alleged payment irregularities during the Formula-E race held in Hyderabad in February 2023, official sources said.

An Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) has been registered under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act taking cognisance of a Telangana Police Anti-corruption bureau (ACB) FIR filed Thursday, the sources said.

The accused in the ED case are the same as those mentioned in the ACB FIR, they said. BRS leader and party working President K T Rama Rao, the son of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, has been named as accused no 1 followed by senior IAS officer Arvind Kumar and retired bureaucrat BLN Reddy as accused no 2 and 3 in the ACB complaint.

This is the second money laundering case against the family of BRS chief Chandrashekar Rao as his daughter K Kavitha was questioned and later arrested by the ED in the Delhi excise policy case. Kavitha is now out on bail and the case is before the court.



The probe against 48-year-old Rama Rao, popularly known as KTR, pertains to alleged payments of about ₹55 crore, some of it in foreign currency without approvals, to conduct a Formula-E race in Hyderabad during the previous regime in February last year.

He had denied any wrongdoing, saying "Where is the corruption in this? We have paid ₹55 crore. They (Formula-E) acknowledged the payment."

He added that it was a "straightforward" account.

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy also attacked Rama Rao for these alleged irregularities, saying about ₹500 crore was saved with the state government under him deciding against further transfer of funds to the organisers of the racing event. Rama Rao, who was the

Municipal Administration minister during the BRS regime, was instrumental in hosting the race last year in Hyderabad.

Though the race was supposed to be held in February this year as well, it was cancelled after the Congress government assumed office in December 2023.

In a linked development, the Telangana High Court Friday directed the ACB officials not to arrest Rama Rao till December 30 as part of their investigation into the case. High Court judge Justice Natcharaju Shrawan Kumar Venkat was hearing a Lunch Motion petition moved by Rama Rao seeking to quash the FIR filed against him by the ACB.

Governor Jishnu Dev Varma had recently granted permission to the ACB to register the case against Rama Rao.

SC says DND flyway will remain tax-free

The top court dismissed an appeal of Noida Toll Bridge Company Ltd (NTBCL), a private firm running the Delhi-Noida-Direct (DND) flyway, against the 2016 decision of the Allahabad High Court order asking it to stop collecting toll from commuters



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: In a relief to lakhs of commuters plying between Delhi and Noida, the Supreme Court Friday upheld that the DND flyway will remain toll-free and castigated the Noida authority and the Uttar Pradesh and Delhi governments saying the blatant misuse of power and breach of public trust have profoundly shocked its conscience.

The top court dismissed an appeal of Noida Toll Bridge Company Ltd (NTBCL), a private firm running the Delhi-Noida-Direct (DND) flyway, against the 2016 decision of the Allahabad High Court order asking it to stop collecting toll from commuters. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan said, "NTBCL has recovered the project costs and substantial profits, eliminating any justification for the continued imposition or collection of user fees or tolls."

The bench said Noida overstepped its authority by delegating the power to levy fees to NTBCL

through the concession agreement and regulations, exceeding the scope of its powers.

It said if a governmental action disproportionately favours a private entity at the expense of public welfare, it is liable to be struck down as invalid. Holding that no person or entity can be allowed to make an undue and unjust profit from public property, at the cost of the public at large, the bench said the CAG report further states that the annual toll income of NTBCL during 2001-2016 was ₹892.51 crore.

"NTBCL has been making profits for the last 11 years; has no accumulated losses as of March 31, 2016; has paid dividends of Rupees 243.07 crores till March 31, 2016 to its shareholders; and repaid all its debt with interest. NTBCL had thus, by March 31, 2016, recovered the project costs, the maintenance costs, and a significant profit on its initial investment. There is no rhyme or reason for the collection of user fees/tolls to continue," it noted.

Dallewal writes to SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Dec 20: Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, whose fast-unto-death entered 25th day Friday, wrote to the Supreme Court, urging it to direct the Centre to accept the farmers' demands including a legal guarantee of the minimum support price on crops.

Dallewal (70), a cancer patient, has been on a fast-unto-death at the Khanauri border point between Punjab and Haryana to press the Centre to accept the agitating farmers' demands.

In the letter to the apex court, Dallewal wrote that his indefinite hunger strike in support of farmers' demands entered the 25th day Friday.

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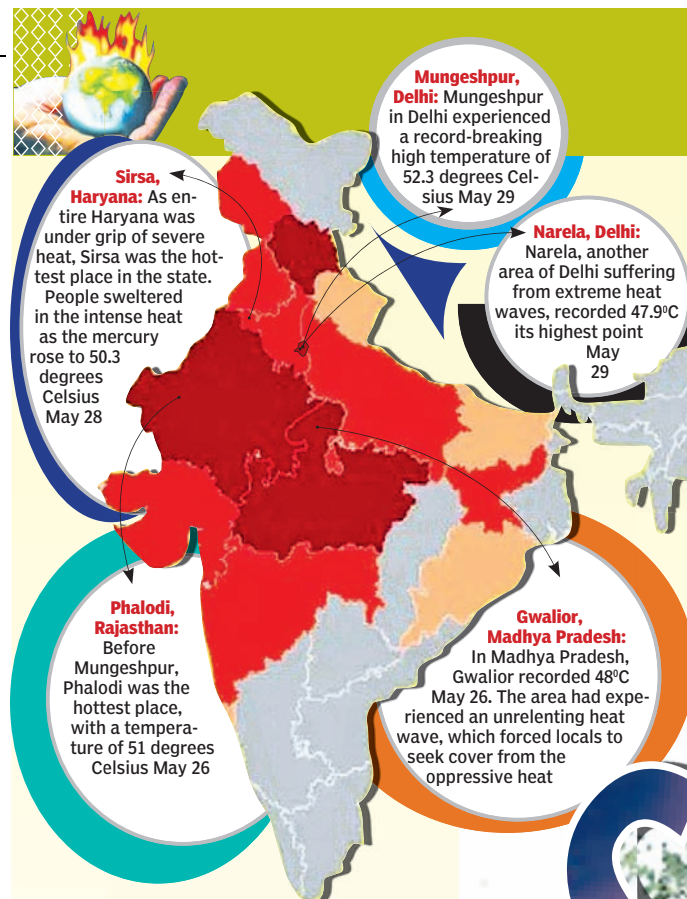
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The world has been warming up quickly over the past 100 years, or so. As a result, weather patterns are changing affecting millions of lives globally. The reason behind this is climate change – a long-term shift in the Earth's average temperatures and weather conditions. This level of warming and human-induced climate change has fuelled a series of extreme weather events worldwide, making them more likely and intense. The events include January's severe cold wave, the scorching heatwaves in the pre-monsoon season, and the extreme rains and landslides. Already, there has been the bleaching of coral reefs; the sea ice volume in the Arctic has been reaching new lows. The year 2024 ended up as the world's hottest on record. It is critical for climate action to go much further, much faster but nations and global climatic organisations have failed miserably to limit carbon emissions. Billed as the "finance Cop", the 29th UN climate change summit (COP29) in Baku, Azerbaijan, was a collective failure to provide the investment needed to shift the world away from impacts of climate change

CLIMATE ON BRINK

Warmest year on record, breaching the 1.5°C limit

Climatologists are virtually certain that 2024 will end as Earth's hottest year on record, according to the European climate change service Copernicus. Not only will it be the hottest year, but the planet will likely reach another critical milestone: the first year Earth has warmed 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, which world leaders and scientists hoped to avoid surpassing under the Paris Agreement. "Contrary to our expectations, globally 2024 is likely going to be even hotter than 2023 was," said Randall Cerveny, a rapporteur on extreme weather records for the United Nations World Meteorological Organization and professor of geographical sciences at Arizona State University. November ended as the second-hottest November ever recorded. With preliminary data from January through November, climatologists can confidently say this year will be hotter overall than last. All of the 10 hottest years globally have occurred in the last decade, according to scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA. The year-to-date global average temperature anomaly is 0.73 degrees higher than the 1991-2020 average, the highest degree of variation on record for that period. That number is 0.14 degrees warmer than the same period in 2023.



The absence of active western disturbances, mainly during the June 10 to June 19 period, was also a reason for the longer dry spell and heatwave prevailing over northwest and central India. Mohapatra said only three western disturbances against a normal of four to five, were observed across north India (June 5-10, June 19-25 and June 26-28). India recorded more than 40,000 suspected heatstroke cases and over 360 heat-related deaths in one of its hottest and longest heatwaves. The intense heat overwhelmed the water supply system and power grids, with Delhi grappling with a severe water crisis.

India has seen 10,635 deaths due to heat or sunstroke in the 10-year period of 2013-2022, according to data given in Lok Sabha by the minister July 25, 2024

Around 40 per cent of the country recorded double the number of heatwave days than usual during the April-to-June period

India recorded more than 40,000 suspected heatstroke cases and over 360 heat-related deaths in one of its hottest and longest heatwaves

According to the IMD, around 40 per cent of the country recorded double the number of heatwave days than usual during the April-to-June period. In contrast, 20 to 38 heatwave days were recorded in different parts of east, north and central India, including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and Gujarat.



Irreversible climate catastrophe looms

The Earth has entered a "critical and unpredictable new phase of the climate crisis," with 25 out of 35 planetary vital signs reaching extreme levels, warned a new climate report published in the journal Bioscience. Some of these planetary vital signs include human population growth, ruminant livestock numbers, per capita meat production, global gross domestic product and coal and oil consumption. Human and livestock populations have been rising at alarming rates, increasing by approximately 200,000 and 170,000 per day, respectively, noted the paper, "The 2024 State of the Climate Report: Perilous

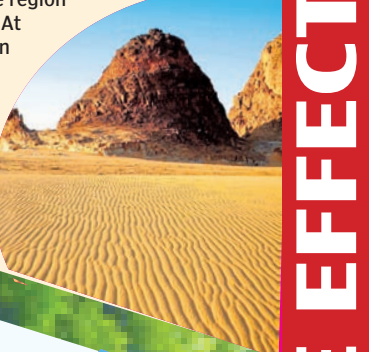


- OCEAN EXTREMES
- UNPRECEDENTED ACIDITY
- MARINE DEATHS
- GLACIER MELTDOWN
- ORANGE STREAMS
- TOXIC METALS
- PERMAFROST THAW

Times on Planet Earth'. Fossil fuel consumption has also surged, with coal and oil use increasing by 1.5 per cent in 2023. Although renewable energy witnessed some growth during the year, fossil fuel consumption remains approximately 14 times higher than that of solar and wind energy. Global tree cover loss also escalated, rising from 22.8 mega hectares (Mha) annually in 2022 to 28.3 Mha in 2023, marking the third-highest rate on record. Wildfires alone caused a record loss of 11.9 Mha of tree cover.

33% of Sicily turning into desert

Sicily's worst drought on record in August - and climate experts say a third of the Italian island could become desert by 2030. Every month this year has set a new heat record for Sicily and at the same time there's been 40 percent less rainfall. Christian Mulder, a professor of ecology and climate change at Catania University, told CGTN that 87 percent of water in the entire region of Sicily has already been lost. "At least one third of Sicily, the western part, will really look like Tunisia," he said. "It's becoming a desert." Dams are critically low and Sicily's last source of natural water, Lake Pergusa, has also dried up.



77% of Earth now drier in last 30 years

Over 77 per cent of Earth's land experienced a drier climate during the three decades leading up to 2020, compared to the previous 30-year period, according to a report released by the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Monday. During the same period, global drylands expanded by approximately 4.3 million square kilometres an area nearly a third larger than India now covering more than 40 per cent of the

Earth's land. The report, launched at the 16th conference of the UNCCD in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, warned that if efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions fail,

Droughts end. When an area's climate becomes drier, however, the ability to return to previous conditions is lost. The drier climates now affecting vast areas across the globe will not return to how they were, and this change is redefining life on Earth

IBRAHIM THIAW | UNCCD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

another 3 per cent of the world's humid areas are projected to transform into drylands by the end of this century. Meanwhile, the number of people living in drylands has doubled to 2.3 billion over the past three decades. Models suggest that as many as 5 billion could inhabit drylands by 2100 in a worst-case climate change scenario. These billions of people face even greater threats to their lives and livelihoods from climate-related increases in aridification and desertification, the report said. Areas particularly hard-hit by the drying trend include around 96 per cent of Europe, parts of the western US, Brazil, Asia, and central Africa. South Sudan and Tanzania have the largest percentage of land transitioning to drylands, with China experiencing the largest total area shifting from non-drylands to drylands, the report said.



Blazing chaos grips 2024

The year 2024 saw contrasting wildfire activity across the globe. Droughts and heatwaves, which are becoming more frequent and intense as global temperatures rise, contribute to increased flammability of landscapes and likelihood of large-scale wildfires in some parts of the world. North and South America were the most affected continents according to the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS) data, going back to 2003. Bolivia recorded its highest wildfire carbon emissions in CAMS Global Fire Assimilation System (GFAS) dataset by a huge margin, and Venezuela also saw the highest annual wildfire emissions. In North America, areas of the western United States and Canada were most affected with the first significant fires starting already in March. Europe had a relatively average season except for Portugal, some countries of Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The Arctic emissions of 2024 ranked in the Top 5 of the 22-year dataset. CAMS data also reflected an intensification of the bushfire season across northern Australia during October and November, slightly above average for the period in terms of fire radiative power in November, but with the overall emissions relatively within the average of the GFAS dataset.



Sahara sees first floods in 50 years

The Sahara does experience rain, but usually just a few inches a year and rarely in late summer. Over two days in September, however, intense rain fell in parts of the desert in southeast Morocco, after a low pressure system pushed across northwestern Sahara. Preliminary NASA satellite data showed nearly 8 inches of rain in some parts of the region. Errachidia, a desert city in southeast Morocco, recorded nearly 3 inches of rainfall, most of it across just two days in September. "It's been 30 to 50 years since we've had this much rain in such a short space of time," said Houssine Youabeb of Morocco's General Directorate of Meteorology. That's more than four times the normal rainfall for the whole month of September, and equates to more than half a year's worth for this area. While much of the rain fell on sparsely-populated remote areas, some fell on Morocco's towns and villages causing deadly flooding, which killed more than 20 dead and damaged farmers' harvests, forcing the government to allocate emergency relief funds.



Rare snowfall in Saudi Arabia

A rare and disruptive weather event has struck Saudi Arabia's Al-Jawf region, where an unexpected snowfall, triggered by heavy rain and hail, has shocked locals and experts alike. For the first time, the usually dry and parched mountains were covered in snow after storms swept through the area starting 6th Nov. This dramatic shift has left the region's landscape barely recognisable, with rivers, valleys, and streams—usually dry—now flowing once again. However, the rare snowfall has not been without its consequences. Strong thunderstorms, gusty winds, and hailstorms are predicted to continue, potentially causing travel delays, poor visibility, and further disruptions to daily life. The cause of the unusual weather is linked to a low-pressure system over the Arabian Sea, which brought in moisture-rich air that collided with the region's extreme desert heat, sparking the chaotic storms.



CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS

national



If the Congress continues spreading lies, by 2029, it will be completely finished

NAYAB SINGH SAINI | HARYANA CM

MOTHER, SON BURNT ALIVE

A tragic fire incident claimed the lives of a mother and her 12-year-old son in Jilimtant village, Dumri block, Giridih district, Jharkhand, the police said.



Parl panel to have 39 members

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Decks were cleared for setting up a mega 39-member parliamentary panel to examine the two Bills proposing simultaneous elections with the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha adopting resolutions in this regard.

The government decided to increase the Committee's strength from 31 to 39 as more political parties expressed the desire to be part of the exercise to examine the two draft legislations that seek to fulfill the BJP's long-cherished promise of holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies.

BJP leader and Lok Sabha member Bhratruhari Mahtab is tipped to be the chairman of the Joint Committee on the 'One Nation One Election' (ONOE) bills with former union ministers Anurag Thakur, Parshotam Rupala, P P Chaudhary, Manish Tewari and several first term lawmakers, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Bansuri Swaraj and Sambit Patra, as members.

The Joint Committee to examine the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill will have 37 members from the Lok Sabha and 12 members



from the Rajya Sabha.

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal moved the resolutions in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha separately amid protests by the Opposition on certain parts of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks on B R Ambedkar.

The two 'one nation, one election' (ONOE) bills, including one requiring an amendment in the Constitution, lay down the mechanism to hold simultaneous elections and were introduced in the Lok Sabha Tuesday after a fiery debate.

"The government agreed that the matter is very important and it relates to the reformation of the election process of our country, so we agreed to include most of the prominent political parties," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju

told reporters here.

Among the 39 members of the Committee, 16 are from the BJP, five from the Congress, two each from SP, TMC and DMK, and one each from the Shiv Sena, TDP, JD(U), RLD, LJSP(RV), JSP, Shiv Sena-UBT, NCP-SP, CPI(M), AAP, BJD and YSRCP. The NDA has 22 members and 15 are from the opposition INDIA bloc. The BJD and the YSRCP are not members of the ruling or the Opposition coalition. The BJD is yet to spell out its stand on simultaneous polls, while the YSRCP has backed the move.

As per the resolution moved by Meghwal, the Committee has been asked to submit its report to the Lok Sabha by the first day of the last week of the next session. However, considering the importance of the measure, the Committee could get extension in tenure as required.

Ex-CJI refutes rumours on NHRC chairmanship

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Former chief justice of India D Y Chandrachud Friday said media reports of him being considered for the National Human Rights Commission chairperson's post were "untrue".

"This is untrue. Presently, I am enjoying my retired life," country's 50th CJI, who demitted office November 10, told PTI. The post of NHRC chairperson is lying vacant since former Supreme Court judge Justice (retd) Arun Kumar Mishra completed his tenure June 1. On December 18, a high-powered committee led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a meeting to select the next chairperson of NHRC, sources had said.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party leader Rahul Gandhi attended the meeting as leaders of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha respectively, they had said.

Delhi Cong, Youth Cong hold protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Delhi Youth Congress held a protest here Friday over the FIR against Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and detention of Indian Youth Congress president Uday Bhanu Chib in Assam.

Delhi Congress workers also protested against Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his remarks on Baba Saheb Ambedkar. Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav said the Congress workers came out on the

streets in thousands, along with local residents, to hold demonstrations in all the 14 districts to protest against Shah's insulting remarks on Ambedkar and demanded an apology and his resignation. Shah's disparaging remarks on Ambedkar was an insult on the people of India who revere Ambedkar for his unparalleled contribution in framing the Constitution and the uplift of the backwards, he added.

The protest by Delhi Youth Congress took place outside the Youth Congress office here,

where the Delhi Police stopped everyone by barricading.

Several Youth Congress workers joined the protest under the leadership of Delhi Youth Congress president Akshay Lakra. They burnt Shah's effigy and demanded his resignation over his remarks on Ambedkar in the Rajya Sabha. They also raised slogans against the Central government. Delhi Police Thursday registered an FIR against Gandhi accusing him of "physical assault and incitement" during a scuffle in Parliament premises.



Bank of India POSSESSION NOTICE. Whereby, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of India, Gopalpur 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.

SNIPPETS

K'taka HC grants interim bail to BJP MLC CT Ravi

Bangalore: In a big relief to BJP MLC CT Ravi, who was arrested on charges of using a derogatory word against Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar, the Karnataka High Court Friday passed an interim order for his release. The bench of Justice M G Uma said that Ravi should co-operate with the investigation and be available for questioning. Ravi allegedly used a derogatory word against Hebbalkar in the Legislative Council Thursday during an altercation between them, when the House was adjourned for a while. He was arrested Thursday evening and taken into the police van from the premises of Suvarna Vidhana Soudha.

Big crowds at Meerut 'Shiv katha', some women injured

Meerut (UP): Surging crowds at the entry gate of a congregation of a religious leader Friday led to some women being injured. Hundreds of people had gathered at the spot being addressed by preacher Pradip Mishra who recites the 'Shiv katha'. As news of the incident spread with some people terming it a stampede, police and district administration officials denied this was so. "Some women present at the event fell and sustained minor injuries," Senior Superintendent of Police Vipin Tada told PTI. He added that police present at the spot picked them up and provided them first aid. Denying reports that some people had been trapped, Meena told reporters that the entire situation was under control.

Insult of Marathi people will not be tolerated: Govt

Nagpur/Thane: The alleged attack on a Marathi-speaking family by a government servant in Maharashtra's Thane district Friday in the state legislature in Nagpur where the BJP-led Mahayuti dispensation asserted "insult" of Marathi people will not be tolerated. The Opposition vociferously raised the issue of the December 18 assault on two members of a Marathi family by the state government employee and his wife, who are neighbours of the victims, following a dispute in Kalyan town, while the Thane police said the male accused, Akhilesh Shukla, has surrendered.

Several schools in Delhi receive bombthreat mail

New Delhi: Several Delhi schools received bomb-threat emails Friday, making it the sixth such incident in the last 11 days, officials said. Security personnel conducted search operations at the schools, but nothing suspicious was found, an official said. "We received a call regarding the bomb threat at 5:02 am from DPS, Dwarka, in Sector 23," the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) official said Friday. Police, the fire department, bomb detection teams, and the dog squad participated in the search operation, but nothing was found so far, another official said. Around five schools in Dwarka, along with some in other districts, received similar emails, the official said.

Closely following situation of Indian workers in Libya: MEA

New Delhi: The Indian Embassy in Tripoli is "closely following" the situation of a batch of Indian workers in Libya who had travelled to that country without proper documents, and working to facilitate their return, the Ministry of External Affairs said Friday. MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters that the Indian Embassy is in touch with Libyan authorities to arrange for the exit permit of the workers at a cement company in Libya. "These Indian workers had reached Benghazi via Dubai. They had gone there but did not have proper documents. When they landed, there were some issues regarding their work... we came to know of these difficulties... our Embassy in Tripoli is active. We reached out to our workers... through our community there," Jaiswal said during his weekly briefing.

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Place: KORAPUT Date: 21.12.2024 AUTHORISED SIGNATORY IIFL FINANCE LIMITED

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Place: KALAHANDI Date: 21.12.2024 AUTHORISED SIGNATORY IIFL FINANCE LIMITED

IIFL FINANCE CIN: L67100MH1995PLC093797 Regd. Office: IIFL House, Sun Infotech Park, Road No. 16V, Plot No. B-23, Thane Industrial Area, Wagle Estate, Thane - 400604

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international

40mn at risk of food crisis: UN

The World Food Programme said 3.4 million people are currently facing 'emergency levels of hunger' in the region, representing a 70 per cent increase in such cases since the summer



We need timely, flexible, and predictable funding to reach crisis-affected people with lifesaving assistance, and massive investments in preparedness, anticipatory action and resilience-building to empower communities and reduce humanitarian needs

Severe climate shocks, conflict, displacement and economic instability are driving food insecurity, with emergency levels of hunger soaring

Dakar (Senegal), Dec 20: More than 40 million people are now struggling to feed themselves across West and Central Africa with that number set to rise to 52 million by the middle of next year, the United Nations food agency said Friday.

According to a new report released Friday, the World Food Programme said 3.4 million people are currently facing "emergency levels of hunger" in the region, representing a 70 per cent increase in such cases since the summer.

The report said conflict, displacement, economic instability and severe climate shocks are driving food insecurity. The ongoing conflict in the Sahel, as well as the Sudanese civil war, have forcibly displaced over 10 million people across the region. Massive flooding in Nigeria and Chad earlier this year has made the situation acute.

Although the numbers are staggering, the new report reduces last year's estimate of the number of people facing food insecurity by 7.7 million. The WFP attributes the drop to better-than-average rainfall and marginal security improvements, which are unlikely to continue improving.

Still, the WFP report says food insecurity will next year touch nearly one in 10 people in West and Central Africa that the World Bank estimates is home to over half a billion people.

Margot van der Velden, WFP's regional director for Western Africa, said the "vicious cycle of hunger" in the region can be broken with better planning and preparedness.

"We need timely, flexible, and predictable funding to reach crisis-affected people with lifesaving assistance, and massive investments in preparedness, anticipatory action and resilience-building to empower communities and reduce humanitarian needs," said Van der Velden.

Ex-IMF chief Rato faces new trial

Madrid: A Madrid court has sentenced former International Monetary Fund chief Rodrigo Rato to almost five years in prison for various crimes related to corruption, the court said Friday. Rato, who had already spent two years in prison over a separate embezzlement case during his tenure as chairman of Spanish lender Bankia, has denied any wrongdoing throughout the nine-year probe.

Package of new arms for Ukraine

Washington: The Biden administration will announce in the coming days its final Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative package, using up the remaining funds set aside to buy new weapons for Ukraine, according to two sources familiar with the matter. The package includes air defense interceptors and artillery munitions, according to a third source, but the exact contents are expected when the package is announced in the coming days.

8 dead, 18 rescued as speedboat capsizes

Athens: A speedboat carrying migrants capsized Friday morning off the eastern Greek island of Rhodes, leaving eight dead, Greek authorities said. The coast guard said the incident occurred while the speedboat was carrying out "dangerous maneuvers" to try and evade a patrol vessel, causing migrants to fall into the sea.

US shutdown looms after Trump-backed bill fails

More than three dozen Republicans rejected a demand by President-elect Donald Trump to use the measure to lift the nation's debt ceiling



REUTERS

Washington, Dec 20: The US Congress was scrambling to avert a partial government shutdown Friday, hours after more than three dozen Republicans rejected a demand by President-elect Donald Trump to use the measure to lift the nation's debt ceiling.

Republican House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson was trying to plot a course that could pass both his chamber, with narrow Republican control, and the Democratic-majority Senate, as a midnight Friday (0500 GMT Saturday) funding deadline loomed.

"We have a plan," Johnson told reporters at the Capitol Friday. "We're expecting votes this morning." Conservative Republicans Thursday rejected

Trump's demand to lift the debt limit, which could add trillions more to the government's \$36 trillion in debt. Trump, who takes office in one month, overnight ratcheted up his rhetoric, calling for a five-year suspension of the US debt ceiling even after members of his party's right flank balked at an earlier two-year extension.

"Congress must get rid of, or extend out to, perhaps, 2029, the ridiculous Debt Ceiling. Without this, we should never make a deal," Trump wrote in a post on his social media platform shortly after 1 a.m. An earlier bipartisan deal was scuttled after Trump and his ally Elon Musk, the world's richest person, came out against it Wednesday. A hastily revised alternative backed by Trump then failed by a vote

of 174-235 Thursday night. That revised measure generally would keep the roughly \$6.2 trillion federal budget running at its current level through March and provided \$100 billion in disaster relief. But it dropped other measures included to appease Democrats, who still control the U.S. Senate and the White House for four more weeks.

Mysterious 'Dinga Dinga' virus outbreak in Uganda

Uganda: A mysterious illness locally called 'Dinga Dinga', meaning 'shaking like dancing', has affected around 300 people, mostly women and girls, in Uganda's Bundibugyo district. The condition is marked by fever and uncontrollable body shaking, severely impairing mobility, according to news agency IANS. Those who are infected by the 'Dinga Dinga' virus are reporting a range of symptoms which involve body shaking along with fever, and extreme weakness. In severe cases, people are also experiencing paralysis. As per local media, walking is difficult for those infected as their body trembles uncontrollably. Health officials in Uganda are investigating the mystery illness and what is causing it. No fatalities have been reported.

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GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES Office of the Addl. Chief Engineer, Mechanical Circle, Bhubaneswar. Email Address: semechcircle104@gmail.com. No.A-762 Bid Identification No.-ACEM/MDC-16/2024-25

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES Office of the Addl. Chief Engineer, Mechanical Circle, Bhubaneswar. Email Address: semechcircle104@gmail.com. No.A-752 Bid Identification No.-ACEM/MDL-09/2024-25

Business



Policy priority at this critical juncture has to be on restoring the inflation growth balance. The fundamental requirement now is to bring down inflation and align it with the target

HONDA CARS TO GET DEARER

Honda Cars India Friday said it will hike prices across its model range by up to 2 per cent from January next year, in order to partially offset the impact of rising input costs.



BEARS TIGHTEN GRIP

INVESTORS LOSE WEALTH

₹18.43L-cr wiped off in 5 days of market crash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Equity investors became poorer by Rs 18.43 lakh crore in five days of market crash as the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 4,091 points, amid unabated foreign fund outflows and weak global trends.

In the past five trading days, the BSE benchmark has tanked 4,091.53 points, or 4.98 per cent.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded Rs 18,43,121.27 crore to Rs 4,40,99,217.32 crore (\$5.18 trillion) in the last five days.

On Friday, the 30-share BSE benchmark tumbled 1,176.46 points, or 1.49 per cent, to settle at 78,041.59. During the day, it slumped 1,343.46 points, or 1.69 per cent to 77,874.59. The NSE Nifty tanked 364.20 points or 1.52 per cent to 23,587.50.

"Nervousness continued to grip investors and stocks across-the-board went into a tailspin as the dollar's continuing strength against the



- BSE tumbled 1,176.46 points, or 1.49%, to settle at 78,041.59
● In past five trading days, BSE has tanked 4,091.53 points, or 4.98%
● NSE tanked 364.20 points or 1.52% to end session at 23,587.50

rupee has been prompting foreign investors to flee local equities and take shelter in safe haven dollar assets," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the 30 blue-chip Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra & Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Tata Motors, State Bank of India, Tata

Consultancy Services, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement and Reliance Industries were the biggest laggards.

In contrast, Nestle and Titan were the gainers.

"Disappointment regarding the slower-than-anticipated rate cuts by the US Fed has adversely affected global market sentiment. This bearish outlook is particularly impacting the domestic market, which is already contending with high valuations & low earnings growth. The sell-off has been widespread, with significant declines in mid- and small-cap stocks, where valuations premiumisation is at historical peak," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower.

Equity markets in Europe were trading in the negative territory. Wall Street ended on a mixed note Thursday.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,224.92 crore Thursday, according to exchange data.

Forex kitty drops \$2bn to \$652.86bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 20: India's forex reserves dropped by \$1.988 billion to \$652.869 billion for the week ended December 13, the RBI said Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had dropped by \$3.235 billion to \$654.857 billion.

The reserves have been declining for the last few weeks, and the drop has been attributed to revaluation, along with forex market interventions by the RBI to help reduce volatilities in the rupee. The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of \$704.885 billion in September.

For the week ended December 13,

foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$3.047 billion to \$562.576 billion, the data released Friday showed. Expressed in US dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves

UCO BANK ZONAL OFFICE: C-2, Ashok Nagar, Unit-II, Bhubaneswar, PIN-751009, Ph.: 0674-2620423 POSSESSION NOTICE (Under Section 13(4) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for Immovable Property)

CCI approves over ₹7K-crore UltraTech-India Cements deal

Indian cement industry is witnessing a consolidation and heightened rivalry between two corporate houses -- Kumar Mangalam Birla-led Aditya Birla Group and Gautam Adani-led Adani Group -- snapping smaller players

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) Friday cleared over Rs 7,000-crore deal, wherein billionaire Kumar Mangalam Birla-promoted UltraTech Cement will acquire a majority stake in India Cements Ltd.

The key approval comes less than two weeks after the regulator had issued a show cause notice to UltraTech seeking clarification on the proposed deal, that will help consolidate its market lead amid rising competition posed by Adani group, which is scaling up capacity with acquisitions.

"The proposed combination envisages UltraTech Cement Ltd's (UltraTech/acquirer) acquisition of 32.72 per cent of the paid-up equity share capital of India Cements Ltd (India Cements/target) from the promoters and members of the promoter group of India Cements and Sri Saradha Logistics Pvt Ltd," CCI said in a release.

The fair trade regulator also granted its clearance to UltraTech Cement to acquire up to 26 per cent of the paid-up equity share capital of India Cements by way of an open offer, it added.

On July 28, UltraTech Cement had announced the acquisition of a 32.72 per cent stake in India Cements Ltd (ICL) from promoters and their associates in a Rs 3,954-crore deal, which will expand its footprint in the highly competitive and fast-growing southern cement market.

Steel imports from China skyrocket

The flood of cheap Chinese steel has pushed India's smaller mills to scale down operations and consider job cuts, as New Delhi joins a growing list of countries contemplating measures to curb imports

REUTERS

New Delhi, Dec 20: India's finished steel imports from China reached an all-time high during the first eight months of the fiscal year to March 2025, provisional government data showed, adding to concerns among domestic mills about cheap shipments from China.

Total imports of finished steel were at an eight-year high with India, the world's second-biggest crude steel producer, a net importer during the period.

India shipped in 6.5 million metric tons of finished steel, a 26.6% increase year-on-year, the data showed.

China sent 1.96 million metric tons of steel to India during April-November, up 22.8% year-on-year, the data showed. Finished steel imports from Japan also reached at least a six-year high during April-November, with imports more than doubling to 1.4 million metric tons, according to the data.

China, Japan and South Korea accounted for 79% of India's total finished steel imports during the period. Hot-rolled coils were the most imported steel product during the period, while bars and rods topped imports in the non-flat product category.

New Delhi has launched a probe to determine whether to impose a safeguard duty - a temporary tax - up to 25% to curb unbridled steel imports.

India became a net steel importer in the financial year that ended in March 2024, and imports have steadily increased since then.

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The Auction shall be conducted on "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS" and "WHATSOEVER THERE IS" basis and IIFL does not make any representation or warranties regarding quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments. IIFL, at its absolute sole discretion, may either postpone or remove, any of accounts from auction list and any proceedings without prior notice and without assigning any reason therefor and to reject any or all the bids or offers without assigning any reason for the same.

For detailed information, terms and conditions, contact the concerned branch office of IIFL Finance Limited. Place: BALANGIR Date: 21.12.2024

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Shaw his own enemy: MCA

Mumbai Cricket Association dismisses Shaw's outburst over Vijay Hazare Trophy snub

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 20: The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) has brushed aside Prithvi Shaw's emotional outburst after his exclusion from the Vijay Hazare Trophy squad, asserting that the temperamental batter has flouted disciplinary norms regularly and is "his own enemy".

A senior official of the MCA, while talking to PTI, claimed that the side was at times "forced to hide" him on the field due to his poor fitness, discipline and attitude.

Shaw had expressed his frustration at not being picked in the 16-member squad for the Vijay Hazare Trophy in a viral social media post some days ago after being a part of the side's title-winning Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy campaign.

"In the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, we were playing with 10 fielders as we were forced to hide Prithvi Shaw. The ball would pass near him and he would barely be able to get to it," the official said on conditions of anonymity.

"Even while batting, we could see he was troubled reaching to the ball. His fitness, discipline and attitude are poor and it is pretty simple, there cannot be different rules for different players," he claimed.

"Even the seniors in the team have started complaining about his attitude now," he added.

Shaw, who has attracted a lot of attention for his off-field activities and not doing his talent justice by focussing on his game, would not get any favour from such social media posts, the official said.

"You would be wrong to think such posts on social media would have any impact on



the Mumbai selectors and the MCA," he added.

Shaw's teammate and Mumbai captain Shreyas Iyer too had issued a stern statement on the night Mumbai defeated Madhya Pradesh in the final to win the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

"He needs to get his work ethics right. And if he does that, (the) sky's the limit for him," Iyer told reporters in Bangalore.

"We can't babysit anyone, right? He has played so much of cricket. Everyone has given him inputs. At the end of the day, it's his job to figure out things for himself. And he has also done it in the past. It's not that he hasn't," he added.

Shaw was earlier left out of Mumbai's Ranji Trophy squad for similar reasons in October after which he was given a specific fitness program to work on

During the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, Shaw missed training sessions regularly after showing up at the team hotel at "six in the morning" being out for most of the night

at the MCA Academy.

"He is not following that to work properly," the official said.

Shaw broke into the scene amid a lot of hype, making his Test debut in 2018 as an 18-year-old in a home series against the West Indies.

His lone century in the format was on that exciting debut but since then, he has appeared in just four more Tests, the last

of these being against Australia four years ago.

His ODI and T20 International career has also failed to take off and he hasn't played any white-ball cricket for India since 2021. These are markedly underwhelming statistics for a player, who was touted as the next big thing in Indian cricket just a few years ago.

Several former players have expressed their concern about his antics and attitude both on and off the field. A recent low for him was failing to find any takers in the IPL auction despite coming in with a relatively low base price of ₹75 lakh.

"I'll tell you one thing. No one is Shaw's enemy. He is his own enemy," the MCA official stated, voicing the frustration that the cricket fraternity in India has felt over him not living up to the early promise.

BORDER-GAVASKAR TROPHY

Teenage sensation Konstas called up for Boxing Day Test

The 19-year-old is set to become Australia's youngest Test batting debutant in over 70 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, Dec 20: Teenage sensation Sam Konstas was handed a maiden call up as Australia Friday dropped rookie opener Nathan McSweeney for the final two Test matches of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India.

If Konstas, who turned 19 October 2, is selected in the playing XI in the Boxing Day Test, he would become Australia's youngest Test debutant since captain Pat Cummins, who was 18 years and 193 days old when he made his debut against South Africa in Johannesburg in 2011.

The teenager would also become the youngest specialist batter to debut for Australia since Ian Craig when he played against South Africa at the MCG in 1953 aged 17 years 239 days.

Konstas' inclusion follows a series of disappointing performances from the Australian top order in the first three Tests especially McSweeney.

The 25-year-old, who made his Test debut in the series-opener in Perth, failed to score a single half century and could only manage scores of 10, 0, 39, 10 not out, 9 and 4 in his six innings and was dismissed by Indian pace Jasprit Bumrah spearhead four times.

Konstas had been in the reckoning to partner experienced Usman Khawaja after grabbing the attention of Cricket Australia's selection committee following his twin Sheffield Shield



Sam gets a call up to the Test squad for the first time. His style of batting offers a point of difference and we look forward to watching his game develop further

GEORGE BAILEY | AUSTRALIAN CHAIR OF SELECTORS

centuries for New South Wales.

He had scored an unbeaten 73 at the MCG against India A while notching up a ton (107) in the Prime Ministers XI pink ball game against India in Canberra.

"Sam gets a call up to the Test squad for the first time. His style of batting offers a point of difference and we look forward to watching his game develop further," Australian Chair of Selectors George Bailey said.

"We remain confident Nathan has the ability and temperament to succeed at Test level in the future. It was a difficult decision to leave him out. It has clearly been a challenge at

the top of the order for batters throughout the series and we want to provide the option of a different line up for the next two matches," he added.

Konstas' inclusion follows a warning from former pacer Merv Hughes, who cautioned selectors against making any changes to the batting lineup for the Boxing Day Test.

The former selector said it would have been a "panic call" move from Australia to add Konstas in the squad.

"Now it would almost be a panic call to me... Just stay calm. They drew the last Test. The last two Tests have been a draw and a win, so what is there to panic about," Hughes had told 'The Courier Mail'.

Konstas had said earlier this week, "It would be a dream come true (playing the Boxing Day Test)." "Maybe I'd get a little nervous before the game, but I've worked really hard for that. Hopefully, it happens one day, but we'll see."

SHORT TAKES

Avani stays in top-20

Marrakech: Avani Prashanth stayed in the top-20 to keep alive her hopes of the Category 12 Ladies European Tour card as she shot 2-under 71 in the Final Qualifiers, here. Avani, whose four rounds have been 69-69-73-71 is 8-under and Tied-13th as the top-20 get the Category 12 status for 2025. The next best Indians are Amandeep Drall (70-71-72-72) and Sneha Singh (73-70-72-70) who are both at 5-under. Among other Indians in the Final Qualifiers, Hitaashee Bakshi, who began the Qualifiers slowly with 76-77 continued her fight back as she shot 67-68 in the next two rounds to make the subsequent cuts and will have a further chance to improve from her current T-51st place.

Pakistan bag ODI series

Cape Town: Pakistan won a second straight major one-day international series away from home when it beat South Africa by 81 runs at Newlands. After beating Australia 2-1 last month, Pakistan has taken the Proteas 2-0 with a game to spare. Half-centuries by Babar Azam, captain Mohammad Rizwan and allrounder Kamran Ghulam staked Pakistan to 329 all out. Heinrich Klaasen hit 97 but South Africa's chase was strangled by Pakistan, and fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi ended the last meaningful resistance with three wickets in three overs. Klaasen was the last man out on 248 in the 44th over. Pakistan's fifth successive bilateral ODI series win puts it in good stead for the Champions Trophy it will host in February.

Totten beat Man United

London: Son Heung-min scored a spectacular goal directly from a corner to fire Tottenham into the English League Cup semifinals in a thrilling 4-3 win over Manchester United. Spurs will play Premier League leader Liverpool for a place in the final, and Arsenal was drawn against Newcastle in the other last-four match. Son's strike in the 88th-minute at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium came as Spurs tried to hold off a dramatic comeback from United, having led 3-0 in the second half. United had pulled it back to 3-2 and was pushing for an equalizer when Son whipped in a curling right-footed shot past goalkeeper Altay Bayindir.

'Trying our best to resolve IOA issue'

The ongoing tussle is not portraying the right image of the country before the International Olympic Committee as India seeks to host the Summer Games and Paralympic Games in 2036

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: The government is trying its best to resolve the differences in the Indian Olympic Association in order to ensure a strong and successful bid for the 2036 Olympic Games, said Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Raksha Nikhil Khadse here Friday.

IOA president PT Usha has been engaged in a raging fight with 12 EC members who have refused to ratify the appointment of Raghuram Iyer as the IOA CEO made by her in January.

India has submitted a 'Letter of Intent', expressing its desire to host the Games, to the IOC's Future Host Commission, taking the first concrete step in an ambitious plan after months of informal dialogue with the in-



ternational body.

"I think everyone is trying to work together and we are trying our best to resolve the issues of IOA. The ministry is trying hard to solve all the differences and issues so that our target of hosting a big event in India is fulfilled," the junior Sports Minister said.

"For that we all need to work together. We need to take this (Olympic) bid forward on a positive note," she said.

With the submission of a 'Letter of Intent', India has progressed from "Informal Dialogue" to the "Continuous Dialogue" stage of the host election process.

In this stage, the IOC con-

ducts a "feasibility study" of the progress of projects associated with the Games in the aspiring host nations.

The next phase of the process would be "Targeted Dialogue", which would require the submission of an edition-specific formal bid, which would be assessed by the Future Host Commission.

The process will end with the host nation being selected. Khadse said the Narendra Modi-led government is committed to enhancing the profile of Indian sports and a successful 2036 Olympics bid will provide a big boost to the country.

SNIPPETS

Odisha weightlifter Sabar sets youth Asian record

Doha: Odisha's talented teenager Jyosha Sabar created a new youth Asian record for total lift on her way to winning the gold medal in the 40 kg weight category at Asian Youth Weightlifting Championships for boys and girls here Friday. Jyosha won the top prize in the 40kg youth girls category by heaving 135kg (60kg snatch + 75kg clean and jerk). Payal too claimed a gold medal, in the youth girls 45kg section with a total lift of 155kg (70 snatch + 85 clean and jerk). There was another Indian athlete named Payal, who won a bronze medal in the junior girls 45kg competition, finishing on the podium after managing a total lift of 155 (70 snatch + 85 clean and jerk), while Babulal Hembrom ended third in the 49kg youth boys section after lifting 197 (88 snatch + 109 clean and jerk).



Dhiraj, Deepika emerge national champions

Jamshedpur: Olympian duo of Dhiraj Bommadevara and Deepika Kumari overcame tough challenges from their respective opponents to emerge men's and women's recurve champions in the Archery Senior National here Friday. Representing Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB), Deepika, who has returned empty-handed from four Olympics, defeated her Paris Games teammate Ankita Bhakat 6-2 in the women's final. Kolkata's Ankita, who represents Jharkhand, took the second set as Deepika faltered but the seasoned archer regained her rhythm to seal the title.



Suruchi bags hat-trick of gold medals at Nationals

New Delhi: Young Haryana shooter Suruchi covered herself with glory, bagging a hat-trick of gold medals in women's 10m air pistol in the ongoing 67th National Shooting Championship here Friday. The daughter of an Army veteran from Hajaraj, Suruchi won her maiden senior national title with a score of 243.1 before adding the junior and youth titles as well at the Karni Singh range. Suruchi, who began shooting five years ago at the same range in Hajaraj as double Olympic bronze medalist Manu Bhaker, thus bettered the silver-medal effort she achieved in the previous Nationals.



Eyes on Chakravarthy as India hunt for wrist spinner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: With India set to play Champions Trophy in less than eight weeks' time, a quality wrist-spinner, a second wicketkeeper to back up Rishabh Pant and the form of key pacers will be in focus during the upcoming National One Day Championship for the Vijay Hazare Trophy starting Saturday across the country.

While the core of the 50-over team is vying for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia right now, the national showpiece has its own significance as some of the stars like Baroda all-rounder Hardik Pandya will get crucial game time.

Punjab's Arshdeep Singh, Madhya Pradesh's Avesh Khan, Rajasthan's Khaleel Ahmed, Bengal's Mukesh Kumar, UP's Yash Dayal would also want to be in the bowling pack, which will expectedly be led by Jasprit Bumrah if all goes well.

CHAMPIONS TROPHY



Search for wrist spinner

Kuldeep Yadav's long rehabilitation from a groin injury at the NCA (National Cricket Academy) might force the national selection committee to look for a potent option alongside Axar Patel and Washington Sundar, who could be automatic selections.

Chakravarthy and Gujarat's Ravi Bishnoi are two wrist spinners, who did exceedingly well in the T20 International series against South Africa.

While Bishnoi had played his solitary ODI back in 2022 against South Africa, Kuldeep's absence gives him a chance to stake claim in the 50-over set-up.

Chakravarthy had a second coming in international cricket with 17 wickets in his last seven T20Is and 12 of them in South Africa in batting-friendly conditions.

He is expected to start against Chandigarh in Visakhapatnam Saturday and although he has played only 17 List A matches but 41 wickets at an economy rate of 4.25 is admirable.

Googly bowler Bishnoi has played 25 List A Games with 36 scalps giving away 5.25 runs per over.

Is Iyer a certainty in 50-over format?

Can Shreyas Iyer, with an average of 47 plus across 62 ODIs, walk into the squad for the Champions Trophy?

Or he will be put under pressure by someone like Tilak Verma with a List A average of 52 plus and five hundreds in 29

games? In his last ODI innings in South Africa in 2023, Tilak scored 52.

Tilak's performances for Hyderabad will also be keenly watched by the selection committee and Iyer, after leading Mumbai to Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, won't mind a double.

Fringe pacers

If fit, then Mohammed Siraj also selects himself alongside Bumrah while one among Akash Deep and Harshit Rana can make it.

This leaves space for one or two more pacers and Arshdeep, Dayal, Mukesh will be trying to prove a point and make it to the final 15.

As far as Mohammed Shami is concerned, it seems that the focus has shifted to IPL. He will play Bengal's second match in Hyderabad and some good performances might get him back on selectors' radar.

India storm into U19 T20 Asia Cup final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, Dec 20: A rampaging India extended their unbeaten run at the U19 Women's T20 Asia Cup as they reached the final with a four-wicket win over Sri Lanka in their last Super Four contest here Friday.

Aayushi Shukla emerged the wrecker-in-chief with a four-wicket haul as the left-arm spinner conceded only 10 runs in her four overs to help India restrict Sri Lanka to 98 for nine after skipper Niki Prasad opted to bowl.

Parunika Sisodia, who also bowls left-arm spin, chipped in with two scalps.

Such was India's domination that only two Sri Lankan batters -- Sumudu Nisansala (21) and captain Manudi Nanayakkara (33) -- could manage double-digit scores.

The Lankan top-order fared poorly with Sanjana Kavindi (9) and Hiruni Hansika (2) staying together for a mere 12 balls.

A 22-run fifth-wicket stand between Nanayakkara and Nisansala was the best for the Lankans. They raised hopes of a rival but the latter's run out punctured all their hopes.



India did not have the best of starts with opener Ishwari Asware running herself out in the third ball of the chase without bothering the scorer.

Left-arm spinner Chamodi Praboda (3/16) led the Sri Lankan fightback by dismissing three Indian batters but opener G Kamalini (28) and Gongadi Trisha (32) ensured that the small run-chase was completed. Once they departed, Mithila Vinod, batting at number seven, carried the side home with her unbeaten 17-run cameo. India overhauled the target with 31 balls to spare.

India had thrashed Pakistan by nine wickets in their tournament-opener and then got the better of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka while the contest against Nepal did not yield any result.