

Ananya's observation

Actor Ananya Panday, rumoured to be dating former model Walker Blanco, says long-distance relationships can be healthy

LEISURE | P2



Cold kills infants

A fourth infant has died of hypothermia in the Gaza Strip, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced by nearly 15 months of war

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Adani to exit FMCG

Billionaire Gautam Adani's group to exit from FMCG joint venture Adani Wilmar by selling its entire stake to the Singaporean partner

BUSINESS | P11



Disappointing loss

India slump to a demoralising 184-run loss to Australia in the fourth Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy

SPORTS | P12

Deadline extended for reporting crop damage

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: The state government Monday announced extension of the deadline till January 1 for farmers to submit the report on crop damage due to unseasonal rains, and make claim for compensation.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi made the announcement after the state government's demand in this regard was accepted by the Centre.

He said farmers can now report and claim compensation over crop loss till midnight of January 1.

The initial deadline was December 29, which was later extended till December 30.

Majhi and other ministers had visited different rain-affected districts Sunday, following which the state government had requested the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Em-

powerment to extend time for the farmers to report crop loss.

"Keeping in view the interests of the farmers, the Central government has extended the time. Farmers can now inform the insurance companies about the crop loss till January 1, 2025," a statement issued by the CMO said.

Meanwhile, Majhi said the damage assessment report in the wake of the unseasonal rains between December 20 and December 28, will be released Tuesday.

The CM has also announced that farmers, those covered under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) and uninsured, will get assistance from the government, as there has been extensive damage to standing paddy crops.

It is also considering compensation for farmers growing cotton, vegetables, betel leaf and other cash crops, officials said.



UP IN ARMS: Farmers raise slogans as they block a road during the statewide 'bandh' called as part their ongoing protest, near Golden Gate in Amritsar, Monday

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

Please keep in mind, I do this to earn a living, not to bask in the limelight

Naidu richest CM, Mamata poorest

New Delhi, Dec 30: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is the richest chief minister in India with assets worth over Rs 931 crore, while West Bengal's Mamata Banerjee is the poorest with just Rs 15 lakh, according to an Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) report released Monday.

The report said the average asset per chief minister from state Assemblies and Union Territories is Rs 52.59 crore.

While India's per capita net national income or NNI was approximately Rs 1,85,854 for 2023-2024, the average self-income of a chief minister is Rs 13,64,310, around 7.3 times the average per capita income of India.

The total assets of 31 chief ministers are worth Rs 1,630 crores.

Arunachal Pradesh's Pema Khandu is the second richest chief minister with total assets worth over Rs 332 crores, Karnataka's Siddaramaiah is the third on the list with assets worth more than Rs 51 crore.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, with assets worth Rs 55 lakh, is the second poorest in the list and Pinarayi Vijayan is third with Rs 1.18 crore.

Out of the 31 chief ministers, only two are women - West Bengal's Mamata Banerjee and Delhi's Atishi.

Employed, in warzone

16K INDIANS IN ISRAEL REPLACE BARRED PALESTINIAN WORKERS

16,000 Indian construction workers have moved to Israel to replace Palestinian workers amid the raging war highlighting a troubling trend. The desperation among unemployed youth in India is soaring and many young people face limited opportunities in a job market overwhelmed by population, competition and a lack of infrastructure. In this context, even life-threatening situations, such as the perilous environment in the theatre of deadly war in Israel, are not deterrents. For these workers, the dire need for stable employment outweighs concerns for personal safety, driving them to seek work in war zones. Their willingness to work in Israel during a war exposes the depth of India's unemployment crisis and the growing desperation of its young labour force. A similar trend has been observed in Russia with young Indians joining the army in combat areas against Ukraine, costing them their life and limbs.

Tel Aviv, Dec 30: Wearing a safety belt, helmet and work boots, Raju Nishad navigates the scaffolding, hammering blocks that will form part of a building in a new neighbourhood in central Israel's town of Beer Yaakov.

While he and other Indians working alongside him do not look out of place on the expansive construction site, they are relative newcomers to Israel's building industry.

They are part of an Israeli government effort to fill a void left by tens of thousands of Palestinian construction workers barred from entering Israel since Hamas's unprecedented October 7, 2023 attack.

If that attack had not happened, this site, with its slowly emerging high-rise towers, homes, roads and pavements, would have teemed with labourers speaking Arabic - unlike the Hindi, Hebrew and



even Mandarin of today.

The Hamas attack triggered the deadliest war yet between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. It later spread to include other Iran-backed groups including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Houthis rebels in Yemen, and even direct confrontation with the Islamic republic itself.

None of this deterred Nishad, 35, from coming to Israel. "There's nothing to be afraid of here," he said, despite several air raid warnings that have sent

him running for the shelters. "Once it (the siren) stops, we just resume our work," he told AFP.

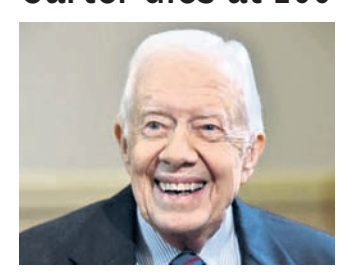
High earnings in Israel, where some workers can make three times what they would back home, are the key to why people like Nishad flock here, thousands of kilometres away.

"I'm saving for the future, planning to make wise investments and do something meaningful for my family," Nishad said. He is just one of around 16,000 workers who have come from India over the past year - and Israel has plans to bring thousands more.

India is the world's fifth-largest economy and one of the fastest growing, but it has also struggled to generate enough full-time jobs for millions of people.

Indians have been employed in Israel for decades, thousands as caregivers looking after elderly Israelis, while others work as diamond traders and IT professionals.

Ex-US prez Jimmy Carter dies at 100



Washington, Dec 30: Jimmy Carter, the 39th US president and the third American head to make a trip to India, during which a village in Haryana was named Carterpuri in his honour, has died peacefully at his home in Plains, Georgia surrounded by his family.

Carter, who died Sunday at 100, was the longest-lived president in US history.

"Today, America and the world lost an extraordinary leader, statesman and humanitarian," President Joe Biden said in a statement.

Carter is survived by his children - Jack, Chip, Jeff, and Amy; 11 grandchildren; and 14 great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his wife Rosalynn and one grandchild.

Carter, a Democrat who served a single term from 1977 to 1981, had been in home hospice care since February 2023 after a series of short hospital stays.

"He was a man of great character and courage, hope and optimism," said Biden and First Lady Dr Jill Biden.

President-elect Donald Trump said while he strongly disagreed with Carter philosophically and politically, he also realised that he truly loved and respected our country, and all it stands for.

Carter was considered a friend of India. He was the first American president to visit India after the removal of the emergency and victory of the Janata Party in 1977. In his address to the Indian parliament, Carter spoke against authoritarian rule.

"India's difficulties, which we often experience ourselves and which are typical of the problems faced in the developing world, remind us of the tasks that lie ahead. Not the Authoritarian Way," Carter said on January 2, 1978.

SHORT TAKES

Majhi to skip New Year celebrations

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday decided not to join any celebrations on the occasion of the New Year in the wake of the demise of former prime minister Manmohan Singh and crop loss by farmers due to unseasonal rains, according to an X post by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). The Chief Minister has requested well-wishers and supporters not to bring any flowers, diaries or other items on New Year. Similarly, Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida's office announced that the Deputy Chief Minister will not celebrate the New Year.

Ayushman Bharat in state by Feb end

Bhubaneswar: The state government is set to implement the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana in the state by the end of February next year, Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling said Monday. He also said the state's Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY) will be implemented along with the Ayushman Bharat scheme. The two health schemes will cover around 3.5 crore beneficiaries. Mahaling said a Central team for implementation of the Ayushman Bharat scheme has already visited Odisha.

Couple posing as PK Mishra's kin arrested

Bhubaneswar: Police Monday said they arrested a couple on charges of defrauding people by impersonating themselves as the daughter and son-in-law of PK Mishra, the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The couple, identified as Hansita Abhilipsa (38) and her accomplice Anil Kumar Mohanty, believed to be her husband, was accused of cheating people by claiming that they have influential connections, police added.

Traffic jam in space: ISRO delays launch by 2 minutes

SpaDeX mission, described as a "bold step" by ISRO Chairman Dr S Somanath, will use indigenous technology to establish India's capability in orbital docking

Sriharikota, (Andhra Pradesh), Dec 30: A traffic jam of sorts in space forced the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Monday to delay the launch of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) by two minutes. Initially scheduled at 9.58pm, the launch of PSLV-C60 rocket for the ambitious Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission, a key milestone in India's space programme, was pushed to 10pm.

Two spacecraft that would aid ISRO in demonstrating space docking, a critical technology for future space missions got separated successful-

ly and were placed into the desired low earth orbit late Monday night, ISRO said. "PSLV C60 mission accomplished as of SpaDeX spacecraft is considered," said Mission Director M Jayakumar.

Dr S Somanath, Chairman of ISRO, told media that the launch was postponed due to "conjunctions with other satellites in the same orbit." Congestion in the orbit and flight path of the rocket has forced the Indian space agency to reschedule its launches earlier also.

Experts at ISRO found that some satellites from the Starlink constellation, owned by American billionaire Elon Musk and his company SpaceX,



were coming in the way. Starlink provides satellite-based broadband internet connectivity across the world.

With about 7,000 Starlink satellites already placed in the low

Earth orbit, the total number of these satellites is ultimately expected to go up to about 12,000. Scientists and engineers from many space agencies have since long been complaining that these massive constellations will cause traffic jams in space.

SpaDeX in a nutshell

Space Docking Experiment is a pioneering mission to establish India's capability in orbital docking, a key technology for future human spaceflight and satellite servicing missions, the space agency added.

A cost-effective technology demonstrator mission for in-space docking, it would make India join an elite list featuring China, Russia and the US.

This landmark mission, described as a "bold step" by ISRO Chairman Dr S Somanath, will use indigenous technology.

The in-space docking technology would be essential for taking up India's ambitions in space including sending humans to the Moon, bringing samples from there, and also building and operating the country's own space station-Bharatiya Antariksh Station.

Earlier, ISRO said the two spacecraft in the PSLV rocket- Spacecraft A (SDX01) and Spacecraft B (SDX02) would be placed in an orbit that would keep them 5km apart from each other. Later, scientists at ISRO headquarters would try to bring them closer up to 3 metres which would subsequently lead them for merging together at an altitude of about 470km above Earth. The process is expected to take place in the next 10-14 days, ISRO officials said. This was ISRO's last mission in 2024

leisure



PALTROW TO WELCOME 2025 WITH CLEAN SLATE

Hollywood actress Gwyneth Paltrow is set to welcome the New Year with a clean slate. The actress recently shared a post on Instagram featuring a list of everything she's "let go of" over the course of the year.

HOPKINS CELEBRATING 49 YEARS OF SOBRIETY

Multiple Academy awards-winning actor Anthony Hopkins, 86, is celebrating 49 years of sobriety and has encouraged those who are struggling to seek help. The 86-year-old actor took to Instagram to share a story about his decision to give up alcohol and how it has impacted his life.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You will be impulsive today, and this may throw up unexpected results. In a rush of enthusiasm, you may finish pending work and even be left with enough time to plan long-term goals. You may also realise and make amends for your past mistakes, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
You may spend a majority of your time on your health and well-being today. Business lunch may see some pending negotiations reaching a successful outcome. Research work will progress better than expected, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
Today, the bond that you share with your friends will get stronger. You are also likely to fall in love. If you are already in a relationship, you will plan to validate your bond either through an engagement or marriage. If you are a student, this is a good phase for you. Along with love, you will also get good grades.

CANCER
There is every possibility that today, you will be probing and prying about your future, predicts Ganesh. A visit to a well-known astrologer cannot be ruled out. Also, you are likely to consult a doctor. It is all due to your bad lifestyle and habits. You had better improve your lifestyle.

LEO
Fortune smiles on but a few, and when it does, it can take you to places you have never even dreamt of. Today is an exceptional day, in the sense that Lady Luck is backing you in all earnestness. So go with the flow and take your chances. You will find, much to your delight, that success is easy to achieve when you are willing to work hard and have luck guiding you.

VIRGO
Reflect on past glories and assemble the machinery for accomplishing more in the future. New relationships will mark the road to progress. You easy-going nature will help you get along famously with people.

LIBRA
Today might be a good day to invest in that body armour you saw on the telly last night. At least find one that will shield you from being at the receiving end of your seniors and the daily grind of life. If you happen to be a job aspirant, be prepared to slog it out for your success. Put off auction bids and sealed tenders for a luckier day. Whatever it is that you do to turn your luck around, Ganesh advises you to take abundant precautions in all matters.

SCORPIO
House renovation is in the offing. You may furnish it with portraits and artefacts. Today, you may also feel like playing the stock market game and stake your bets, says Ganesh. Have a great time at home by hosting friends over.

SAGITTARIUS
Personal grooming will be on your mind today. A small fortune may be spent on enhancing the way you look, especially on a new hair-do. Retail Therapy is on the cards, and you may indulge spending on clothes and jewellery.

CAPRICORN
It's difficult to keep calm and have a control over your temper in times of distress, but today, you will prove all who surrendered to the whims of adversity wrong, foresees Ganesh. You will be unfaltering in dealing with problems, and will overcome them with ease.

AQUARIUS
The day seems normal as you are unlikely to encounter unpleasant situations, says Ganesh. The high point of the day will be your consummate skill with which you will handle mundane tasks. Ganesh reminds you of the saying, "Success is one percent inspiration and 99% perspiration."

PISCES
Fear is a part and parcel of life, and while it can not be eliminated, it can certainly be tamed, and that is what you will be doing today. All your suppressed audacity will be on full display, says Ganesh.

What Malaika learnt in 2024

Mumbai: Malaika Arora recently opened up about the lessons she has learned in 2024, particularly the importance of trusting herself more following her separation from Arjun Kapoor.

In a social media post, the actress reflected on the challenges and growth she has experienced over the past year. Malaika shared her agreement with a post stating that 2024 has been a year of self-discovery and empowerment, teaching her to lean into her own strength and trust her instincts.

On Monday, Arora took to her Instagram and reshared a note reflecting on her 2024 journey. The note came just days after she responded to her ex, Arjun Kapoor's public comment about being 'single.'

The note read, "I don't hate you, 2024, but you were a difficult year, full of challenges, changes, and learning. You showed me that life can change in the blink of an eye and taught me to trust myself more. But, above all, you made me understand that my health—whether physical, emotional, or mental—is what really matters."

For those who may not know, Malaika Arora faced two significant life changes this year: the loss of her father, Anil Arora, and the end of her seven-year relationship with Arjun Kapoor.



Long-distance relationship healthy: Ananya

Mumbai: Ananya Panday is currently rumoured to be dating former model Walker Blanco. She attended Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's wedding earlier this year with him, and introduced as her 'partner'. Now, in a new interview with a film journal, the *Call Me Bae* actress opened up about handling long distance relationships, and said that they can be 'healthy.'

During the conversation, Ananya said: "I actually think it is quite healthy sometimes to have some space. I think 45 days not meeting someone is good enough. I don't think it is too bad. Two months is okay. Actually, distance does make the heart grow fonder."

She went on to add how she is as a girlfriend. She added, "Over time, I have become more comfortable in who I am and that has directly impacted my relationships. I had this thing of becoming who my partner is. Whatever their interests were, I would start liking those. If they wanted to do something I would kind of not do what I wanted to do and go with them. I would spend less time with my friends. In the past, I based a lot of my personality a lot on who I was dating, and now I am comfortable in who I am."



Kajol's NY resolution

Mumbai: Bollywood actress Kajol recently shared that she was fabulous last year and will be even more fabulous in the coming year.

On Monday, the actress posted stunning photos of herself splaying in a saree, which she paired with statement earrings and jewellery. In the photos, Kajol can be seen flaunting her radiant smile as she poses for the cameras.

Alongside the pictures, she wrote, "None of this new year new me shit! I was fabulous last year and I will be even more fabulous next year as

well #someteitbe #asitis." Previously, the *Dilwale* actress had posted a candid selfie with the caption, "Just me, being the main character as always #selfietime."

Kajol recently made headlines for recalling the delightful moments she shared with Shah Rukh Khan on the sets of their blockbuster film *Dilwale*. The *Do Patti* actress shared a series of photos featuring herself posing with SRK and others. In the caption, she wrote, "BTS of such a good good time... you can see it in our madness and fun! #dilwale."



Rakul teases fans about her new releases

Mumbai: Rakul Preet Singh, one of the most talented actresses in the entertainment industry, has consistently won hearts with her stellar performances in Bollywood and South Indian cinema.

Speaking about her releases this year, the actress said, "I have been a part of showbiz for over 10 years. You can't constantly think about validating yourself by doing cinema across boundaries. Mostly, I pick up a film because of the script or role, but at other times, I sign a movie because I want to work with a certain filmmaker or an actor."

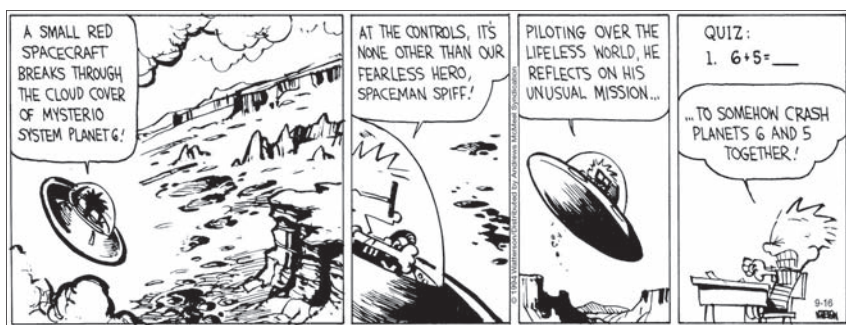
The actress teased fans about her exciting roles in 2025 saying, "People didn't see me in Hindi films this year, but that changes in 2025. I am excited that they will see me in varied, exciting roles."

For the unversed, Rakul has already shared a sneak peek of some of her films that fans will get to see her in this year. Among that is the much-awaited sequel *De De Pyaar De 2*, in which she plays the role of Ayesha Khurana and it will feature her opposite Ajay Devgn, with R Madhavan joining the cast.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

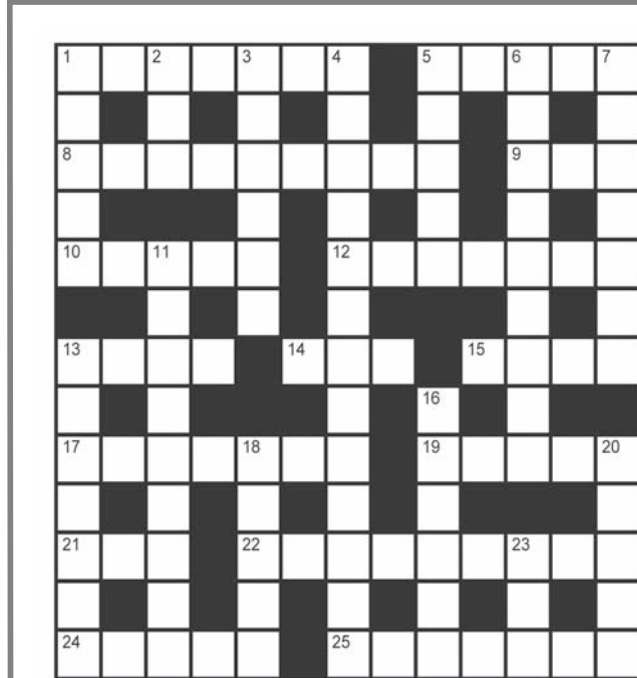


BREVITY



FUN post

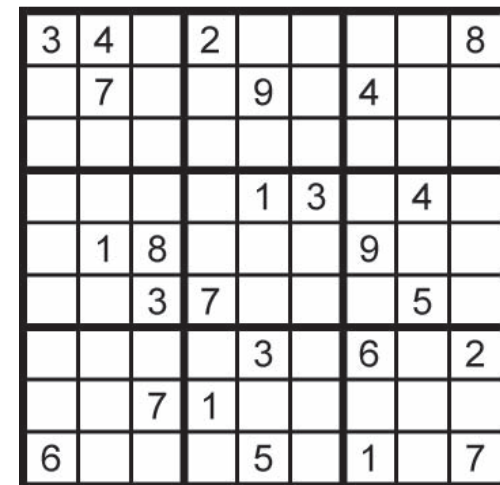
CROSSWORD



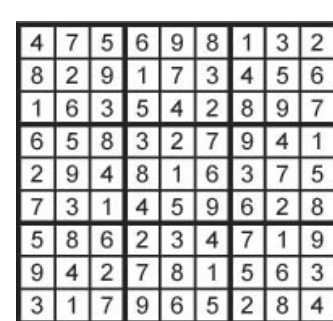
- Across**
- 1 Ancient Egyptian king
 - 5 Cravat
 - 8 He was great
 - 9 Objective
 - 10 Japanese city
 - 12 In the background
 - 13 Iota
 - 14 Canny
 - 15 Mediator's skill
 - 17 Absurd
 - 19 Flower feature
 - 21 Hellenic vowel
 - 22 Understanding
 - 24 Ocean motion
 - 25 Decay
 - 5 Nimbi
 - 6 Clot former
 - 7 Tea pot resident?
 - 11 Arise
 - 13 Restaurant employees
 - 16 Enter the picture
 - 18 Hiker's path
 - 20 Unit of petrol
 - 23 Self-importance
- Down**
- 1 Ship board
 - 2 Logger's tool
 - 3 South American river
 - 4 Power plant type
 - 16 Enter the picture
 - 18 Hiker's path
 - 20 Unit of petrol
 - 23 Self-importance

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

'JULU' DIES AT NANDANKANAN

Barang: Julu, the oldest chimpanzee at Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) here, died Monday. Born October 12, 1988 at Singapore zoo, Julu was brought to Nandankanan May 16, 1994. A major attraction at NZP, Julu was struggling with old age-related complications. With this, Nandankanan has now seven chimpanzees—a male, five females and a baby.



CM thanks PM, Union Agri min for extending crop loss plea deadline

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan for extending the deadline for farmers to report crop damage due to unseasonal rains to insurance companies till January 1, 2025.

Majhi, who visited Nayagarh, Gajapati, and Ganjam districts to assess the damage caused by unseasonal rains, interacted with affected farmers and noted the significant crop losses they are experiencing.

The state government, he said, has planned to provide assistance to all affected farmers, including those uninsured.

"Although December 29 was initially the last date for insured farmers to report crop loss, the state government requested an extension from the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and it was granted in the interest of the farmers," the CM said, thanking the PM and the Union Agriculture Minister for their sympathetic attitude towards the plight of Odisha's farmers.

The CM assured that all affected farmers would receive assistance. Alongside him, Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari also visited the affected districts.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi along with Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari had visited Nayagarh, Gajapati and Ganjam districts to assess the damage caused by unseasonal rains

block of Nayagarh district December 29. According to official records, 6,350 hectares of farmland in the district have been damaged.

The CM also inspected crop damage in the Gosani block and Gurandi gram panchayat of Gajapati district, where 2,128.586 hectares of farmland and 121.122 hectares of unharvested paddy were reported as damaged.

In Ganjam district, Majhi visited the farmlands in the Nauli area of Laxmipur panchayat and the Ganju area of Rangeilunda gram panchayat in Chhatrapur block. The district recorded Kharif crop damage across 37,800 hectares, vegetable damage on 822 hectares, and a total of 61,540 farmers affected.

During his visits, the CM personally surveyed the damage and interacted with the affected farmers.

Majhi urged all farmers to apply for assistance through tehsildars, revenue inspectors, or district agriculture officers. Applications can also be submitted via 14447, the toll-free number, or the Krishi Rakshak portal.

"The government is committed to compensating not only rice farmers but also vegetable farmers and uninsured farmers for their losses," Majhi said.



HELPING HAND: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi hears public grievances at CM Grievance Cell in Unit-V area of Bhubaneswar, Monday

Spl arrangements for deities' darshan Dec 31, Jan 1

AGENCIES

Puri, Dec 30: Keeping in mind the large congregation of devotees and tourists in Puri on the occasion of New Year celebrations, the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) and police have made elaborate arrangements for the smooth darshan of the sibling deities and movement of tourists.

The SJTA in a statement said, "Entry for darshan in the 12th-century shrine will be allowed only through the Singhadwar (Lion's gate), while exit has been arranged through the other three gates. General devotees will not be permitted to enter through any gates other than the Singhadwar."

However, this arrangement will not apply for servitors and their family members, who may enter or exit through any gate. "We seek everyone's cooperation for the smooth implementation of this arrangement for the orderly darshan of Mahaprabhu (Lord Jagannath)," SJTA chief administrator Arabinda Padhee said.

He said this arrangement in the temple will be implemented on December 31 and January 1.

This apart, the Puri district administration and police have made elaborate security arrangements for devotees. Barricades have been erected from the Singhadwar to Market Square in



DIG (Central) Charan Singh Meena said 60 platoons of force (one platoon comprises 30 personnel) would be deployed for crowd management on the two days

At least 10 additional SPs, 33 DSPs, 62 inspectors, 245 sub-inspectors and assistant SIs would be deployed for crowd control and management

the town so that the devotees can enter the temple in an organised manner. DIG (Central) Charan Singh

Meena said 60 platoons (1 platoon comprises 30 personnel) would be deployed for crowd management on the two days. At least 10 additional SPs, 33 DSPs, 62 inspectors, 245 sub-inspectors and assistant SIs would be deployed for crowd control and management.

Two teams of police would be deployed inside the temple and arrangements have been made to engage special anti-snatching teams, Meena said, adding that traffic arrangements and parking places have been prepared for devotees and tourists coming

from different places. He said checking of vehicles has already started at different entry points to Puri and in the town. A special outpost would be opened on the sea beach, which will keep a watch on tourists.

Meanwhile, around 10 devotees, including four students, fainted and complained of breathlessness due to overcrowding inside the Shree Jagannath Temple here, police said.

The four students were hospitalised and discharged in the evening, they added.

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	29.2°	27.2°
Min Temp	17.9°	17.0°
Humidity	88%	91%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
Fog/mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	78,248.13	↓ 450.94
NIFTY	23,644.90	↓ 168.50
DOLLAR	85.77	↓ 0.02
EURO	89.62	↑ 0.14
GOLD	₹76,191	↓ ₹353
SILVER	₹87,390	↓ ₹1,497

Odisha to implement Ayushman Bharat by end of Feb: Min

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: The Odisha government is set to implement the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana in the state by the end of February next year, Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling said Monday.

He also said the state's Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY) will be implemented along with the Ayushman Bharat scheme. The two health schemes will cover around 3.5 crore beneficiaries. Mahaling said a Central team for implementation of the Ayushman Bharat scheme has already visited Odisha, and the state government is committed to increase the number of medical colleges and nursing colleges in the New Year to strengthen the healthcare sector.

He said an agreement is likely to be signed for implementation of the two schemes. The beneficiaries can avail health insurance in 27,000 empanelled hospitals in the state and outside, the Minister added.

Naveen seeks immediate relief for rain-hit farmers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Former chief minister Naveen Patnaik Monday urged the state government to provide adequate and quick compensation to farmers who incurred losses due to unseasonal rains.

Patnaik undertook field visits in Ganjam district to take stock of crop damage. He interacted with affected farmers in Seragada, Aska, Kabisuryanagar Khallikote and his Assembly segment in Hinjili.

"I have visited five areas of Ganjam district today. The crop damage is severe and farmers are in distress. They must be compensated quickly as was a practice during our tenure," Patnaik told reporters after the visit. Describing cultivators as

the backbone of the economy, the BJD president claimed that he was informed by hundreds of farmers, including women, that "no government official has so far visited their paddy field to assess crop damage".

"The farmers told me that they had no advance information about rain or advisory. Had farmers received prior information about unseasonal rains, they could have saved their crop," Patnaik said.

The BJD chief assured the farmers that he would fight for their rights.

"The unseasonal rain has broken their (farmers) backbone. Therefore, I strongly demand that the state government immediately provide adequate compensation to them," the former chief minister said.

City gears up for New Year celebrations

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: As 2024 comes to an end, Bhubaneswar is abuzz with excitement, gearing up for vibrant New Year celebrations. The City, known for its cultural richness and lively atmosphere, is ready to welcome 2025 with a variety of events featuring music, dance, and culinary delights.

Hotels and resorts across the City have announced special programmes for the occasion. Empires Hotel has organised an evening of live music by singers Remo Ghosh, Chelsi Behura, Sachin Rout, and Rozalin Patnaik, along with performances by the musical band Eagle. Empires accommodation manager Arun Mohanta assured that all



safety protocols will be followed, and celebrations will conclude shortly after midnight.

Hotel Hindustan International (HHI) will host 'Eclipse Party 2025', featuring DJ Pankaj, dancers Swati Banerjee and Ditsa Banerjee, and tabla player Dibyendu Banerjee. Wonder World Water Park and Resort's 'Euphoria' event includes live performances by Priya Singh and

Jay Jha, with a night of music and entertainment.

Pal Heights Mantra's 'Vintage Hollywood' theme will dazzle guests with golden-age cinema-inspired décor and performances by the Band Jashn. Meanwhile, their Jaydev Vihar branch will host a 'Winter Wonderland' party. Hotel Pushpak's celebration includes playback singers Navya Jaiti, Swirin

Brain, and DJ Cross, while Swosti Premium's 'Groove & Glitter' promises unlimited snacks, beverages, and live music.

Residents and visitors are also expected to flock to popular attractions like Dhauli, Nandankanan, and Sikharchandi to celebrate in serene settings.

To ensure public safety during "Zero Night" and New Year's celebrations, security has been beefed up across Bhubaneswar. DCP Pinak Mishra emphasised the importance of avoiding drunken driving, which has caused accidents in previous years. CCTV surveillance, night patrolling, and vehicle checks are in place to prevent illegal activities. Organisers of public events are required to secure necessary permissions.

Direct flight services to more cities from January

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Direct flight services from two airports in the state to some prominent cities across the country will be launched in the first week of January 2025.

According to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), direct flight services from Veer

Surendra Sai Airport at Jharsuguda to Hyderabad, Raipur, Lucknow and Mumbai will be launched January 1.

Similarly, direct flight services from Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) in Bhubaneswar to Indore, Dehradun, Kochi, Jaipur and Lucknow will start January 3, it added.

Cops nab couple posing as kin of PM's principal secy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Odisha Police Monday said it arrested a couple on charges of defrauding people by impersonating themselves as the daughter and son-in-law of Dr PK Mishra, the principal secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The couple, identified as Hansita Abhilipsa (38) and her accomplice Anil Kumar Mohanty, believed to be her husband, was accused of cheating people by claiming that they have influential connections, police added.

They were arrested Sunday and booked under Sections 329(3), 319(2), 318(4), and 3(5) of the BNS. They claimed to be the daughter and son-in-law of PM's principal secretary Dr PK Mishra, Swaraj Debata, Additional

DGP Zone 6 in Bhubaneswar, said. Police recovered several photographs from the couple's residence, showing them with high-profile people, including Chief Secretary. The duo allegedly swindled rich businessmen, builders, mining operators, and other influential people in Bhubaneswar.

Officials said the couple digitally manipulated the photographs with influential officials and used these doctored images to approach victims, falsely promising to help them get their tenders passed.

Hansita is a resident of Kandhamal district, while Mohanty is a small-time businessman who owns an infrastructure firm.

The arrests were made following a complaint by a mine owner.



People stand in a long queue to buy state government calendar and diary, at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Monday

PICT: BHASKAR NAYAK

FOCUS **DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

NAVIGATING THE RISKS



Despite being ill-defined, Digital Public Infrastructure has become the new policy paradigm for development. But policymakers must reach consensus on the proper scope of these policies and how to implement them to ensure that governments do not use them as tools for surveillance and repression

Lastly, proponents point out that DPI could bolster international cooperation, particularly as the 20-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) approaches. This important UN initiative has provided the framework for countries to collaborate on digital development. Although authoritarian states have previously sought to assert greater control over the internet's governance during these negotiations, a focus on promoting DPI could avoid this politicised debate and instead foster a constructive agenda to bridge digital divides.

But basing policy on such an ill-defined concept poses significant risks. Ideally, governments would convene other stakeholders to create an enabling environment for DPI and safeguard users' rights and interests. It is easy to imagine, however, that some governments will place their own interests above civil lib-

erties and fundamental rights, using this infrastructure for surveillance and targeting in the name of law enforcement or national security. An especially pernicious example could involve the monitoring and regulation of individual behaviour through dystopian social-credit systems.

Moreover, while many proponents hope that DPI could chip away at Big Tech's outsize power, it has also been associated with narratives of digital sovereignty that could contribute to the internet's fragmentation – a systemic threat to global communications. For example, one can imagine scenarios in which some governments challenge the multi-stakeholder model for governing global internet resources like IP addresses and domain names on the grounds that they constitute DPIs.

In fact, we recently witnessed something similar in the European Union when it

proposed an amendment to the Electronic Identification, Authentication, and Trust Services (eIDAS) regulation that would have empowered governments to mandate the recognition of digital certificates that did not adhere to stringent industry standards. This risked undermining the global governance model for browser security and could have allowed European governments to surveil communications both within and beyond their borders.

The policy vision of DPI will continue to evolve, and ongoing discussions, it is hoped, will help identify and clarify further opportunities and risks. Initiatives such as the UN's Universal DPI Safeguards Framework, which seeks to establish guardrails for DPI, are a promising start. But much more must be done. For example, the UN's framework has recognised the need for continuous learning to ensure that the right safeguards are in place.

As the concept of DPI gains traction in the UN system and other multilateral organisations, vigorous and informed debate regarding its potential advantages – and pitfalls – will be essential. With clear-cut policy guidelines and protections, we can help prevent these technologies from becoming tools for surveillance and repression, ensure that everyone benefits from the burgeoning digital economy, and keep the internet open, globally connected, and secure.

The writer is Director of Policy Development and Research at the Internet Society.

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Carl Gahnberg

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS OF DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE IS CRUCIAL TO ENSURING THAT ITS POTENTIAL BENEFITS MATERIALISE

In recent years, the concept of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) has gained significant attention from the international community, including the United Nations and the G20, as a new policy paradigm for development. But understanding the risks of DPI is crucial to ensuring that its potential benefits materialise.

The risks stem from the fact that "digital public infrastructure" lacks a clear definition. The term encompasses the many digital technologies that serve as economic and social infrastructure, from digital identification and payment systems to data exchanges and health services. As a policy initiative, though, DPI refers to a vague vision of using these technologies to serve the public interest. This could result in the internet and technological innovation working for everyone – or just as easily turn them into tools for political control.

In discussions about DPI, policymakers often point to cases that highlight how technology and connectivity can spur development. They frequently cite India's Unified Payments Interface, which has expanded financial inclusion and reduced the costs of digital transactions for its hundreds of millions of users.

It is also understood that such infrastructure is to be built with Digital Public Goods (DPGs), a concept that encompasses open-source software, open standards, and other non-proprietary components. This definition is partly intended to position DPIs as being "for the public" but also to enhance competition and mitigate concentrations of power in the global digital economy.

SPECTRUM **WARFARE**

Russians unveil a game-changer

In the early hours of 22 December, the Ukrainian city of Dnipro, Dnepropetrovsk during Soviet days, received a Christmas gift three days earlier – a series of missile strikes most unlike any other seen in the current war with Russia, or in any other since the twin atomic bomb strikes on Nagasaki and Hiroshima at the fag-end of World War II. A series of thunderous bolts from the sky hit the Yuzhmash military production complex at Dnipro, resulting in massive explosions, causing damage not revealed by Ukraine for obvious reasons, but estimated to have been extensive, some calculating that the complex, a mile square, that produces missile and aircraft parts, and parts of which were built deep underground during the Soviet days, was made non-functional.

Coming a month after a fearsome strike on the energy grid of Ukraine which crippled the war-torn country, the strike by Oreshnik, the new missile, had the equivalent of a meteorite, to quote President Vladimir Putin. Russia, which unleashed the attack by its latest, and till the attack unknown Oreshnik missile, understandably preened.

Oreshnik (Hazel in Russian, a tree that produces nuts packed with vitamin 'A') may force many militaries to rewrite their war doctrine. It is a system that consists of a rocket vehicle, or 'bus', that carries six MIRVs (multiple independently-targetable re-entry vehicles), to the high levels of the atmosphere, much like an Intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) each of which carried six sub-munitions, virtually rods, speculated to be made of hard metal, tungsten, or alloys such as tungsten-titanium, or perhaps more dense metals like osmium, or rhenium, that bore down on their target at Mach 10, and at impact, reduce the object of their wrath to nothing. This is because at the time of impact, they unleash energy equivalent of close to 80 US Mark 84 bombs used in Vietnam, which means four-fifth of a kiloton. For comparison, the "Little Boy" that destroyed Hiroshima was 15 kilotons.

The missile was an IRBM, Intermediate range ballistic missile, whose range was limited to within 5,000 km under the IRBM treaty between US and Russia, signed during the Soviet days, which the former withdrew

during the first Trump term. In fact, Moscow informed Washington of its intention to use missile in advance, and perhaps that the missile was not carrying a nuclear warhead, in order to prevent a nuclear holocaust.

Western defence analysts came up with mixed reactions. Some scoffed at the scientific feasibility of a missile that can reach its target at Mach 10-11, claiming that any object that does would lose power because of atmospheric resistance, and therefore could not reach that speed at impact. Others doubted if the missile's MIRVs strikes had been accurate since at the speed claimed, the projectiles would be covered in a plasma cloud that could prevent guidance signals reaching them, to target them to their intended targets.

The 'before' image of Yuzhmash complex are available freely on the internet, but Ukraine, which claimed that there was no damage on the complex, has not released the 'after' photographs, so it is not easy to assess the devastation wrought, but that reluctance raises the speculation that the impact the 36 projectiles wrought could have put out the facility for a long time.

What Oreshnik has, in effect, done is to change the basics of war, if not doctrines. A country at war can now unleash a weapon on its enemy with the awe-inspiring power equivalent of a nuclear missile, but with no radiation effect that a nuclear strike entails, and therefore escaping the opprobrium and retaliation that a nuclear strike would attract.

Simply put, you can stay within conventional warfare bounds, and yet wreak devastation that a nuclear missile can. And not trigger a nuclear Armageddon. In other words, even conventional war will now approach the ruinous capability of MAD (mutually assured destruction).

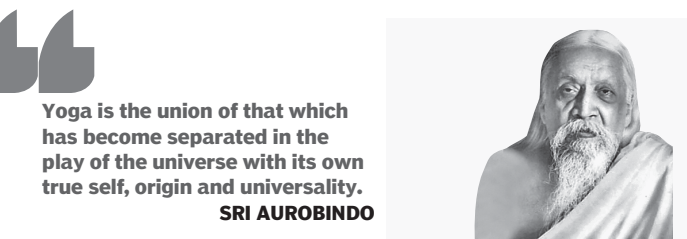
The Ukraine war has changed the world in many ways. It has destroyed the normal rules the world lived by, including those that governed financial transactions between nations. It overturned the supply chains of international trade. It has now thrown up a weapon that makes nuclear weapons redundant even as weapons of deterrence.

The writer, a senior journalist, is an analyst of geopolitics.



KV Ramesh

THE ORESHNIK MISSILE MAY FORCE MANY MILITARIES TO REWRITE THEIR WAR DOCTRINE



Yoga is the union of that which has become separated in the play of the universe with its own true self, origin and universality.

SRI AUROBINDO

Turmoil in S Korea

South Korea is plagued by a deepening political crisis after two impeachment motions against two top leaders have been passed, one after the other, in an unprecedented development that has baffled the observers of that country. The Opposition-controlled National Assembly has voted to impeach acting President Han Duck-soo. It comes close on the heels of President Yoon Suk Yeol's surprising imposition of martial law on 3 December and his ensuing impeachment on 14 December. The latest move by the Opposition means Han will be stripped of the powers and duties of the President until the Constitutional Court decides whether to dismiss or reinstate him. The court is already reviewing whether Yoon's earlier impeachment can be upheld or not. The impeachments of the country's two top political heads in such quick succession have exacerbated the political turmoil, deepened economic uncertainties and lowered the country's image internationally.

The single-chamber National Assembly passed Han's impeachment motion with a 192-0 vote. Lawmakers of the ruling People Power Party (PPP) boycotted the vote and tried to mob the Assembly Speaker Woo Won Shik shouting that the vote was invalid. They even demanded Woo's resignation protesting against his ruling that the passage of the impeachment motion required a simple majority in the 300-member assembly, not a two-thirds majority as claimed by the PPP. The problem with the South Korean system is that there are no specific laws on the impeachment of an acting president.

Reacting to the impeachment announcement, Han said it was regrettable but added that he respected the assembly's decision and would suspend his duties so as not to "add to the existing confusion and uncertainty." He declared he will wait for "a swift, wise decision" by the Constitutional Court.

Han's powers were officially suspended after copies of his impeachment document were delivered to him and the Constitutional Court. The Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Choi Sang-mok, has taken over the duties. Since South Korea can ill afford to be in a state of political turmoil, given the belligerence of its neighbour – North Korea, Choi's office immediately instructed the military to boost its readiness to prevent North Korea from miscalculating the situation and launching provocations. He also told the foreign ministry to inform the United States, Japan and other major partners that South Korea's foreign policies remain unchanged.

Han could have survived had he not crossed swords with the main liberal opposition Democratic Party by stonewalling the latter's efforts to fill three vacant seats on the Constitutional Court, establish an independent investigation into Yoon's martial law decree and legislate pro-farmer bills. The demand for the approval of the assembly's nominations of three new Constitutional Court justices stemmed from the anxiety of the Opposition to have the court's full nine-member bench ahead of its ruling on Yoon's impeachment. A court decision to dismiss Yoon as President needs support from at least six justices, and adding more justices will likely increase the prospects for Yoon's ouster. Yoon's political allies in the governing party oppose the appointment of the three justices on the plea that Han should not exercise the presidential authority to make the appointments while Yoon is yet to be formally removed from office. Han decided to oblige them by announcing that he would not appoint the justices without bipartisan consent. In response the Democratic Party, which holds a majority in the assembly, submitted an impeachment motion against Han and passed bills calling for the appointment of three justices.

South Korean investigative agencies have been deployed to find out whether Yoon committed rebellion and abuse of power with his martial law decree, which had to be rescinded within six hours of its promulgation due to mass protests. Yoon has repeatedly ignored requests by authorities to appear for a face-to-face questioning. His defence minister, police chief and several other military commanders have already been arrested over the deployment of troops and police officers to the National Assembly.

South Korea is effectively sending out the message across the globe that it will not tolerate any attempt to subvert democracy. This is a remarkable development at a time when autocratic leaders and parties are entrenching themselves in many countries. It is to be seen whether the South Korean experience augurs well for the democratic process the world over.

WISDOM CORNER

The intuition of the moral sentiment is an insight of the perfection of the laws of the soul. These laws execute themselves. They are out of time, out of space, and not subject to circumstance.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Intuition and concepts constitute... the elements of all our knowledge, so that neither concepts without an intuition in some way corresponding to them, nor intuition without concepts, can yield knowledge.

IMMANUEL KANT

Time heals griefs and quarrels, for we change and are no longer the same persons. Neither the offender nor the offended are any more themselves.

BLAISE PASCAL

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1600: The East India Company, formed for the exploitation of trade with East and Southeast Asia and India, was incorporated by English royal charter.

1857: Ottawa, located in Ontario at the confluence of the Ottawa, Gatineau, and Rideau rivers and whose area was first described by Samuel de Champlain in 1613, was named the capital of Canada by Queen Victoria this day in 1857.

1907: The first annual ball drop at Times Square. The annual tradition of dropping a ball at 11:59 pm to mark the start of the New Year was organized for the first time by Adolph Ochs, the owner of the New York Times.

1909: Manhattan Bridge opens for traffic. The Manhattan Bridge, one of the first suspension bridges ever constructed, was opened to traffic on this day. The bridge was designed by Leon Moisseiff and crosses the East River in New York City.

1983: Coup in Nigeria. A military coup in Nigeria overthrew the civilian government of Shehu Shagari and installed Maj-Gen Muhammadu Buhari.

1991: The Soviet Union legally ceased to exist, Russia and other former Soviet republics having declared themselves independent and having founded the Commonwealth of Independent States on December 21, 1991.

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

Land of immigrants

Sir, This refers to "MAGA Meltdown," Dec 30, **Orissa POST**. The ongoing debate over the "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) movement and its stance on immigration underscores one of the most profound contradictions in American society: a nation that prides itself on being a land of immigrants grappling with the complexities of its immigration policies. Despite ideological divides, one undeniable truth prevails—America has always been, and continues to be, a nation shaped by immigrants. Even those who claim "nativist" identities often have ancestral ties to foreign shores, a fact that highlights the paradox of anti-immigration rhetoric. Historically, the US has thrived on its ability to attract talent, ambition, and ingenuity from around the globe. The promise of meritocracy and the 'American Dream' has drawn countless individuals seeking a better life, fueling economic growth and innovation. From the industrial revolution to the digital age, immigrants have played a central role in positioning the US as a global leader. However, the idealised narrative of America as a welcoming haven for immigrants often obscures the reality: immigration policies have always been selective, favouring certain groups while marginalising others..

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Out of school

Sir, Right to Education Act, 2009 has made education free and compulsory for children in the age group of 6-14 years under Article 21 A of the Constitution. But has the Act percolated through the society to fulfil its stated aim? The Lok Sabha was told the other day that 11.7 lakh school children were considered "out of school" in the first eight months of 2024. Children not enrolled and those absent 45 days without notice are defined as "out of school." Poverty, abysmal and unhygienic living conditions, child labour, insufficient and untrained teachers, and paucity of vehicles to ferry children keep them away from schools. Governments can set right the anomaly in several ways and, of course, making schools appealing for the children is the right way to go ahead. There is an urgent need to tie up loose ends of the once attractive midday meal scheme or the PM-POSHAN because a hungry body is an angry mind.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Bodies to check illegal mining 'ineffective'

JAJPUR DISTRICT



Jajpur, Dec 30: The district, sub-divisional, and tehsil-level committees formed by the state government's Steel and Mines department more than two weeks ago to curb illegal mining of minor minerals have allegedly proved ineffective as large scale theft of black stone in Dharmasala tehsil of Jajpur district - where a majority of these, and other, quarries are located - continue unhindered.

The sub-collector is the chairperson of the sub-divisional committee while the sub-divisional police officer (SDPO), assistant conservator of forests (ACF) or range officer, tehsildar, and inspector-in-charge of the local police station will function as members, the notification stated.

The smugglers are using 10 compressors and two to four excavators to extract the mineral from the quarry, it is alleged. This rampant loot is estimated at ₹12 lakh on a daily basis. It is alleged that the miners distribute about 20 per cent of the proceeds among the officials, enabling the illegal mining to continue without any hurdles.

units, the truth would become evident. However, the committees are deliberately avoiding conducting verification of these crusher units and remaining silent on the matter, they alleged. It is feared that the lack of transparency in administrative actions and illegal operations could lead to the complete depletion of valuable black stone reserves in Dharmasala tehsil area. According to reports, the state government this year suffered significant loss of revenue owing to the illegalities, as against the crores of rupees it earlier generated annually.

AI cams help nab 13 poachers in Similipal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Dec 30: With the help of AI camera network set up in the Similipal Wildlife Sanctuary, Forest department sleuths in Mayurbhanj district were able to track and successfully arrest a group of 13 poachers Monday.

The accused were booked under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 following their arrest. In addition, a separate case under the Arms Act has also been filed against them for possession of illegal firearms. A total of 13 bows, 33 arrows, one country-made gun, and other hunting tools were seized from them.

Sources said the AI cameras installed in the core area of Similipal Tiger Reserve, which is a part of the advanced Similipal Wildlife Intelligence Network (SWIN), caught the accused persons poaching wildlife after entering into the core area November 24. After receiving the automated alert, the Forest sleuths moved swiftly, arrested them and seized a significant quantity of hunting gear from their homes.

3 held for assaulting women over religious conversion

BJD accuses BJP of shielding prime accused

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balasore/Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Even as Odisha Police arrested three persons on charges of assaulting two women over allegations that they were attempting religious conversion of some tribal families in Balasore district, Opposition BJD Monday alleged that the prime accused was allowed to go scot-free due to his links with ruling BJP leaders.

According to police, the arrests were made Sunday and two cases have been filed at Remuna police station. Police action followed a viral video showing two women being tied to a tree and assaulted in public view for allegedly attempting forced conversions of tribal families in Gorbardhanpur village Thursday. "So far, three people have been arrested. We are taking stringent action to ensure there is no law and order situation in the area," Balasore SP Raj Prasad said.

The accused were booked under the SC & ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and BNS, while another case was registered against the two women under Section 4 of the Odisha Freedom of Religion Act, 1967, and Section 299 (deliberate and malicious insult of a religion), 3(5) (joint criminal liability), and 351(2) (criminal intimidation) of BNS.



Meanwhile, BJD leader Lekhashree Samantsinghar alleged that members of the ruling BJP were behind the assault. "The prime accused, Badal Panda, who is seen in the video, was not arrested because of his close proximity to Balasore MP Pratap Sarangi and Nilagiri MLA Santosh Khatua," Samantsinghar claimed. BJD MP Sarangi dismissed the allegations, calling them false and politically motivated. Earlier during the day, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi posted on X, "On one hand, a Dalit youth was killed in police custody in Dewas, Madhya Pradesh. On the other hand, tribal women were tied to trees and beaten in Balasore, Odisha."

Zeenat at Kolkata zoo vet hospital, in good health



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 30: Tigress Zeenat, which had strayed from Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) to West Bengal and was finally captured in Bankura district, is now in good health and under the observation of veterinary doctors at Alipore Zoo hospital, an official said Monday.

A senior Forest official told PTI that the three-year-old tigress - who could finally be captured after being sedated with tranquilisers in Bankura Sunday afternoon - was brought to the Alipore Zoo Vet Hospital around midnight and her health checked after arrival.

She was again checked by three vets and zoo keepers Monday morning and her condition was okay excepting the stress and trauma due to tranquillizing and being on the run for 21 days since her escape from Similipal reserve forest in the first week of December, he said. "She will be under observation for some more days as she has been running away from one place to another in three states and has been chased. She did not have proper meal as the places where she roamed in the three weeks did not have enough prey base. Also, the Forest department had to sedate her with tranquilizers as she could not be caught otherwise. So she needs time to recuperate," he said.

Zeenat was given buffalo meat as her meal on arrival at Alipore Zoo. The official said a full-grown adult

tiger takes 4-6 kg of buffalo meat a day in perfect health condition but did not specify her intake. "She is in good health but needs rest and our team of vets and zoo keepers are at work. We are constantly monitoring him," the official said but did not give a timeframe for when the tigress will be sent back to Similipal. The Forest department is regularly coordinating with their counterparts in Odisha.

The tigress had kept wildlife officials from both the states on edge for over a week after leaving STR December 8.

On Sunday the tigress was tranquillised with a single dart shot at 4:09 pm, after previous attempts to sedate her had failed.

The animal's vital parameters were examined several times before her road journey from Bankura to Kolkata in a vehicle accompanied by a convoy of police and the Forest department.

"The operation to sedate Zeenat was undertaken after veterinarians gave their approval," he said.

Since Saturday night, the tigress had been in the Gopalpur forest in Bankura district, where she was surrounded by double netting, he added.

Zeenat had been relocated from Maharashtra's Tadoba-Anchari Tiger Reserve (TATR) to Similipal last month to introduce new gene pool to the tiger population.

After leaving Similipal, Zeenat ventured through forests in Manbazar and Bandwan before crossing into West Bengal, covering over 120 km across the borders of West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Odisha.

Despite efforts, the tigress avoided baits in trap-door cages and instead killed domestic goats that strayed into the forest. Surveillance using drones was also conducted, but the dense forests made monitoring challenging. Officials said Zeenat had been travelling shorter distances in recent days, suggesting she may be settling in the area.

Eco-friendly paver block making unit inaugurated



RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

Rourkela, Dec 30: 'Eco Brick' an eco-friendly paver block manufacturing facility using LD slag was inaugurated by Atanu Bhowmick, Director In-Charge (DIC) at the materials recovery department (MRD) of SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant Monday.

while advancing waste utilisation, and circular economy, a release said. The new paver block manufacturing facility is equipped to produce high-quality paver blocks with a concrete grade of M200 (1:1.5:3), and a block thickness of 80 mm. The facility has a daily production capacity of 1,000 units, which converts to yearly output of 3 lakh units.

With an annual influx of 10 lakh tons of LD slag from the steel melting shop (SMS), this facility is a significant step in utilising slag for innovative applications. Currently, internal consumption across RMHP, SMS-II, T&RM, and other departments is limited to 2 lakh tons per annum. This initiative ensures a substantial portion of slag is repurposed, addressing disposal burdens and contributing to sustainable steel production, the release added.

DICGC निक्षेप बीमा और प्रत्यय गारंटी निगम DEPOSIT INSURANCE AND CREDIT GUARANTEE CORPORATION

Unidentifiable and untraceable depositors in claims prepared by liquidators.

Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) settles claims prepared by liquidators in terms of provisions contained in Sections 17 and 18 of DICGC Act, 1961. The claims of insured depositors who were marked unidentifiable (depositors who were not paid due to non-availability of KYC documents at the time of sanction of main claim) /untraceable (depositors whose claims were sanctioned but remain undisbursed and refunded to DICGC) by liquidators is provided for by DICGC. Instructions have been issued to Registrar of Co-operative Societies and liquidators of banks (liquidated before December 31, 2014) to contact such depositors and submit the claims, if any, to DICGC. Depositors of these banks are advised to approach the respective liquidators with officially valid documents/identity in case of unpaid claims. The list of banks is available on DICGC website www.dicgc.org.in.

"Don't get cheated by E-mails/SMS/Calls promising you money."

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION, KUCHINDA

Corrigendum to Bid Identification No. Tender Online 07/RWD/Kuchinda/2024-25 No.O-1076:Due to unavoidable circumstances, the following changes have been made in this Office Bid Identification No. tender online 07/RWD/Kuchinda/2024-25

EAST COAST RAILWAY

(1) e-Tender Notice No. 24-SBP-TRD-OT-2024-25, Dtd. 23.12.2024

Name of the work: TRD RELATED WORK IN CONNECTION WITH THE WORK OF "P-WAY AND OTHER ALLIED WORKS IN CONNECTION WITH REMOVAL OF PERMANENT SPEED RESTRICTION (PSR) ON CURVE NO. 23 UP AT KM 48/27-47/13 AND CURVE NO. 24 DN AT KM 48/26-47/24 IN JIJUMURA (JUJA)-KEREJANGA (KJG) SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION".

Approx. cost: ₹ 56,06,480.31, EMD: ₹ 1,12,100.00.

(2) e-Tender Notice No. : 25-SBP-TRD-OT-2024-25, Dtd. 23.12.2024

Name of the work: TRD RELATED WORK IN CONNECTION WITH THE WORK OF "P-WAY AND OTHER ALLIED WORKS IN CONNECTION WITH REMOVAL OF PERMANENT SPEED RESTRICTION (PSR) ON CURVE NO. 36 UP AT KM 75/1-23 AND CURVE NO. 37 DN AT KM 75/24-2 IN JIJUMURA (JUJA)-KEREJANGA (KJG) SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION".

Approx. cost: ₹ 61,69,986.30, EMD: ₹ 1,23,400.00.

(3) e-Tender Notice No. : 26-SBP-TRD-OT-2024-25, Dtd. 24.12.2024

Name of the work: TRD RELATED WORK IN CONNECTION WITH THE WORK OF "P-WAY AND OTHER ALLIED WORKS IN CONNECTION WITH REMOVAL OF PERMANENT SPEED RESTRICTION (PSR) ON CURVE NO. 18, 18A, 18B & 18C DN IN JHARSUGUDA ROAD (JSGR)-SAMBALPUR (SBP) SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION".

Approx. cost: ₹ 21,41,117.27, EMD: ₹ 42,800.00.

Completion period: 12 Months (for all sl. no.)

Tender closing Date & Time: At 1530 hrs. on 14.01.2025 (for sl. no. 1 & 2) and at 1530 hrs. on 15.01.2025 (for sl. no. 3).

No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

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

The tenders/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering. All relevant paper must have to be uploaded at the time of participating, on e-tendering as per instruction.

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

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), PR-839/P/24-25 Sambalpur

Indian Bank ZONAL OFFICE: SAMBALPUR At: Shyam Arcade, Khetrajpur, Sambalpur - 768003

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank 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/Partner/Guarantors/Mortgagor to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

Table with 4 columns: Branch/Name and Address of Borrower/Partner/Guarantors/Mortgagor, Amount Payable as on specified date, Date of Demand / Possession Notice, Description of the Immovable Property

Place: Sambalpur Date: 30.12.2024 Sd/- Authorised Officer Indian Bank

Central Bank of India Regional Office: Sambalpur, Quantum Building, Farm Road, P.O.: Modipara, Sambalpur - 768002, Phone: 0663-2533091/2522954, Email: cmrecovery@sambro@centralbank.co.in

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Central Bank of India under the Securitisation & Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 & in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued a demand notice to the concerned Borrower on the date mentioned against her name, calling upon them to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

Table with 4 columns: Branch / Name and Address of Borrower, Amount in Demand Notice, Date of Demand / Possession Notice, Description of Mortgaged Property

Place: Sambalpur, Date: 30.12.2024 Sd/- Authorised Officer, Central Bank of India

Bank of Baroda Regional Office (Sambalpur Region) G.M. College Chowk, Christian Para, Sambalpur-768001

(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002) Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the BANK OF BARODA 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 demand notice calling upon the Borrowers/Guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice together with further interest thereon at the contractual rate plus costs, charges and expenses till date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

Table with 4 columns: Branch / Name & Address of the Borrowers/Guarantors, Description of the Immovable Properties, Demand/Possession Notice Date, Total Dues as on

POWER LIST 2024

As the world continued to evolve in 2024, remarkable individuals stood out, shaping the year's defining moments. From leaders in politics, industrialists and entrepreneurs making impacts locally and globally, to jurists upholding human rights and democratic values, these headline-makers reflected resilience by overcoming all odds. Their achievements and actions not only captured the public's attention but also left a lasting impact, inspiring millions. Be it breaking barriers, solving complex challenges, or initiating transformations, these individuals left their mark in the outgoing year

STATE



MOHAN CHARAN MAJHI
Chief Minister



ASHWINI VAISHNAW
Railway Minister



DHARMENDRA PRADHAN
Union Education Minister



MANMOHAN SAMAL
BJP State Chief



KANAK VARDHAN SINGH DEO
Deputy CM



PRAVATI PARIDA
Deputy CM



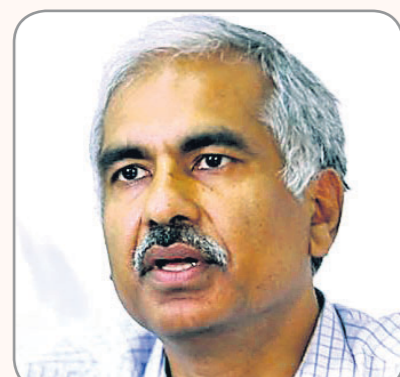
SURESH PUJARI
Revenue Minister



PRITHVIRAJ HARICHANDAN
Law Minister



MUKESH MAHALING
Health Minister



MANOJ AHUJA
Chief Secretary

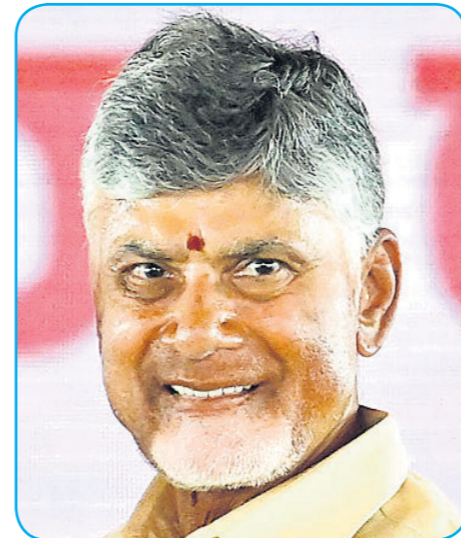
NATIONAL



NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister



MOHAN BHAGWAT
RSS Chief



N CHANDRABABU NAIDU
CM, Andhra Pradesh



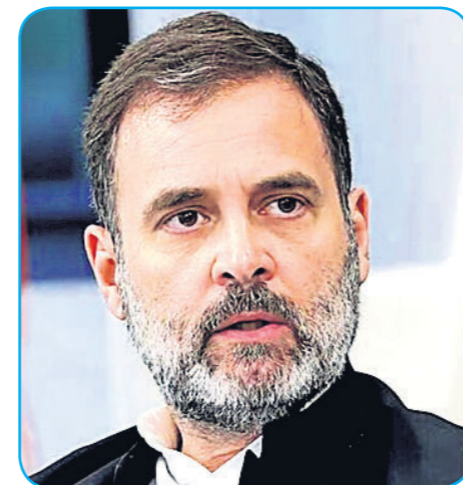
NITISH KUMAR
CM, Bihar



MAMATA BANERJEE
CM, West Bengal



AMIT SHAH
Home Minister



RAHUL GANDHI
Leader of Opposition



AKHILESH YADAV
President, Samajwadi Party



HEMANT SOREN
CM, Jharkhand



SANJIV KHANNA
Chief Justice of India



MALLIKARJUN KHARGE
President, Indian National Congress



MK STALIN
Chief Minister, TN



GAUTAM ADANI
Founder-Chairman, Adani Group



MUKESH AMBANI
Chairman & MD, RIL



JAGAT PRAKASH NADDA
President, BJP



YOGI ADITYANATH
CM, Uttar Pradesh



ARVIND KEJRIWAL
Convener, AAP



PK Mishra
Principal Secretary to the PM



AJIT DOVAL
National Security Advisor



RAHUL NAVIN
Director, ED

INTERNATIONAL



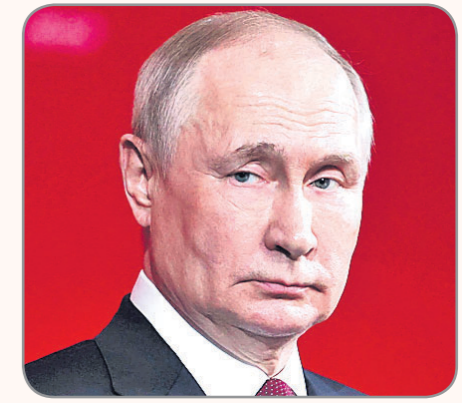
DONALD TRUMP
President-elect, US



XI JINPING
President, China



MARK RUTTE
Secretary-General, NATO



VLADIMIR PUTIN
President, Russia



BENJAMIN NETANYAHU
Prime Minister, Israel



ELON MUSK
CEO, Twitter, Tesla & Space X



VOLODYMYR ZELENKYY
President, Ukraine



ABU MOHAMMAD AL-JULANI
Syrian revolutionary leader



GIORGIA MELONI
Prime Minister, Italy



MD BIN SALMAN AL SAUD
Prime Minister, Saudi Arabia



KEIR STARMER
Prime Minister, UK



TAMIM BIN HAMAD AL THANI
Emir of Qatar

of the day uote

In our memorandum, we sought steps to protect law and order in Tamil Nadu, besides action for ensuring safety of women in all places



VUJAY | TAMIZHAGA VETRI KAZHAGAM FOUNDER

Why are they working so hard and creating drama? Hardeep Puri and Amit Shah have all the data of Rohingyas settled in Delhi



ARVIND KEJRIWAL | AAM AADMI PARTY CONVENER

The exclusion of Bhujbal from the council of ministers is the issue of the NCP and not of the Mahayuti coalition



BHARAT GOWALE | SHIV SENA LEADER, MAHARASHTRA

SHORT TAKES

Contractor suicide: CID to probe case

Bangalore: The Karnataka government has handed over the contractor suicide case to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), state Home Minister G Parameshwara said Monday.

Nepalese man held with charas

Bahraich (UP): A 26-year-old Nepalese man was arrested here with charas worth Rs 1.5 crore in his possession, authorities Monday said.

Smuggler escapes police custody

Barabanki (UP): A drug smuggler who was arrested with morphine here escaped from police custody following which two policemen including a sub-inspector were suspended and a case was lodged against a home guard jawan, officials said Monday.

ED traces ₹33 crore worth assets of MP's ex-Transport dept official, associates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: The Enforcement Directorate Monday said it has found documents related to assets worth about Rs 33 crore after it conducted searches against a former Madhya Pradesh Transport department official and his associates as part of a money laundering probe linked to a disproportionate assets case.

About eight premises in state capital Bhopal, Gwalior and Jabalpur were raided by the federal probe agency December 27 in the case against Saurabh Sharma, a former constable of the state Transport department, his "associate" Chetan Singh Gaur and some others including Sharad Jaiswal and Rohit Tiwari.

The ED said in a statement that these persons were the "suspected beneficiary of the proceeds of crime or have allegedly abetted in the laundering of the same".

The money laundering case stems from an FIR of Lokayukta police of the MP government against Sharma where it is alleged that he amassed "disproportionate assets worth crores of rupees in the name of his family members and associated firms and companies".

Movable assets (fixed deposits) of more than Rs 6 crore were identified in the name of Chetan Singh Gaur and bank deposits of more than Rs 4 crore were found in the name of family members and companies of Sharma, it said.

Some documents related to immovable properties worth more than Rs 23 crore in the name of various companies and family members of Sharma were found along with other "incriminating" documents, the ED claimed. These assets were allegedly purchased and acquired by Sharma from "illegal" money obtained through "corrupt" practices while he was working as a constable in the state Transport department, the agency said.

Union Carbide toxic waste set to travel 250 km for disposal

The highly toxic gas methyl isocyanate leaked from the Union Carbide pesticides factory on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984, killing 5,479 persons and leaving more than five lakh others with health problems and long-term disabilities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal/ Indore, Dec 30: The work to remove 377 metric tonnes of hazardous waste from the now-defunct Union Carbide factory in Bhopal has got underway ahead of its planned disposal near Indore. The development comes

weeks after the Madhya Pradesh High Court chided the authorities for not taking action despite repeated directions to clear the site in the Madhya Pradesh capital.

The highly toxic gas methyl isocyanate leaked from the Union Carbide pesticides factory on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984, killing 5,479 persons and leaving more than five lakh others with health problems and long-term disabilities.

Half-a-dozen GPS-enabled trucks with specially reinforced containers reached the factory site as part of the waste disposal process Sunday morning.

40 YEARS ON



the site. Police were also deployed around the factory.

The toxic waste will be moved to an incineration site in Pithampur near Indore, around 250 km from Bhopal, sources said.

The MP High Court December 3 set a four-week deadline

to shift the toxic waste from the factory, observing that even 40 years after the gas disaster, the authorities were in a "state of inertia" that may cause "another tragedy".

Describing it as a "sorry state of affairs", the HC warned the government of

contempt proceedings if its directive was not followed.

"The waste of Bhopal gas tragedy is a stigma which is going to disappear after 40 years. We will dispose it by sending it safely to Pithampur," Swatantra Kumar Singh, director of the state's Gas Relief and Rehabilitation Department told PTI.

He said a "green corridor" of about 250 km will be created by managing traffic to transport the waste from Bhopal to Pithampur in the shortest possible time.

Singh refused to give a specific date for the transportation of the waste and its subsequent disposal at Pithampur, but sources said in view of the HC direction, the process can start soon and the waste might reach its destination by January 3.

9-HOUR BANDH BY FARMERS

Daily life hit in Punjab

Rail operations in Punjab were mostly suspended, buses and other vehicles remained off the road, leaving passengers stranded; and shops and establishments downed shutters as the 7 am-4 pm bandh passed off peacefully

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Dec 30: Normal life was hit across Punjab Monday due to a nine-hour 'bandh' called by farmers protesting against the Centre for their various demands including a legal guarantee of a minimum support price for their crops.

Rail operations in Punjab were mostly suspended, buses and other vehicles remained off the road, leaving passengers stranded; and shops and establishments downed shutters as the 7 am-4 pm bandh passed off peacefully.

Farmer leaders who gave the bandh call more than a week ago declared it "successful" and thanked the "three crore Punjabis for extending their full support".

Amid a harsh winter chill and dense fog at some places, farmers staged 'dharnas' on several roads and highways



including in Patiala, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Bathinda, and Pathankot, crippling the traffic.

The sit-in at the Dhareri Jattan Toll Plaza affected vehicular movement on the Patiala-Chandigarh National Highway. At Amritsar's Golden Gate, scores of farmers staged a 'dharna' near the city's entry point.

Police there assisted some stranded foreign tourists by arranging auto rickshaws for them to reach the Golden

Temple. At some places, commuters were seen arguing with the protesting farmers blocking the roads.

The call for the statewide shutdown was given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha over the Centre not acting on the farmers' demand for a legal guarantee for the MSP.

The bandh was also in support of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal (70) who has

been on a fast-unto-death at Khanauri border protest site over the non-fulfilment of the demands. His health has deteriorated during the fast which has completed 35 days.

Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher told reporters in Amritsar that emergency and other essential services were allowed to operate. He said those going to airport or for a job interview or a wedding were allowed to go.

"Punjabiyaat has won. On behalf of both the forums (speaking heading protests at Shambhu and Khanauri), I want to thank three crore Punjabis for extending their full support to the bandh," Pandher said after the bandh hours.

He also said vegetable mandis, grain markets and petrol pumps also remained shut. "All establishments remained closed. The bandh has been successful and Punjabis have shown great support for Dalalw sahib," he said.

BJP MLA DHAS APOLOGISES FOR REMARKS ON MALI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 30: Maharashtra BJP MLA Suresh Dhas Monday claimed his statement on actor Prajakta Mali was misinterpreted and said he was apologising if it had hurt her and other women.

His statement came amid the Maharashtra State Commission for Women, earlier in the day, directing Mumbai Police to take immediate action and submit a factual report on Mali's complaint against Dhas.

"My statement regarding Prajakta Mali was misinterpreted. I had no intention to disrespect her and talking about her character was out of question. I respect all women. If my statement has hurt her or any other woman, then I apologise," Dhas said.

Mali, in her complaint, had claimed Dhas' inappropriate and defamatory remarks impacted her personal and social life. She also alleged that defamatory content was circulated on social media following these remarks.

The Maharashtra State Commission for Women informed through its X handle that it had received Mali's complaint and initiated action.

The commission stated that the issue was serious and that it had directed the Mumbai Police Commissioner to act immediately and submit a factual report.

Earlier in the day, Dhas, when queried about Mali's complaint, had said the issue was over for him and that he was ready to face consequences.

Dhas had said the focus must remain on the December 9 murder of Santosh Deshmukh and the crime situation in Beed. "I am ready to answer anything about these issues," he added.

Mali had met Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at his residence in Mumbai on Sunday.



The glass bridge connecting Vivekananda memorial and Thiruvalluvar statue, inaugurated by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, in Kanniyakumari, Tamil Nadu, Monday

PTI PHOTO

MAHA KUMBH 2025

AI cameras, RFID wristbands to be used for pilgrims headcount

The mega-religious event, which is held every 12 years, will be held in Prayagraj from January 13 and will continue for 45 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: Artificial intelligence-enabled cameras, RFID wristbands and mobile app tracking are among the methods that will be used to track headcount of the pilgrims attending the Maha Kumbh in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj next month.

The mega-religious event, which is held every 12 years, will be held in Prayagraj from January 13 and will continue for 45 days.

Sharing details of the arrangements being made for the event, Uttar Pradesh Minister Suresh Khanna said the headcount of pilgrims attending the Maha Kumbh will be efficiently managed using advanced technology.

"The first method is attribute based search, where tracking will be conducted using person attribute search cameras. The second method involves RFID wristbands, which will be provided to the pilgrims. Through these wristbands, entry and exit times will be tracked using RFID readers," Khanna said at a roadshow here.

"The third method is mobile app tracking, where with the consent of pilgrims, their location will be tracked through GPS using a mobile application," he added.

The minister said the government is gearing up for a divine, grand and digital Maha Kumbh. The preparations include the launch of a dedicated website and app, an AI-powered chatbot in 11 languages, QR-based passes for people and vehicles, a multilingual digital



lost and found centre, ICT monitoring for cleanliness and tents, software for land and facility allocation, multilingual digital signage (VMD), an automated ration supply system, drone-based surveillance and disaster

management, live software for monitoring 530 projects, an inventory tracking system and integration of all locations on Google maps," he added.

Khanna said the arrangements have been made to ensure the tourists do not face parking issues.

In this regard, 101 smart parking facilities have been created, capable of accommodating up to five lakh vehicles daily.

The parking area spans 1867.04 hectares, which is 763.75 hectares larger compared to the 1103.29 hectares allocated for parking in 2019. These parking facilities will be monitored through the Integrated Command Centre," he added.

The event draws millions of pilgrims to the banks of Ganga at Sangam, and this year, the state government is expecting a staggering 40 crore devotees to take the holy dip and make the Maha Kumbh the largest religious gathering in the world.

The monumental task of preparing for such an event includes meticulous planning and extensive logistics.

international



We repeat: stop attacks on hospitals. People in Gaza need access to health care. Humanitarians need access to provide health aid. Ceasefire!
TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WHO

BAATH PARTY FACES COLLAPSE

A few days after insurgents in Syria overthrew President Bashar Assad, his ruling Baath party announced it was freezing its activities, marking a stunning change in fortunes for the political group that had ruled for more than six decades. Many members of the party's leadership have gone into hiding and some have fled the country



of the day quote

Freedom of expression also includes the greatest nonsense. It is indeed the case that Elon Musk is trying to influence the federal election through his statement
CHRISTIANE HOFFMANN | GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON, GERMANY

There will be strategic partnerships between us and Ukraine on the political, economic and social levels, and scientific partnerships
ASAAD HASSAN AL-SHIBANI | FOREIGN MINISTER, SYRIA

Neither Shahbaz nor Nawaz Sharif have yet offered a public condolence on the loss of Manmohan Singh. There was a message from Ishaq Dar. Still, it's perplexing. They were contemporaries, had some similar economic views, and shared a desire for better India-Pakistan relations
MICHAEL KUGELMAN | DIRECTOR, WILSON CENTRE SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE

GRISLY GAZA

Newborns freeze to death

Fourth infant dies of winter cold in Gaza as families share blankets in seaside tents

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Deir Al-Balah, Dec 30: A fourth infant has died of hypothermia in the Gaza Strip, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced by nearly 15 months of war huddle in tents along the rainy, windswept coast as winter arrives. Jomaa al-Batran, 20 days old, was found with his head as "cold as ice" early Sunday, his father, Yehia, said. The baby's twin brother, Ali, was moved to intensive care at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. Their father said they were born one month premature and spent just a day in the nursery at the hospital, which like other Gaza health centres is overwhelmed and only partially functioning. He said medics told their mother to keep the newborns warm, but it was impossible because they live in a tent and temperatures regularly drop below 10 degrees Celsius (50 degrees Fahrenheit) at night. "We are eight people, and we only have four blankets," al-Batran said as he cradled his son's pale body. He described drops of dew seeping through the tent overnight. "Look at his colour because (of) the cold. Do you see how frozen he is?"



Children, some of them barefoot, stood outdoors and watched him mourn. The shrouded infant was laid at the feet of an imam for prayers. Then the imam took off his ankle-length coat and wrapped it around the father. "Feel warm, my brother," he said. At least three other babies have died from the cold in recent weeks, according to local health officials. The death of Jomaa al-Batran shows how severe the situation facing vulnerable families remains. Israeli authorities say they have allowed thousands of aid trucks carrying food, water, medical equipment and shelter supplies into Gaza. International aid agencies say Israeli forces have been hampering aid deliveries, making the humanitarian crisis even worse. Yahya al-Batran's family, from the northern town of Beit Lahiya, fled their home early in the war for al-Maghazi, an open

air patch of dunes and scrubland in central Gaza which Israeli authorities decreed as a humanitarian zone. Later on, as al-Maghazi became increasingly unsafe, they moved to another encampment in nearby Deir al-Balah city. "Since I am an adult I may take this and endure it, but what did the young one do to deserve this?" Jomaa's mother, Noura al-Batran said, as she held embraced her son's colourful blanket to her chest. **TATTERED TENTS** Around the area, dozens of tents, many already tattered from months of use, have been blown away or flooded by the strong winds and rain, leaving families struggling to repair the damage, patching torn sheets of plastic and piling up sand to

In the second winter of the war in Gaza, the weather has added an extra element of suffering to hundreds of people already displaced, often multiple times, while efforts to agree a ceasefire go nowhere

hold back the water. "The water seeped inside and on the mattresses and my children's clothes. I changed the children's clothes this morning to their underwear," said Sabreen Abu Shanab, a mother of three, whose tent was flooded. "They were sleeping and soaked wet to their underwear. I swear. The pants and



underwear (were all soaked). Everything is soaked, the blankets, the pillows, everything," added the woman. **HUMANITARIAN CRISIS** It is another aspect of the humanitarian crisis facing Gaza's 2.3 million population, caught by the relentless Israeli campaign against the remnants of Hamas and dependent on an erratic aid system increasingly vulnerable to looting as order has broken down. Israel's campaign against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 45,500 Palestinians, according to Palestinian health officials, and turned the enclave into a wasteland of rubble and destroyed buildings. The war was triggered by a Hamas attack on southern Israel October 7, 2023, in which 1,200 people were killed and 251 taken to Gaza as hostages, according to Israeli tallies. The United Nations relief agency for Palestinians, UNRWA, said Sunday that the aid is nowhere near enough and a ceasefire was desperately needed to deliver as famine loomed.

Indian student's body found in Scotland river



London, Dec 30: The body of a 22-year-old Indian student missing since earlier this month has been found in a river in Scotland and her family has been informed while formal identification is awaited. Santra Saju from Kerala was enrolled at the Heriot-Watt University in the Scottish capital of Edinburgh. Police Scotland said in a statement over the weekend that they were made aware of a body in a river near Newbridge, a village near Edinburgh. "Around 11.55am on Friday, December 27, 2024, police were made aware of a body found in the water near to Newbridge," Police Scotland said. "Formal identification has still to take place however the family of Santra Saju, 22, has been informed. The death is not believed to be suspicious," the police said. The statement added that a report will be sent to the Procurator Fiscal, Scotland's prosecution service and death investigation body. Saju was last caught on CCTV at an Asda supermarket store in Almondvale, Livingston, December 6 evening.

SHORT TAKES

More aid to Ukraine

Washington: US President Joe Biden announced \$2.5 billion in additional security assistance for Ukraine Monday as he uses his final weeks in office to surge military aid to Kyiv before President-elect Donald Trump takes power. "At my direction, the United States will continue to work relentlessly to strengthen Ukraine's position in this war over the remainder of my time in office," Biden said in a statement. Biden's announcement includes \$1.25 billion in military aid drawn from US stockpiles and a \$1.22 billion Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) package, the final USAI package of Biden's time in office. Nearly three years into the war, Washington has committed \$175 billion in total aid for Ukraine, but it is uncertain if the aid will continue at that pace under Trump, who replaces Biden January 20. Trump has said he wants to bring the war to a swift end.

Taliban warns to close NGOs employing Afghan women

Afghanistan's Taliban govt has already barred women from many jobs and most public spaces, and also excluded them from education beyond sixth grade



ried out by national and foreign organisations. The government was once again ordering the stoppage of all female work in institutions not controlled by the Taliban, according to the letter. "In case of lack of cooperation, all activities of that institution will be cancelled and the activity license of that institution, granted by the ministry, will also be cancelled." It's the Taliban's latest attempt to control or intervene in NGO activity. **Rules for windows** In another development, the Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada has ordered that buildings should not have windows looking into places where a woman might sit or stand. According to a four-clause decree posted on X late Saturday, the order applies to new buildings as well as existing ones.

Kabul, Dec 30: The Taliban say they will close all national and foreign nongovernmental groups in Afghanistan employing women. It comes two years after they told NGOs to suspend the employment of Afghan women, allegedly because they didn't wear the Islamic headscarf correctly. In a letter published X Sunday night, the Economy Ministry warned that failure to comply with the latest order would lead to NGOs losing their license to operate in Afghanistan. The ministry said it was responsible for the registration, coordination, leadership and supervision of all activities car-

Pak's largest N-plant

Islamabad: Pakistan is set to construct its largest nuclear plant for electricity generation after the country's atomic energy regulatory agency issued the licence for it. The Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA) issued the licence to build Chashma Nuclear Power Plant Unit 5 (C-5), the largest plant producing electricity through nuclear power with a capacity of 1200 MWe. The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission applied for the licence in April of this year.

Road mishap kills 71

Addis Ababa: At least 71 people died in Ethiopia when a truck packed with passengers plunged into a river, according to the spokesperson for the southern Sidama regional government and a statement. The accident occurred in the Bona district, the regional communication bureau said. Wosenyeh Simion, spokesperson for the Sidama regional government, told Reuters at least 71 people had died, including 68 males and 3 females.

Pakistan's polio crisis

Islamabad: Pakistan reported a new polio case Monday, taking the year's tally to 68 in a blow to national efforts to control the crippling disease. So far this year, 27 cases have been reported from Balochistan, 20 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 19 from Sindh, and one each from Punjab and Islamabad. The virus has persisted despite Pakistan conducting multiple mass vaccination drives in 2024 to provide free of cost vaccines to children under five years at their doorsteps.

SK investigators request arrest warrant for Yoon

The martial law move shocked the nation, which has been a democracy since the 1980s and caused international alarm



Seoul, Dec 30: South Korean investigators have sought an arrest warrant for suspended President Yoon Suk Yeol over this month's short-lived imposition of martial law, an official said Monday, the first time an incumbent president has faced such action. Yoon has failed to respond to summons for questioning by police and the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials who are jointly investigating whether his December 3 martial-law declaration amounted to insurrection. Police have tried but failed to successfully raid the presidential office as part of the investigation. A Seoul court will decide

whether to issue an arrest warrant following the request. Insurrection is one of the few charges for which a South Korean president does not have immunity. Yoon Kab-keun, a lawyer for the suspended president, said the arrest request was "unfair" and the anti-corruption agency has no authority to do so. "Emergency martial law is within the president's authority," the lawyer told reporters outside the Seoul Western District Court after submitting a written opinion about the arrest warrant request as well

as a letter of appointment of lawyers. Yoon was suspended from presidential powers after being impeached by parliament over his decision to briefly impose martial law. Masked martial law troops equipped with rifles, body armour and night-vision equipment entered the parliament where they faced off with staffers who opposed them with fire extinguishers. The decree lasted just hours until the parliament voted it down and Yoon backed down. A Constitutional Court trial

Airline safety probe after worst crash

South Korea's acting President Choi Sang-mok Monday ordered an emergency safety inspection of the country's entire airline operation as investigators worked to identify victims and find out what caused the deadliest air disaster on South Korean soil. All 175 passengers and four of the six crew were killed when a Jeju Air Boeing 737-800 belly-landed and skidded off the end of the runway at Muan International Airport, erupting in a fireball as it slammed into a wall. Two crew members were pulled out alive. As a first step, the transport ministry announced plans to conduct a special inspection of all 101 Boeing 737-800 aircraft operated by South Korean airlines beginning Monday, focusing on the maintenance record of key components.

has commenced into whether to reinstate Yoon or remove him permanently from office. It has 180 days to reach a decision.

BIG TECH'S H1B ARGUMENTS IN SPOTLIGHT

AGENCIES

Washington, Dec 30: The past few days have witnessed a fierce debate between President-elect Donald J Trump's very recent tech industry supporters and his long-standing America First base. At the core of the disagreement is the subject of legal immigration—specifically, how Trump should handle so-called "high-skilled" foreign worker programs like the H1B visa. One of the staunchest proponents of expanding the labor pool in this way is billionaire Elon Musk. In a Christmas Day post on X, Musk exclaimed America needs more than double the 160,000 semiconductor industry engineers said to be required by 2032. "No, we need more like double that number yesterday! The number of people who are super talented engineers AND super motivated in the USA is far too low," Musk wrote, adding "Think of

this like a pro sports team if you want your TEAM to win the championship, you need to recruit top talent wherever they may be. That enables the whole TEAM to win." Additionally, Musk-allies and newly-named artificial intelligence (AI) advisors to President-elect Trump, David Sacks, and Sriram Krishnan, have both emerged as loud advocates for more legal immigration, expanding the high-skilled labor supply through changes to the H1B visa lottery. **A FLAWED MORALITY** While bringing allegedly top talent from around the world to the United States sounds good on its face, this isn't actually what H1B visas do. The O-1 visa is actually the program used to grant legal work status to a foreign nation in the United States that is considered a 'once-in-a-generation' intellectual talent in a critical industrial sector.



H1B visas apply more to workers with skills that native-born Americans can easily learn through technical training programs or even collegiate classes. Think more programmer or mid-level software engineer than someone trained in semiconductor fabrication. Even more concerning is that the big tech companies routinely abuse H1B visas as part of a scheme to suppress the wages of both American and foreign workers while maximizing shareholder profits. Recently, the US Department of Justice ramped up enforce-

ment of visa rules after a pattern emerged in which tech companies artificially create the appearance of a domestic work shortage to increase their H1B allotments. This ultimately resulted in native-born workers being laid off and replaced two or threefold by cheaper foreign H1B workers. H1Bs benefit tech companies on two key fronts: First, on average, H1B workers are paid significantly less than their American-born counterparts. This effectively puts downward pressure on wages across the industry, meaning American workers also get paid less; Secondly, because the visa is attached to the sponsor company, the foreign worker lacks the leverage afforded to American-born workers who can demand higher salaries by simply looking to take a job with a different firm. **A COMPLETE SCAM** Little data actually supports the tech industry's claims of a

worker shortage and a need to end H1B country caps. The data does suggest, however, that big tech is replacing qualified and capable American workers with cheaper foreign labor. Between 2022 and 2024, Amazon laid off nearly 30,000 high-skilled workers. In the same period—though in compliance with federal law regarding when companies can request H1B visa workers—the online retail giant expanded its workforce by nearly 100,000 foreign workers. Despite the layoffs, Amazon asked the federal government for a total allotment of 125,000 new H1B visa workers between 2022 and 2024, while they requested to retain around 90,000. Similar trends are true for Google and Microsoft. Between 2022 and 2024, nearly 60,000 American workers were laid off among the three companies, while the companies increased their H1B employees by over 340 percent.

