

Border tensions: B'desh summons Indian envoy

Dhaka: Bangladesh Foreign Ministry Sunday summoned Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma over border tensions, the state-run BSS news agency reported. The development came hours after Dhaka alleged that India was trying to construct fences at five locations along the Indo-Bangla border, violating a bilateral agreement. Verma entered the foreign ministry around 3.00pm (local time). His meeting with Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin lasted about 45 minutes. However, a press statement later issued by the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry did not use the term 'summoned'. "I just met Foreign Secretary to discuss India's commitment to ensuring a crime-free border, effectively addressing challenges of smuggling, movement of criminals and trafficking," Verma told the media after emerging from the meeting.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Make your son a true patriot -- no need to send him abroad. My son, who's studying there, says education isn't that great there

MAHA KUMBH BEGINS

World's largest gathering of humanity expected to host 35 crore devotees in Prayagraj



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj (UP), Jan 12: Maha Kumbh 2025 -- a 45-day event billed as the biggest gathering of humans in one place -- is all set to begin Monday with the first major bathing ritual or 'Shahi Snan' on the auspicious occasion of 'Paush Purnima' at the Sangam, the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mystical Saraswati rivers here. The present edition of the Kumbh is being held after 12 years, though seers claim the celestial permutations and combinations for the event are taking place after 144 years, making the occasion even more auspicious. Perhaps that's why the Uttar Pradesh government is confident of 35 crore devotees visiting Prayagraj this time. Already the numbers are telling, with a record 25 lakh

people taking the holy dip Saturday, two days ahead of the formal start of the event. It will be a grand Maha Kumbh this time. Along with divinity and spirituality, it would also showcase modernity as this time it is going to be a 'Di-gi-Kumbh' of sorts with Artificial Intelligence (AI) being tapped in a big way, officials said. On the ground, Prayagraj is all decked up for the grand occasion, ready to welcome saints, seers, pilgrims, and masses from across the globe, many of whom have already arrived -- all driven by the common goal of getting soaked in the spiritual fervour. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said during his one-of-the-many visits to Prayagraj that the Maha Kumbh, to be held from January 13 to February 26, will elevate India's ancient cultural and religious traditions to

CM flags off special pilgrim bus services

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday virtually flagged off pilgrim bus services from Odisha to Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh for the Maha Kumbh Mela. The luxury buses will operate from Puri, Sambalpur, Bhawanipatna and Berhampur. The buses will go to Ayodhya via Varanasi and Prayagraj. Launching the bus services, Majhi said women will get 50 per cent discount on the bus fare. More than 200 people from Odisha have embarked on a journey to Maha Kumbh Mela on the first day. The passengers will get several facilities in the buses, he said. The Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) buses have both sleeper and seating arrangements. The buses will be available from January 12 to February 26.



More P4

global prominence.

Calling the event a testament to India's rich spiritual and cultural legacy, Adityanath said, "Maha Kumbh offers people from across the globe a chance to reconnect with their ancient traditions and cultural roots. The latest edition of the Maha Kumbh will be a grand, divine, and digitally advanced event." Spanning 10,000 acres, the event will set an exemplary standard for cleanliness, security, and modernity. To enhance the convenience of devotees, a digital tourist map will facilitate monitoring the cleanliness of toilets, while an AI-powered security system integrated with smartphones will ensure safety,

the chief minister said.

He also said the Maha Kumbh is not merely a religious event, but a symbol of social and spiritual unity. The event will transform (Mahakumbh Nagar) into the world's largest temporary city, accommodating 50 lakh to 1 crore devotees at any given time, Adityanath said. This time the Maha Kumbh Mela assumes special significance as it is the first Kumbh being held after the 'Pran Pratistha' of Lord Ram in Ayodhya January 22, 2024. Currently, the first anniversary celebrations of the consecration ceremony are underway in Ayodhya.

FACE-OFF AT GAHIRMATHA

Fish mafia attacks patrol vessel, frees 8 fishermen

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara/Mahakalapara, Jan 12: In a shocking development, fish mafia onboard eight to 10 trawlers allegedly attacked a patrol vessel of the Forest department in the prohibited seawaters of Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary and freed eight fishermen in another trawler detained by the Forest patrol team, official sources said Sunday. The attack was allegedly planned by the crew, who were illegally fishing near the Babubali coast. They also tried to sink the forest patrol vessel, a Forest department official said. The confrontation occurred after Forest department patrolling team nabbed nine individuals suspected of illegal fishing. However, over 80 fishermen in eight to 10 trawlers launched an organised attack on the patrol vessel following a tip-off by the detained fishermen over VHF and freed eight of their colleagues except the driver of the seized trawler. The patrol personnel led by Forester Suresh Chandra Prusty fired shots into the air in self-defence after the fishermen in other trawlers ignored their warnings announced through a handset microphone. The arrested driver of the



seized trawler Chandi Tarini-3, identified as Madhav Mallick of Arua Chudamani area in Bhadrak district, is currently being questioned in this connection. The trawler had violated the fishing ban order by trespassing into prohibited corridors, breaching the Wildlife Protection Act, the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act, and marine sanctuary regulations. A round-the-year ban on sea fishing is enforced at Gahirmatha coast, located off the Bay of Bengal in Kendrapara district. It is one of the world's largest-known nesting ground for olive ridley turtles. Additionally, the turtles also nest at Rushikulya river mouth and Devi river mouth, known for the annual mass nesting event called 'arribada'. When contacted, Rajnagar DFO Sudarshan Gopinath Yadav confirmed the development stating that the Forest department is keeping a close watch on illegal fishing in Gahirmatha area. He said joint raids will be carried out and patrolling will be intensified.

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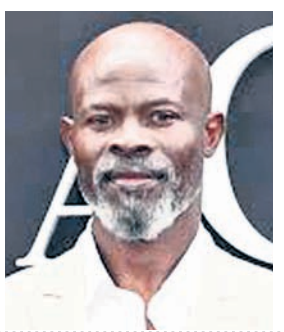
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leisure



DJIMON HOUNSOU SHARES HIS STRUGGLES AS A BLACK ACTOR

Actor Djimon Hounsou recently spoke about the challenges he faces in Hollywood, despite his successful career. Hounsou expressed frustration over being underpaid and undervalued in the industry. He also highlighted the slow progress in diversity and systemic racism within the industry.

ANGELINA OPENS HOME TO LA WILDFIRE EVACUEES

Amid the catastrophic wildfires ravaging California, Angelina Jolie has taken a compassionate step to support evacuees. The 49-year-old actress has opened her home to friends forced to flee their residences due to the destruction, offering a safe haven during this crisis.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
 You will be in a tight fix as the day starts. However, that's exactly the kind of situation in which your skills are tested. In the evening you will draw a lot of praise for your excellent performance. If Ganesha chooses to shower his blessings on you, you will sign new deals.

TAURUS
 Money matters are likely to take up most of your time, this day. Ganesha sees that you will have quite a time handling the difficulties and complexities they pose. You may not find an easy way out of your financial problems and will find it hard to take firm decisions. Your experience and expertise plus your great way of dealing with people will eventually enable you to make correct and profitable investments.

GEMINI
 You are likely to be in a romantic mood today. You may just end up falling in love today. A difficult situation will bring out the competitive streak in you and spur you on to physical and mental excellence. Your capacity and intelligence will be testified to by your work, says Ganesha.

CANCER
 Today is a day for taking things slowly, especially on the business front. This applies the most to the stockbrokers and also others who invest in stocks or shares on the side. Stars are not so bright today and haste will only worsen the matters. People involved in speculation, chance games and shifty markets may feel frustrated.

LEO
 You will be unable to express the feelings that rise up inside you in spite of wanting to. However, keep them close to your heart. You will be very serious about your work today. There is a possibility of some delay in your schedule today due to unforeseen problems, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
 Ganesha says today you will be highly motivated. Your creative talents and abilities set you apart as an excellent artist. Words will flow if you give vent to your creativity, and if you choose to sing or dance, you will be the focus of attention. Ganesha advises you to pursue the performing arts or writing as hobbies.

LIBRA
 Ganesha advises you not to take stress about small issues or matters. To avoid tension and to gain mental peace it is advised you perform yoga or meditation. There will be pressure put on you regarding certain matters at the work-front.

SCORPIO
 You can be fondly called as 'the perfectionist' today. Right from being punctual to following a systematic method for your work, you do it all. All in all, you set an ideal example for the people around you, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
 Take it as a piece of advice: tough times don't last; tough people do. The day has a lot of ups and downs in store for you. However, you are the sailor of stormy seas and would sail through all the troubles easily.

CAPRICORN
 You can't bear the weight of the heavy work load any more. Very cleverly, you will complete your tasks and slowly but steadily you take the load off your shoulders, predicts Ganesha. Attentive and observant, you meticulously plan your actions and minimise the chances of errors.

AQUARIUS
 You are talented, hard working, confident and down to earth. These four characteristics are the pillars of success. Now, it is time build the building. Your curiosity and desire to achieve your goals will help you with it, feels Ganesha. In order to succeed, you may skip a 'quality check' of your output.

PISCES
 A reckless attitude is the root cause of any downfall. Ensure responsible behavior and actions at every step at your workplace, today, suggests Ganesha. Be alert and focused and you will be able to dodge any incoming trouble. Today is a day of materialization and the projects and other things that you have been working on since a long time will draw close to completion and begin to pay off.

Kareena's obsession



Mumbai: Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan is obsessed with Gujarati food and gorged on yummy delicacies such as "kadi and undhiyoo". Kareena took to her Instagram stories section, where she shared the pictures of the delicacies sent in by her friend Poonam Damania. "Yar kadi and undhiyoo.. Everyone knows my obsession for Guju food na... Thank you to my Poonie...", she wrote as the caption. Last week, Kareena, who was seen holidaying in Switzerland with husband Saif Ali Khan, and sons

Taimur Ali Khan and Jeh Ali Khan, dropped a fresh string of pictures. Kareena captioned the post, "Headed home with this mood for 2025". Commenting on the post, Rhea Kapoor wrote, "Tims shoes on point (sic)". While Kareena looked breathtaking in a shimmery dress with open hair and red heels, Saif channeled his inner Nawab in a black pantsuit with a matching bow. Twinning with his father, little Taimur also opted for a black suit. Meanwhile, Kareena last graced the silver screens with Rohit Shetty's cop drama, *Singham Again*, opposite Ajay Devgn. Up next, the actress has reportedly joined hands with Raazi fame director Meghna Gulzar for her drama, titled *Daayra* for now. If the reports are to be believed, the highly-awaited movie will also see Ayushmann Khurrana as the lead.

Sunny reflects on spiritual wisdom



Mumbai: Actress Sunny Leone, who is currently in Malaysia, shared that she thinks God is teaching her a lesson on patience and humility. Sunny took to Instagram, where she shared a video standing on a deck. In the backdrop, a cloudy sky, the sea and sand can be seen. "Hmm, yes, where could we be? There are very mysterious things happening here," without divulging much the actress said in the video. She then shared a cryptic message, which read: "I think God is teaching me a lesson on patience and humility...I just wish I had gotten a warning so I could mentally prepare!!" In other news, Sunny and her husband Daniel Weber renewed their wedding vows after 13 years of their marriage in November. The couple renewed their vows in an intimate ceremony in the Maldives October 31, and was joined by their children Nisha, Noah, and Asher. In a bizarre turn of events, December 23, a new fraud in Chhattisgarh involving Sunny came to light. A person was enjoying the benefits of the state's welfare scheme Mahtari Vandan Yojana using the actress name to get the Rs 1000 per month from the state government.

Sonakshi loses her cool

Mumbai: Sonakshi Sinha, known for her calm demeanor and friendly interplay with the paparazzi, recently had an outburst at an event in Mumbai. The actress, who was attending the event with husband Zaheer Iqbal, expressed frustration when photographers followed her closely. A video from the event shows Sonakshi attempting to move inside the venue when the photographers continued to crowd around her. After maintaining her composure for a while, she lost her patience and asked them to give her space. "Guys, bas karo! Ho gaya, ho gaya," she said, urging the paparazzi to stop following her. She then made her way inside with Zaheer after requesting some room to move freely. Sonakshi was dressed in a black outfit, complemented by minimal makeup and winged eyeliner. Zaheer also wore black, coordinating with his wife. The couple, who got married in June last year after seven years of dating, made their relationship official on June 23, the same date they began their romantic journey. Sonakshi was last seen in *Kakuda* on ZEE5, alongside Riteish Deshmukh and Saqib Saleem. Her upcoming project includes *Nikita Roy* and *The Book of Darkness*, which features Paresh Rawal and Suhail Nayyar in key roles.

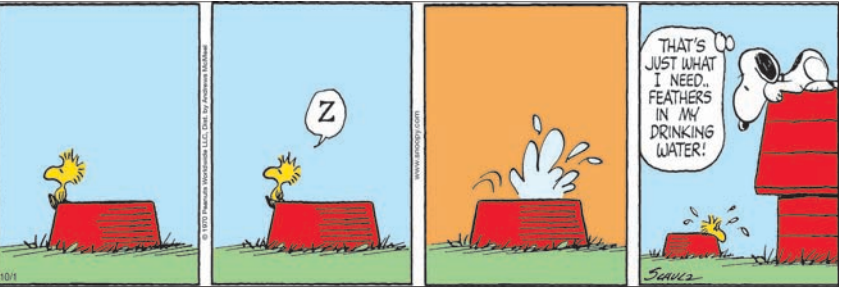


I will be back soon: Rashmika

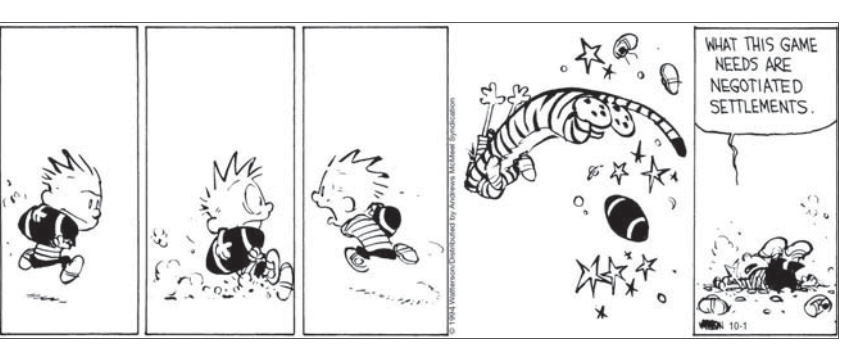
New Delhi: *Pushpa 2: The Rule* star Rashmika Mandanna has confirmed that she got injured in her leg recently, saying she hopes to return to work soon. The 28-year-old actor, also known for films such as *Animal*, *Bheeshma* and *Geetha Govindam*, shared a post on Instagram Saturday days after reports of her sustaining a leg injury started doing social media rounds. "Injured myself in my sacred gym shrine," she wrote in the caption alongside a picture of her with a plaster on her right leg. Mandanna apologised to the directors of her upcoming films *Thama*, *Sikandar*, and *Kubera* for the delay in the shoots due to her injury. "Now I'm in 'hop mode' for the next few weeks or months or god only knows, so seems like I'll be hopping my way back to sets for Thama, Sikandar, and Kubera. To my directors sorry for the delay..." "I'll be back soon enough just making sure my legs are fit for action (or at least fit for hopping). In the meantime, if you need me...I'll be the one in the corner doing a highly advanced bunny hop workout. HOP HOP HOP..." she wrote. The actor was last seen in *Sukumar's Pushpa 2*, co-starring Allu Arjun.



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

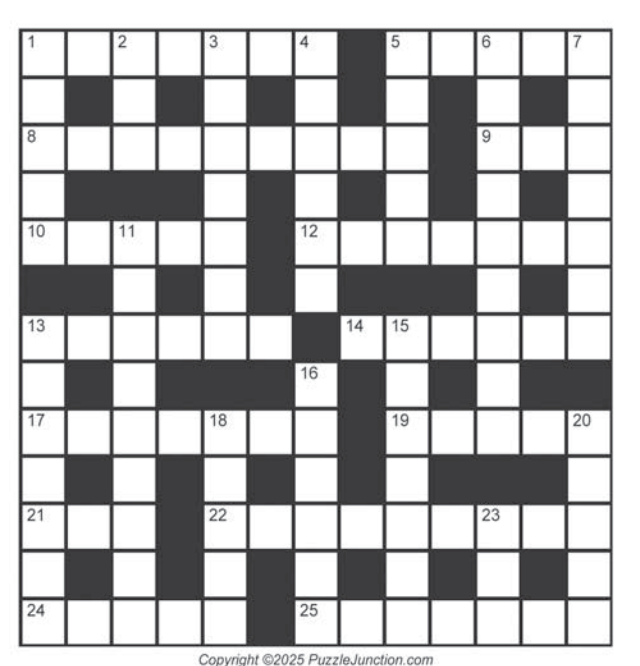


BREVITY



FUN POST

CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Lower someone's spirits
 - 5 Gnat
 - 8 Like a riptide
 - 9 Varnish ingredient
 - 10 Filled to excess
 - 12 Crisp lustrous fabric
 - 13 Hypothesis
 - 14 Salad leaf
 - 17 Ineffectual
 - 19 Breakfast bread
 - 21 Debate position
 - 22 Gourmet
 - 24 Figure
 - 25 Pudding ingredient
 - 6 Fellini flick, *La ___* (5,4)
 - 7 Enclosed territory
 - 11 Signature tune (5,4)
 - 13 Pounded
 - 15 Bridge bid (2-5)
 - 16 Back up
 - 18 Standing
 - 20 Monarchy
 - 23 Self
- Down**
- 1 Dried fruit
 - 2 Hole goal
 - 3 Quito locale
 - 4 Gym wear
 - 5 Recurring theme

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.

		6						
5	4		7	2		6		
	2		4	6		8		
7	8		5		1			
6			3					4
						5		
			1		8	2		
	5	3	2	9				8
								3

SOLUTIONS

A	T	E	B	E	W	I	T	C	H	J
M	O	I	R	D	L	J				
N	I	P	I	N	G	E	I	M	A	G
N	I	C	O	V	E	T				
D	I	C	T	A	T	O	R	S	H	I
F	N	D	Y	E	R					
U	F	O	D	R	O	W	N	R	E	E
L	P	E	U	C						
W	E	L	S	H	R	A	R	E	B	I
E	N	C	A	A	A	A				
W	A	I	V	E	B	U	S	S	T	O
E	N	N	U	Y	O	E				
A	G	I	T	A	T	E	A	N	Y	

4	1	7	3	5	6	8	2	9
3	2	9	8	1	4	7	5	6
5	8	6	9	7	2	1	4	3
7	3	2	5	6	9	4	1	8
9	4	8	2	3	1	6	7	5
6	5	1	4	8	7	9	3	2
8	6	4	7	2	3	5	9	1
1	9	3	6	4	5	2	8	7
2	7	5	1	9	8	3	6	4

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Students and teachers admire a model of 'Bhagabat Tungji' at the State Museum in Bhubaneswar Sunday



downtown

Youth will play key role in '36 vision: CM

Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: The youth of the state will play a pivotal role in the vision to achieve a prosperous Odisha by 2036, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said Sunday. "Our youth will be the driving force behind Odisha's development. Let us resolve to work for the economic prosperity of our state and country while promoting our cultural and spiritual values globally," the chief minister said while speaking at an event organised by Ramakrishna Mission here on the occasion of Vivekananda Jayanti which is also celebrated as the National Youth Day.

Paying glowing tributes to Swami Vivekananda, Majhi described him as an eternal consciousness, rather than just a personality, whose ideals continue to inspire generations. He highlighted Vivekananda's

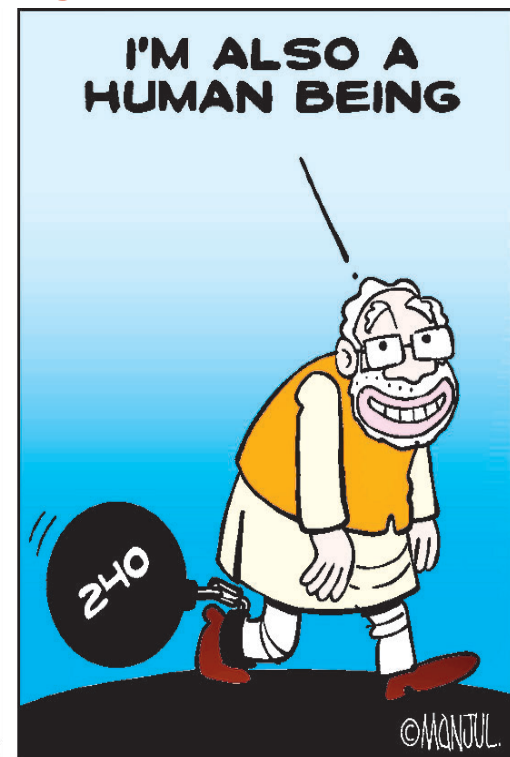
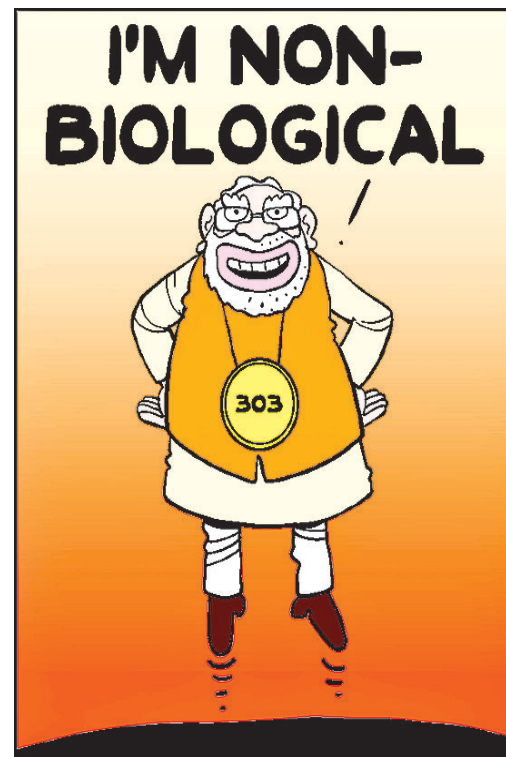


teachings as a guiding light for the youth, recalling his iconic speech at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, which changed the world's perception of Indian spirituality and philosophy. He urged the youth to embrace Indian language, literature, and cul-

ture to build a successful and empowered society. Majhi emphasised the significance of Vivekananda's ideals and spirituality in making life accessible to all. He praised his enduring image as a brilliant, eloquent, and great warrior monk, who

inspired Indian youth to take pride in their asceticism. He encouraged the youth to strive for economic prosperity and establish India's cultural and spiritual ideas globally. The program also featured speeches by Balasore MP Pratap Sarangi and Eka-mar-Bhubaneswar MLA Babu Singh, who praised Swami Vivekananda's legacy as a source of inspiration and leadership. They encouraged the youth to incorporate his principles into their lives to foster personal growth and societal progress. The event saw active participation from students of various schools and colleges, adding vibrancy to the celebration. A notable moment was a heartfelt recitation of Swamiji's Swadesh Mantra by a student of DAV Pokhaript, showcasing the enduring relevance of his teachings.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Ayushman Bharat MoU signing today

Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will attend the MoU signing ceremony for implementation of Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) at New Delhi Monday. The agreement will be signed between National Health Authority and Odisha government on implementation of Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY in the presence of Union Health Minister JP Nadda and Majhi. Union ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and Jai Oram will also be present during signing of the MoU.

Drugs crunch hits SCB Niramaya centres

Cuttack, Jan 12: At a time when the state government is focusing on quality healthcare and aiming at transforming Sriram Chandra Bhanj (SCB) Medical College and Hospital here into a world-class health facility, shortage of medicines at the Niramaya centres on the hospital premises have sparked concern. Resentment brewed among patients and attendants at the premier state-run hospital when Orthopaedic medicines went out of the shelves at these government stores which dispense drug free of cost. Patients have alleged that medicines prescribed by Orthopaedic department physicians are unavailable at the Niramaya centres for quite some time. Some patients and atten-



dants alleged that they have been standing in long queues in front of the Niramaya centres for hours since Friday, but they have to return empty-handed. Although there are six Niramaya centres on SCB premises, none of them are having medi-

cines for Orthopaedic patients. The development comes in the wake of state government's purported focus on quality healthcare and its vision to transform SCB into a world-class hospital. Litan Maharana, attendant of a patient at Orthopaedic department, said, "We are facing a lot of difficulties as not a single Niramaya centre here has the medicines prescribed by the Orthopaedic department. Since we have come from Dhenkanal, we cannot go home without medicines. I don't know how long I have to wait." Significantly, earlier allegations had surfaced regarding non-availability of medicines for cardiology and ENT patients. SCBMCH superintendent in-charge Lusi Das was not available for comments.

Illegal trawlers killing Olive Ridley turtles



Environmentalists and nature lovers have expressed concern over the lack of consistent patrolling in the restricted sea zones by Marine Fisheries and Forest departments

Konark, Jan 12: Giving two hoots to the fishing ban imposed by the government for the nesting season of Olive Ridley sea turtles, illegal fishing trawlers are active near Chandrabhaga beach, proving fatal to the rare marine species, reports said. The discovery of a carcass of an Olive Ridley turtle near Daria Mahaveer Temple along Chandrabhaga beach, under Konark police station, has raised serious environmental concerns, according to the reports. The Olive Ridley turtles usually begin their mass nesting season from November to February. This critical period witnesses strict restrictions on trawler movement within designated no-fishing zones to protect the turtles and their nesting grounds. However, illegal trawler activities have reportedly escalated during this time, with trawler mafia gangs blatantly violating the restrictions. These illegal operations disrupt

the turtles' nesting process and lead to numerous fatalities as the turtles are often struck by trawlers. Environmentalists and nature lovers have expressed concern over the lack of consistent patrolling in the restricted sea zones by the Marine Fisheries department and the Forest department. The absence of such surveillance has allowed unchecked illegal fishing, endangering the Olive Ridley population. Highlighting the gravity of the issue, local intellectuals, concerned citizens, and environmental groups from Konark region have called for immediate action. They demanded regular patrolling by the departments concerned to enforce the restrictions effectively and ensure the safety of the Olive Ridley turtles during their nesting season. This situation underscores the urgent need for coordinated efforts between authorities and stakeholders to preserve these endangered turtles and their fragile ecosystem.

BJD seeks reply on removal of Raghubar

Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: The Opposition BJD Sunday alleged that former Odisha governor Raghubar Das was a "controversial" figure and demanded that people should know the reason "for his premature removal from the post". The BJD's reaction followed Das's formal rejoining of the BJP in his home state Jharkhand Friday. While being inducted into the BJP, Das said as governor, he worked for the people, listened to their grievances, and visited 30 districts within three months. "I have broken the myth that the governor's post is 'laat sahib'," Das said. Addressing a press conference here at the BJD headquarters, former minister and MLA Arun Kumar Sahoo accused Das of working as an "agent" of the BJP even though he was holding the governor's post. "Das was working as an agent of the BJP and was a controversial figure. He was never a popular governor. His remark that governors are not 'laat sahib' raises several questions, such as whether other governors are 'laat sahib'," Sahoo told reporters. Sahoo added, "If Das was a popular governor as claimed by the BJP, then why was he unceremoniously removed from the post? The BJP should give a reply to the people of Odisha in this regard." The BJD leader also questioned why police did not take any action against Das's son who had allegedly assaulted a state government employee. The BJP rejected BJD's allegations and claimed that Das was loved by the people of Odisha because he reached at the doorstep of villagers, listened to their grievances while their chief minister (referring to Naveen Patnaik) was confined to Bhubaneswar. "BJD was opposing Das because he was reaching out to people and hearing their grievances while the then chief minister, Naveen Patnaik, could not meet masses," BJP MLA Saroj Padhy said.



STELLAR SHOW: Artistes perform during Adivasi Mela-2025 at Exhibition Ground in Bhubaneswar Sunday

Crucial meet on HMPV Jan 15

Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: The Health department is scheduled to hold a crucial meeting January 15 to address concerns regarding Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in the state and to prepare strategies to implement guidelines, if issued, by the Centre. The meeting assumes significance as deliberations will be made with a focus on preparedness in all districts. The state government's response will depend heavily on the directives issued by Central authorities. Delegates will consider expert advice from the Union government's committee and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to shape future actions. Health department special

secretary Bijay Mohapatra stated that symptoms associated with HMPV may include cold, fever, cough and even pneumonia. The government emphasised its readiness to manage these health threats. Surveillance operations are active while all districts have been instructed to remain vigilant. There is no specific treatment for HMPV and it is similar to the treatment given to patients suffering from pneumonia. Hospitals in the state are reportedly well-stocked with essential medicines and oxygen supplies that were made during Covid-19 pandemic, Mohapatra asserted. "We are waiting for the necessary instructions from the technical advisory group of the government of India. We will take appropriate action once any advisory is released," he added.

Every public space should be a safe space: Sanyasi

Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: Every public space should be a safe space for people of all abilities, said Deputy Secretary of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) department Sanyasi Behera at a function on the concluding day of the nine-day tactical urbanism event 'Sensesphere' here, Sunday. Behera, who earlier toured the event site at Bhim Bhoi Street, Madhusudan Marg in Unit III commended the initiative and stressed the importance of creating inclusive public spaces. "I strongly urge the government to implement Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RpWD) Act which advocate



for the fundamental rights to acceptability and accessibility," he said. Organized by Aaina in collaboration with WRI India and Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), the event

showcased a series of initiatives focused on accessibility, sensory engagement, and community collaboration. In addition to Behera's speech, the event featured an array of engaging activities on the concluding day. Sabita Pattnaik, an expert in inclusive design and storytelling, led an interactive storytelling session on the importance of sensory parks. She discussed how such spaces contribute to cognitive and emotional well-being, and emphasised the need for their integration in urban planning. The closing ceremony saw a thematic performance by singer Susmita Das on the idea of community cohesion through music. The performance also highlighted the importance of designing inclusive spaces for children and adolescents. "Creating spaces that cater to everyone is essential. Initiatives like this one should be replicated in all parts of the City to ensure a more inclusive future for the next generation," she said. The final day of Sensesphere also witnessed community interactions, with many adolescents, parents, and local residents offering feedback on the event.



Developed Jammu Kashmir for Developed India



Inauguration of 6.4 km long **Sonamarg Tunnel** with an investment of over ₹2700 crore

BENEFITS OF THE PROJECTS



All weather connectivity between Srinagar and Ladakh, simplifying life for millions of people



1.5 hour journey can now be completed in just 40 minutes, saving time, fuel and logistics costs



Promoting all season tourism with safe connectivity to Sonamarg and other destinations and opening up opportunities for local businesses like hotels, transportation and restaurants



Enhanced market access for local agricultural produce, like saffron, apples, walnuts, cherries, Kahwa, etc



Improved availability of essential items and access to better healthcare services for local residents



Improved connectivity will attract investment, create new employment opportunities and stimulate economic growth



Seamless access to border areas in all seasons, thereby enhancing national security



Along with the 6.4 km long tunnel, the project includes a 6 km long approach road and a 4 km long creeper lane dedicated to the movement of heavy vehicles

by

Narendra Modi

Prime Minister

Monday, Date: 13th January, 2025 | Time: 11:30 AM
Venue: Village Shutkadi, (Sonamarg), Distt. Ganderbal, Jammu & Kashmir

in the august presence of

Nitin Gadkari

Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways

Dr. Jitendra Singh

Union Minister of State
(Independent Charge)

Ajay Tamta

Union MoS for Road
Transport & Highways

Harsh Malhotra

Union MoS for Corporate Affairs and
Road Transport & Highways

Manoj Sinha

Lt. Governor,
U.T. of Jammu & Kashmir

Omar Abdullah

Chief Minister,
U.T. of Jammu & Kashmir

Surinder Kumar Choudhary

Dy. Chief Minister,
U.T. of Jammu & Kashmir

Sunil Sharma

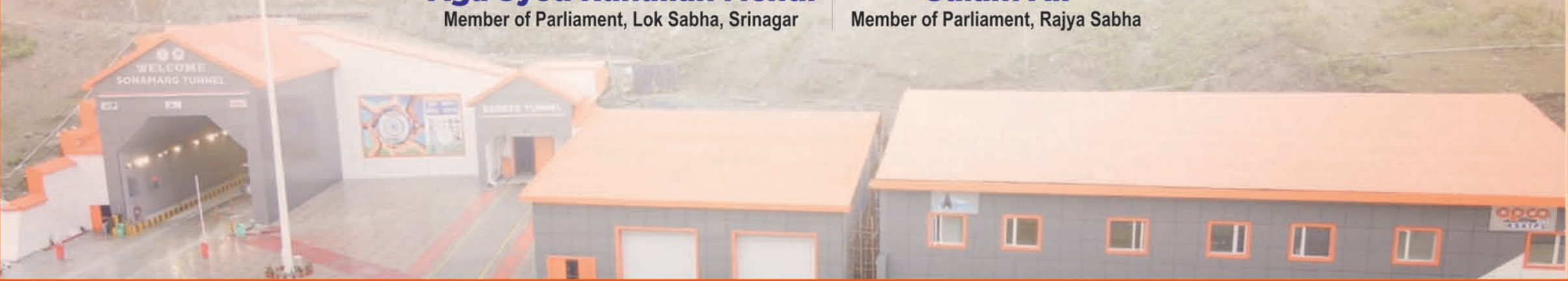
Leader of Opposition,
J&K Legislative Assembly

Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi

Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha, Srinagar

Gulam Ali

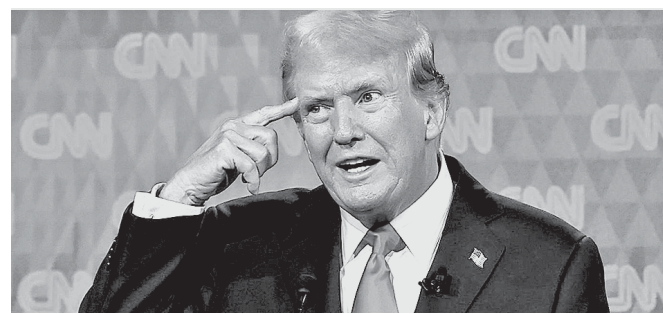
Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha



DD NEWS Watch the Event Live at DD News

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

AMERICAN CATASTROPHE



Perhaps Senator Marco Rubio, President-elect Donald Trump's nominee to be Secretary of State, should warn his boss that such brilliant geopolitical musings could get the Russians thinking about taking Alaska back

We just got a foretaste of the bizarre stream of consciousness that will be emanating from the White House over the next four years: the United States might start expanding territorially by taking over Greenland, the Panama Canal, and maybe Canada as well. Perhaps Senator Marco Rubio, President-elect Donald Trump's nominee to be secretary of state, should warn his boss that such brilliant geopolitical musings could get the Russians thinking about taking Alaska back.



Jan T. Gross

WHAT STANDING DO WESTERN DEMOCRACIES HAVE NOW TO DEMAND THAT ANY REGIME OR POLITICIAN ABIDE BY INTERNATIONAL RULES AND NORMS?

Trump is a profoundly ignorant man whose knowledge about the world seems to be limited to what he has gleaned from watching television. During his first presidency, world leaders, especially many of the European politicians he met, were transfixed by his mental tabula rasa. The one time he was caught with a book in hand – the Bible, no less – was in the notorious photo-op at St. John's Church during the George Floyd protests in Washington.

As if ignorance were not bad enough, America's president-elect has been held liable for sexual assault and is a convicted felon, a friend to nativists and racists, a coup plotter and rabble-rouser, and a serial liar who touts the virtues of fictional cannibals. He is a classic con man – and more than half of America's voters can't seem to get enough of him.

Long before the 2024 presidential election, the American political class knew all there was to know about Trump's unfitness for the job, and they, too, didn't flinch. Impeached twice during his first term, Trump was twice pronounced fit by his party's senators to be the leader of the largest

democracy in the West. By voting twice to acquit Trump, Republican senators refused to disqualify Trump from the US presidency permanently – and thereby deliberately and directly enabled his return.

The ripple effects of this catastrophe go well beyond putting an ugly face on the American Dream. They undermine the foundations of political order worldwide. What standing do Western democracies have now to demand that any regime or politician abide by international rules and norms? How do we shame with a straight face the Aleksandr Lukashenkos and Nicolás Maduros of this world when they deny the results of elections they lost? What credibility and effect can we expect to have in calling out Vladimir Putin's lies about his murderous war in Ukraine, when the US has a president who spins alternative facts?

Lenin famously said that the capitalists, out of self-interest, would sell the Bolsheviks the rope with which the Bolshe-

viks would later hang them. The American political class exceeded Lenin's expectations. Trump's enablers wove the rope of lawlessness, tied the noose, put our collective head inside, and hanged the American Republic – all without any assistance from the Bolsheviks.

One day, wise students will show how all this was a consequence of the current information revolution, which is probably having a greater impact on social relations and public discourse than the invention of print once had. Before we attempt to understand why existing institutions seem unable to process these revolutionary changes while safeguarding a liberal democratic order, we should note that this would not be the first time grand and elaborate common endeavors go out with a whimper.

America's founders, an exceptionally talented group of subtle political thinkers and talented writers, thought through many of the pitfalls

that could derail their proposed system of government, defending it brilliantly in The Federalist Papers. But for all their awareness of human folly and personal hubris, they could not erect institutional ramparts to protect the US Constitution from the one-time host of a reality television show and owner of the Miss Universe pageant. A man who reportedly strolled unannounced into a dressing room full of half-naked teenage pageant contestants is pushing the founders' intricate and inspiring Enlightenment project over the brink.

Trump is not doing this alone, of course. His enablers included not only the American political class but also some extremely wealthy people (including the world's richest person), and, most importantly, 77 million American voters. The last time a great nation whose weight in world affairs reached far beyond its borders fell for a hatred-spewing demagogue, it took 12 years and 70 million dead before the West could start picking up the pieces.

Building and maintaining a liberal institutional order requires years, if not generations, of hard work, as well as visionary public servants and an occasional miracle. How long will it take to rebuild what Trump will destroy? Under the best circumstances we must wait four years to get an answer. In the meantime – even though a good psychologist friend opined that my sentiment is but a sign of senility – I am not optimistic.

The writer is Emeritus Professor of War and Society and Emeritus Professor of History at Princeton University.

PROJECT SYNDICATE



There is no greater courage than that of recognizing one's own mistakes.

THE MOTHER

On The Threshold

It's official now. The global average temperature has exceeded 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial levels for the first time on record. This brings the world closer to breaching the pledge that as many as 195 governments made under the 2015 Paris climate agreement. The planet's average temperature in 2024 was 1.6 degrees Celsius higher than in the 1850-1900 pre-industrial period, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S).

The bleak finding comes at a time when devastating wildfires continue to tear through Los Angeles, California, a disaster scientists say was made worse by climate change. The wildfires have so far claimed sixteen human lives while more than 12,000 structures have been destroyed. According to a preliminary estimate, the economic losses of the disaster range from \$135 billion to \$150 billion. Wildfires are among the many disasters that climate change is making more frequent and severe. Climate change is also creating new unknown diseases that will require hitherto undeveloped medicines to keep people healthy while making big pharma reap inconceivable profits.

Every continental region, with the exception of Australasia and Antarctica, recorded its hottest year ever, as 11 months of 2024 surpassed the 1.5 degrees Celsius mark. Global temperatures have reached unprecedented highs and continue to rise for several consecutive years. The previous record for the hottest year was set in 2023. Notably, all ten of the warmest years on record have occurred within the last ten years. However, this marks the first instance of an entire calendar year exceeding the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold.

The year was marked by extreme weather events all through. Devastating floods in April killed hundreds of people in Pakistan and Afghanistan, while a year-long drought left water levels in the Amazon at an all-time low. Climate change also intensifies storms and heavy rainfall, as a warmer atmosphere can retain more moisture, resulting in severe downpours. In 2024, atmospheric water vapour hit an all-time high with the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reporting that it was the third-wettest year on record. Likewise, atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas, hit a new record of 422 parts per million in 2024, according to the C3C.

While human-induced warming in the form of burning fossil fuels is to be blamed for the state of affairs, natural factors, such as a significant El Niño event too played a crucial role in the rising temperatures of 2024. El Niño is a phenomenon that influences weather patterns around the world, leading to higher ocean temperatures in the tropical Pacific region.

Year-to-year fluctuations in the weather mean that even if a single year surpasses 1.5 degrees Celsius, the long-term average may still lie below that. It is this long-term average temperature that the Paris agreement referred to. The current long term average is around 1.3 degrees Celsius. To ensure that warming does not exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius for a prolonged period, and avoid the worst effects of climate change, we need to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adopt more greener alternatives to fossil fuels.

However, the prospects for this appear grim, at least in the near future, as US President-elect Donald Trump who is set to assume office on 20 January, has already declared climate change a hoax, disregarding the global scientific consensus. During his first term, he withdrew the United States from the Paris agreement and has pledged to increase fossil fuel production while reversing President Joe Biden's efforts to promote alternative energy sources. The US happens to be one of the largest contributors of greenhouse gases and therefore plays a vital role in helping in the global battle against climate change.

WISDOM CORNER

Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy.
KAHLIL GIBRAN

Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.
CARL JUNG

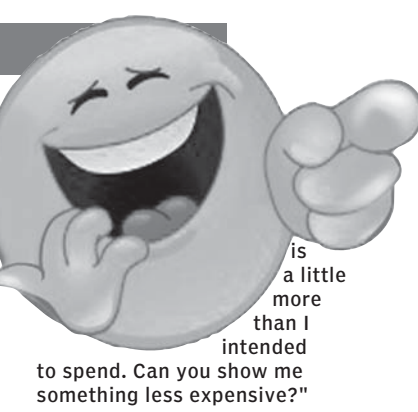
Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for.
ZIG ZIGLAR

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1832:** Horatio Alger, one of the most popular American authors in the last 30 years of the 19th century and perhaps the most socially influential American writer of his generation, was born.
- 1898:** Émile Zola's "J'accuse" published. On this day in 1898, French author Émile Zola published an open letter in the newspaper L'Aurore denouncing the French general staff for its role in the 1894 treason conviction of Jewish French army officer Alfred Dreyfus.
- 1915:** The worst earthquake in Italian history kills 30,000. The quake hit the town of Avezzano, about 100 km (60 m) east of Rome.
- 1942:** American industrialist Henry Ford patented plastic automobile construction.
- 1968:** Johnny Cash performs live at Folsom State Prison. American singer and songwriter Johnny Cash recorded the album Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison in front of an audience of some 2,000 inmates at California's Folsom Prison. The album "Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison" became a huge success.
- 1997:** President Abdalá Bucaram Ortíz of Ecuador visited President Alberto Fujimori of Peru, marking the first official visit to Peru by an Ecuadoran president in 150 years.

LOL THE SHOPLIFTER

A shoplifter was caught red-handed trying to steal a watch from an exclusive jewellery store. "Listen," said the shoplifter, "I know you don't want any trouble either. What do you say I just buy the watch and we forget about this?" The manager agreed and wrote up the sales slip. The crook looked at the slip and said, "This



is a little more than I intended to spend. Can you show me something less expensive?"

SPECTRUM HEALTHCARE

Vision for a healthy Odisha by 2036



Sarit Kumar Rout

PRIMARY CARE FINANCING SHOULD BE STEPPED UP TO 70 PER CENT OF TOTAL HEALTH BUDGET GRADUALLY FROM THE CURRENT LEVEL OF APPROXIMATELY 45 PER CENT

The state is preparing to celebrate its centenary year of separate statehood in 2036. The next decade is critical in terms setting priorities and providing avenues to accomplish the goal of a developed state harnessing unexplored potentials. Health sector over the years has made notable strides including improving institutional delivery, immunization, arresting child mortality, and reducing the prevalence of TB and malaria. However, the burden of maternal deaths, rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases and undernutrition related morbidity and mortality still worry us. Compared to 1990s, the leading causes of death now have been stroke, CODP and ischemic heart diseases. Moreover, the unequal distribution of health benefits across social groups especially, the STs and SCs performing below par require further attention. By 2036, the share of 60+ people in the total population will rise approximately to 16% demanding higher investment in geriatric care. This age group living longer will be exposed to age related complications along with NCDs inflicting many. This urges to tailor programmes to cater to the needs of this specific group. The other concern is climate change, which

is upsetting population health dynamics on multiple ways. Health system needs intense introspection to design and implement programmes to make a healthy Odisha by 2036. Without spreading the efforts thinly on countless interventions, it must aspire for achieving universal health coverage (UHC). Strengthening comprehensive primary care with a mix of adequate financing and service packages is critical in the next decade to design, develop and promote basic low cost care. The state has created health and wellness centers (HWCs) to provide comprehensive primary care however, it needs to be augmented with required staff, infrastructure and delivery models in both rural and urban settings. Moreover, the secondary care, especially community health centers which lack specialists and essential infrastructure, has been a major drag in the rural health system. This missing link in the three-tier delivery system has created enormous inefficiencies wasting both household and government resources. The next decade should not be missed and a comprehensive plan with appropriate budget allocations ought to be introduced from 2025-26. Primary care financing should be stepped up

to 70% of total health budget gradually from the current level of approximately 45%.

Importantly, resource allocations should match to bridge the gap at CHCs and around 15-20% of total health budget must be tied up for this.

Odisha's urban growth has been tardy in the last two decades; this will alter in the next decade with exodus of more people from backward regions. By 2036, around one fifth of the population will constitute urban population who will be struggling with NCDs, diseases associated with undernutrition and poverty. In this context, the urban health ecosystem has to be upgraded by improving capacity and reach of primary care. Equally important is sanitation and waste management to improve resistance to respiratory diseases.

Constituting 23% of total population, the STs face multiple deprivations and lag behind the mainstream population on several health indices. Grappling with high burden of child and maternal mortality, anaemia and undernutrition, this social group is rapidly transitioning to lifestyle diseases - hypertension and diabetes. The goal of healthy Odisha remains elusive if this group is not mainstreamed addressing the health systems

deficits and the social determinants of health. The next budget must pay attention to this by creating a centre for health of vulnerable population to assess, guide and support the government.

The next decade will benefit from advancement of digital technology. Mobile health (mHealth), health information technology (IT), telehealth and telemedicine should be used for bringing last mile connectivity to provide good quality care.

In recent past, the state government has stepped up allocations for health and in FY25; it increased the share of health budget to 8% of total budget. This however should grow uninterruptedly and proportionately to GDSP growth. Likewise, allocations to medicine, diagnostics and patient transport that cause high out-of-pocket expenses should be raised. The middle class, who remain uncovered by government insurance schemes, may be included after exploring the payment options. The upcoming budget may contemplate these points and initiate action on these directions.

The writer works as a professor of health economics & financing, Indian Institute of Public Health, Bhubaneswar.

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



Work-life balance

Sir, Following Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy's suggestion in October 2023 for "70-hours-work-a-week" among Indian youngsters, L&T Chairman SN Subrahmanyam's recent promotion for 90-hours work per week has stirred the pot further and his contemptuous remarks on the private lives of his employees are inappropriate and indecent, which naturally invited resentment from all corners. Such suggestions from top business officials may boost productivity, but they will certainly affect the balance of work-life approach, which is equally important. In fact, a Bangalore-based cardiologist wrote in his X account, saying, "such an inhumane working hours can create a whole generation with a host of heart-related comorbidities." The cardiologist's comment gains prominence, as the WHO says that India accounts for at least one-fifth of the 17.9 million cardiovascular disease-related deaths globally, especially in the younger generation. Currently, India's labour codes mandate that workers put in 8-hours of work a day, capping the weekly work hours at 48. Despite this, global data shows that India ranks fifth in the world among countries with long working hours. **Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI**

Call to action

Sir, National Youth Day, observed on January 12, commemorates the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, one of India's greatest spiritual leaders and social reformers. His call for "muscles of iron" and "nerves of steel" underscores the need for self-reliance, education, and societal responsibility. With nearly half of India's population under 25, the youth represent immense potential for nation-building. Initiatives like Skill India, Startup India, and the National Youth Policy empower young people through training, innovation, and leadership opportunities. These programmes resonate with Swami Vivekananda's ideals of self-reliance and social reform, aligning with India's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Self-respect and self-worth were central to Vivekananda's teachings, linking discipline to a positive self-image. He emphasised respect for oneself and others as the foundation for confidence, integrity, and personal growth through structured routines and hard work. National Youth Day is a call to action for India's youth to unlock their full potential. **Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD**

Crimes drop slightly in Delhi

The national capital witnessed decline in murder, robbery, crimes against women in 2024 as compared to 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: The national capital witnessed a slight drop in crimes such as murder, robbery, rape and molestation in 2024 compared to the previous year, according to the annual data released by the Delhi Police.

Crimes against women saw a decline, with rape cases reducing to 2,076 from 2,141 in 2023. Similarly, incidents of molestation dropped sharply from 2,345 to 2,037, while eve-teasing cases also decreased to 362 from 381 the previous year.

Murder cases in Delhi recorded a marginal dip, with 504 incidents reported in 2024 compared to 506 in 2023. Robbery cases decreased to 1,510, down from 1,654 the previous year. The number of riots in the city also dropped from 43 in 2023 to 33 in 2024.

The data for some crimes remained unchanged, as cases of dacoity stood at 29 in both 2023 and 2024, while 13 cases of kidnapping for ransom were reported in both years.

However, areas of concern



CRIMES	2024	2023
RAPE CASES	2,076	2,141
MOLESTATION	2,037	2,345
EVE-TEASING	362	381
MURDERS	504	506
ROBBERY	1,510	1,654
RIOTS	33	43
SNATCHING	6,493	7,886
THEFT	1,17,563	1,58,965

persist, as the city recorded an uptick in fatal accidents and burglaries. Fatal accidents rose

to 1,504 in 2024 from 1,432 in 2023, while number of burglaries surged past 29,000, marking

an increase of over 400 cases from the previous year.

On the other hand, several crimes saw a notable decline. Snatching cases reduced significantly, dropping to 6,493 from 7,886 in 2023. Hurt cases also fell to 1,401 from 1,481 the previous year. Motor vehicle theft showed a slight improvement, with cases reducing to 39,976 from 40,045.

Theft cases, one of the most reported crimes in Delhi, saw a sharp decline in 2024, with 1,17,563 incidents recorded, a significant drop from 1,58,965 in 2023. Simple accident cases also showed improvement, reducing to 4,069 in 2024 from 4,283 in the preceding year.

According to the data, cases under the Arms Act saw a slight decrease, with 3,526 incidents reported in 2024 compared to 3,579 in 2023. However, a sharp rise was recorded in cases under the Excise Act, which increased to 6,445 from 5,951 in the previous year.

Similarly, cases registered under the Gambling Act saw a marginal uptick, rising to 3,556 in 2024 from 3,534 in 2023.

A significant increase was observed under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, with cases surging to 1,789 in 2024, up from 1,325 the previous year.

A senior Delhi Police officer attributed the overall decline in crime to improved law enforcement strategies and targeted operations.

"We focused on enhanced patrolling, community engagement, and technology-driven surveillance to prevent offenses. Special operations targeting repeat offenders and organized criminal networks resulted in the arrest of over 100 hardcore criminals this year, significantly disrupting criminal activities across the city," the officer stated.

The officer also highlighted the role of citizen cooperation and digital tools in crime prevention.

"We leveraged advanced analytics and integrated technology with traditional policing methods, ensuring quicker response times and better resource allocation," the officer added.

Seven special courts to try sexual crimes against women in TN



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Jan 12: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin Saturday announced setting up of 7 special courts to try sexual offences against women and a special committee to be led by a police officer in districts for expeditious handling of such cases.

Stalin, in his reply to the motion of thanks to the Governor's address, also said that Tamil Nadu Prison Rules will be amended suitably to not permit premature release of prisoners, convicted for sexual offences.

"Special courts would be newly set up in Madurai, Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, Salem, Tiruchirappalli, Chennai and Chennai suburbs for exclusive trial of cases involving sexual offences against women", he added

Stalin, in his reply to the motion of thanks to the Governor's address, also said that Tamil Nadu Prison Rules will be amended suitably to not permit premature release of prisoners, convicted for sexual offences

"Special courts would be newly set up in Madurai, Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, Salem, Tiruchirappalli, Chennai and Chennai suburbs for exclusive trial of cases involving sexual offences against women", he added

remainder of the convicted person's natural life. BNS provides for ten years RI, may go up to life imprisonment and fine.

The punishment for rape of girls under 16 years of age has also been enhanced. The minimum punishment is 20 years RI in both BNS and state amendment. Now, Tamil Nadu has enhanced the maximum punishment, which is RI for the remainder of the convict's natural life and also a fine. In BNS, the maximum is, imprisonment for life, the remainder of natural life and fine. For the offence of rape against girls under 12 years of age, Tamil Nadu has enhanced the minimum punishment to RI for life, the remainder of the convicted person's natural life and fine or death sentence (maximum). In BNS, the minimum punishment is 20 years RI, but may extend to life imprisonment with fine or death (maximum).

The Tamil Nadu amendment to BNSS also provides, in respect of sexual offences, for issuance of a 'Protection Order (PO)' by an executive magistrate, prohibiting the accused from attempting to communicate with the aggrieved person in any form, whatsoever, including personal or oral or written or electronic or telephonic contact or through third parties. The accused in case of breach of the PO shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term that may extend to 3 years and with fine which may extend to Rs 1 lakh. As regards an amendment to the TN Prohibition of Harassment of Women Act, 1998, it freshly defines harassment. The Tamil Nadu Assembly met January 6, 2025 for the Governor's customary address. However, Governor RN Ravi walked out over the national anthem issue. The House was adjourned sine die on January 11.

MCC violations: AAP files plaint against BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has lodged a complaint with the Election Commission of India against the BJP, accusing it of spreading misinformation and violating the Model Code of Conduct.

The complaint alleges that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) shared a false video on social media, depicting pothole-ridden roads as being located in Delhi when they were actually from Faridabad, Haryana.

"The party (BJP) has been spreading misinformation through a false video on their social media channels, showcasing roads in Delhi in a deplorable condition. However, it has been exposed that the road featured in the video is actually located in Faridabad, Haryana," said the AAP's complaint letter.

The letter attaches screenshots of tweets posted from the BJP's Delhi handle, where the purported videos were shared.

It also includes links to videos debunking the claim, showing the actual location of the road.



The AAP contended that such acts amount to a "blatant violation" of the Model Code of Conduct, which prohibits the dissemination of false propaganda. The party has requested the Election Commission of India (ECI) to take strict action, including the immediate removal of the video from the BJP's social media accounts, legal prosecution under Section 123(4) of the Representation of People Act, 1951, Section 340 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Section 66 of the Information Technology Act, and measures to prevent the dissemination of such misinformation in future.

"These acts destroy the sanctity of the election process, and parties committing such offences should be held accountable. An example should be set for the public to maintain the integrity of the electoral process," the letter states. No immediate response was available from the BJP on the AAP's allegations.



Congress leader Sachin Pilot with Delhi Congress President Devendra Yadav, Delhi In-charge Qazi Nizamuddin and others during the launch of 'Yuva Udaan Yojana', at DPCC office in New Delhi

DELHI WINTER NGO claims 474 homeless perished

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: An NGO Saturday claimed that at least 474 homeless people in Delhi have died due to "winter exposure" between November 15, 2024, and January 10, 2025.

The claim made by Centre for Holistic Development (CHD), an NGO working for the welfare of homeless, however, has no official confirmation.

In a letter addressed to Delhi Chief Secretary Dharmendra and Delhi Urban Shelter

Improvement Board (DUSIB) Chief Executive Officer Ravi Dhawan, CHD cited police statistics, indicating that an alarming 80 per cent of "unidentified dead bodies" in the city are believed of homeless individuals.

"Between November 15 2024 to January 10, 2025, 474 homeless people died in Delhi due to the 'winter exposure' and unavailability of essential protective measures such as warm clothing, blankets, or adequate shelter," the NGO claimed.

CHD also highlighted that people living on the streets face numerous health challenges, including respiratory infections, skin ailments, arthritis flare-ups, and deteriorating mental health.



"Chronic illnesses, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and cardiovascular diseases, worsen due to freezing temperatures, increasing vulnerability to severe complications and even death," the organisation added.

It emphasised on the lack of access to basic protective measures, such as warm clothing, blankets, and adequate shelter, increasing the risk of mortality among the homeless population.

Chennai among top cities for women's social, industrial inclusion

BANGALORE HAS SURPASSED CHENNAI TO SECURE THE TOP POSITION AS THE BEST CITY IN THE COUNTRY FOR WORKING WOMEN IN 2024

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Jan 12: Chennai has been recognised as one of the top three cities in India excelling in social and industrial inclusion for women, according to a recent study.

As many as eight cities from Tamil Nadu have figured in the list with the capital city ranking second for being the most inclusive, safe and resilient and sustainable city for working women.

As per the Top Cities for Women in India 2024 report by Avtar group, South India emerged as the most gender-inclusive region with 16 cities in the south featuring in the top 25.

Bangalore has surpassed Chennai to secure the top position as the best city in the

country for working women in 2024, it said.

Avtar Group Founder-President Saundarya Rajesh said Chennai came second for being the most inclusive, safe, resilient, sustainable city for working women and Tamil Nadu dominated the survey results with Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, Vellore, Madurai, Salem, Erode and Tiruppur also being on the top of the list.

"Cities are the foundations of opportunity. They shape how women live



To realise the dream of Viksit Bharat by 2047, we need women professionals to succeed on par with men. This is possible only if cities are truly gender inclusive and offer an atmosphere where women's strengths can be optimised

work and thrive. A clear understanding of the core principles and cultural fabric of our cities is crucial for

advancing women's progress and inclusion," Rajesh said on the findings.

The Top Cities for Women in India Index identifies role model cities and best practices, and provides a framework for

organisations, policy makers to foster well-rounded development in cities, which play a pivotal role in progress of women, nationwide.

The Index has been compiled by assimilating various data sources including the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), the World Bank, crime records and periodic labour force survey, along with the Avtar Group's primary research team. As many as 1,672 women participated from 60 cities for the survey, it said.

The top 10 cities for women in 2024 include Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Delhi, and Coimbatore. The cities were ranked based on an overall score assigned to every city and based on the Avtar Group's research and ex-

isting government data. Among the states, Kerala leads with the highest inclusion score of 20.89 followed by Telangana at 20.57, Maharashtra 19.93, Tamil Nadu at 19.38 and Karnataka 17.50.

Based on skilling and offering employment to women among cities, Gurugram secured the top spot, followed by Mumbai, Bangalore while, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Thiruvananthapuram marginally lagged behind, the report said.

In efficiency of government bodies, Thiruvananthapuram stood first and Pune ranked second. On safety for women, Thiruvananthapuram, Mumbai and Hyderabad topped the list while Bangalore, Kochi, Gurugram were comparatively low in safety, the report revealed.

national



Big targets have to be set for a country to march forward... This is what today's India is doing NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

AIR INDIA TO OFFER FIRST CLASS SEATS IN A350-1000 PLANES

Air India will have first class seats in its large wide body A350-1000 planes, with the airline seeing opportunities in the airline's network where these seats will work well as the airline pursues efforts to have a larger pie of the global skies



of the day uote

2019 was Kumbh. This is Maha Kumbh, and in the last Kumbh, we received 24 crore pilgrims, and this time we are expecting more than 35 crore pilgrims. Arrangements are also being made like that

People showed Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray their place in the 2024 polls. They sent both home and made the real Shiv Sena and NCP victorious along with BJP

The state government is working diligently to create 4 lakh government jobs and 6 lakh private-sector employment opportunities within five years

Bidhuri refutes AAP's claims on BJP's CM face

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 12: BJP's Kalkaji candidate Ramesh Bidhuri Sunday said he was not the party's chief ministerial face and the claim made by AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal was "completely baseless."

Kejriwal, citing sources Saturday, claimed that the BJP had decided to project Bidhuri as its chief ministerial candidate. The same claim had been made by Delhi Chief Minister Atishi Friday. Bidhuri said he is a loyal party worker, committed to public service and the country, and has no claim over any post.

"I am as much committed towards the people, as I am towards the BJP. Talking about the post of chief minister in reference to me is absolutely baseless," he said. He added, "Kejriwal making announcement with reference to me has admitted that Delhi BJP is going to form government in Delhi."

Bidhuri accused Kejriwal of indulging in a sustained "misinformation campaign" against him and warned the Delhi resident against falling into the "trap" of "Aapda" - a derivative term his party coined to refer to AAP. He said there is widespread anger against Kejri-



wal among the people over the "Sheesh Mahal scam, liquor scam, damaged roads, dirty water."

Bidhuri is a two-time former South Delhi MP and three-time MLA. Kejriwal and other AAP

leaders have assailed the BJP alleging the party had no face it can show to people as a future chief minister of the city, neither any vision, nor issues for the election.

On Saturday at a press conference, Kejriwal claimed that he had come to know from "reliable sources" that the BJP would announce Bidhuri as its CM candidate in the next one or two days. He then challenged Bidhuri to a public debate to let Delhi decide who is better equipped to lead.

The 70-member Delhi Assembly will go to polls on February 5, and the results will be announced after counting of votes February 8. Bidhuri will be in fray against Atishi from the Kalkaji Assembly seat.

Delhi polls: Atishi launches crowdfunding campaign

NEW DELHI: Chief Minister and AAP's Kalkaji candidate Atishi Sunday launched a crowdfunding campaign to contest the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls and said she hoped that people would support her party's politics of work and honesty. Addressing a press conference here, Atishi released an online link for people to donate money, saying she needed Rs 40 lakh to fight the elections. The AAP has always fought the elections with the help of small donations from the common man which has helped it pursue the politics of work and honesty, she said.



Cong blames WB govt for fatal IV fluid mishap



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 12: Following the death of a woman and four others falling ill after childbirth due to the alleged administration of expired intravenous (IV) fluid at a state-run hospital in Paschim Medinipur district, the state Congress held the West Bengal government responsible for the incident and demanded an explanation from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who also serves as the health minister.

Termining the mishap a result of corruption and negligence on the part of the state health department, West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee president Subhankar Sarkar announced that the party would organise a "gherao" of the Swasthya Bhavan Monday in protest against the incident.

"This incident highlights the height of corruption, negligence and lack of infrastructure, with the victim couldn't even see her baby after giving birth. Four other women are still suffering. What is the health minister and the health department doing? We demand answers. We have no option but to call for a peaceful gherao of the Swasthya Bhavan tomorrow around 2 PM," Sarkar said. The Congress leader added that party workers would gather at Salt Lake's Karunamoyee

WB govt to shift three 'very critical' women from Midnapore hosp

KOLKATA: The health condition of three women, critically ill after childbirth at a state-run hospital in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district allegedly due to the administration of expired intravenous fluids, has deteriorated, prompting authorities to shift them to a Kolkata facility Sunday, a senior official said. The other woman, whose condition improved substantially, will remain at the Midnapore Medical College and Hospital, he added. "The three women, currently on life-support system, have developed multiple complications and their condition is very critical. We have decided to admit them in the ICU of SSKM hospital here. The trio will be brought to the city by this evening," the state health department official told PTI. A woman died and four others were critical after the delivery of babies at the MMCH allegedly due to the administration of expired intravenous fluid, prompting the health department to constitute a 13-member committee to investigate the matter.

around 12:30 PM before beginning their rally to Swasthya Bhavan in Sector V. "I appeal to the people of West Bengal to come forward and join our rally," he urged.

Tension in Chamarajpet after miscreants attack 3 cows; CM orders probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Jan 12: Tension gripped Chamarajpet area in the city after unidentified people attacked three cows, severing their udders.

According to police sources, the incident occurred at Vinayakanagar in Chamarajpet. The cows belong to a local named Karna. Residents woke up to the distressing sounds of the cattle and found the injured animals lying in a pool of blood, sparking outrage in the locality. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said he has directed Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda to investigate the case and take action. Reacting to the incident, the BJP announced plans to observe 'Black Sankranti' if the government failed to take action.

"This heinous act reflects a Jihadi mindset. We will observe 'Black Sankranti' if the government fails to take action against the accused persons," Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka told reporters. He further stressed the cultural and religious significance of cows and bulls, which are decorated and worshipped during Sankranti festival. "After this incident, how could we celebrate Sankranti?" Ashoka asked. The BJP leader along with the party workers visited the spot and consoled the owner of the cows.

ISRO brings satellites within three metres in trial attempt



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Jan 12: ISRO Sunday said the two satellites launched to perform space docking experiments were brought within three metres and then moved safely back in a trial attempt.

The space agency also said the docking process would be done after analysing the data further. "A trial attempt to reach up to 15 metres and further to three metres is done. Moving back spacecraft to safe distance. The docking process will be done after analysing data further," ISRO said in a post on X.

The Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) project has missed two announced schedules for docking experiments January 7 and January 9. ISRO launched the mission December 30.

The PSLV C60 rocket, carrying two small satellites - SDX01

(Chaser) and SDX02 (Target) - along with 24 payloads, lifted off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. About 15 minutes later, the two small spacecraft weighing about 220 kilogrammes each were launched into a 475-kilometre circular orbit, as intended. The SpaDeX project is a cost-effective technology demonstrator mission for the demonstration of in-space docking using small spacecraft, according to ISRO.

A successful demonstration of SpaDeX will make India the fourth nation to master the complex technologies that are crucial for its future missions, such as the Bharatiya Antariksh Station and landing an astronaut on the moon. In-space docking technology is essential when multiple rocket launches are required to achieve common mission objectives.



'Sadhus' of 'Shri Panchayati Akhara Bada Udasin' take part in a procession towards Sangam ahead of Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

SHORT TAKES

Prez greets citizens on eve of Lohri

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu Sunday greeted fellow citizens ahead of harvest festivals Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal and Magh Bihu, and hoped that they bring happiness, prosperity in everyone's life. These festivals are symbols of our rich cultural heritage and bring with them, enthusiasm and joy, she said. "Celebrated in diverse forms across the various regions of India, these festivals showcase our harmonious relationship with nature. People also take a holy dip in sacred rivers and perform acts of charity on these occasions," Murmu said.

5 dead as bus falls into gorge in Pauri

Dehradun: Five people died and 17 others were injured when a bus fell into a ditch in Pauri district's Srinagar area Sunday, officials said. According to the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), the accident took place near Dahalchauri where the bus went out of control and fell into a 100 meters deep gorge. The bus, with 22 passengers on board, was en route to Dahalchauri from Pauri, they said, adding that four people died on the spot while another succumbed later. Local people also helped in conducting the rescue operation after the accident and the injured were taken to Pauri district hospital.

Security personnel recover three IEDs

Chaibasa (Jharkhand): Security personnel have recovered three improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from a forest in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, a senior police officer said Sunday. The IEDs were allegedly planted by the outlawed CPI (Maoist) to target the security personnel engaged in anti-Naxal operations, the police officer said.

DYFI, SFI hold protest

Kolkata: The youth and students' wings of the CPI(M) Sunday held a protest in front of the Midnapore Medical College and Hospital demanding action against those responsible for the death of a woman at the state-run hospital. A woman died and four others fell critically ill after the delivery of babies at the hospital in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district allegedly due to the administration of expired intravenous fluid, prompting the health department to order an investigation.

HMPV not new; stay calm, take basic precautions: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: Amid growing concerns over the detection of human metapneumovirus (HMPV) cases in India, health experts have emphasised the virus is not new, and advised people to stay calm and take basic precautions.

HMPV, that causes upper respiratory infection, recently gained attention following an outbreak in China. While it can affect people of all age groups, experts said India has not witnessed any unusual surge in cases. The HMPV typically spreads through the air, especially during winter and early spring.

"HMPV is not a new virus; it was first identified in 2001. The virus is an emerging health concern, but there's no reason to panic. Understanding its symptoms, taking necessary

precautions, and adhering to testing protocols are critical to managing its spread effectively," said Dr Aabid Amin Bhat, the Medical Director at Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals. He said the common symptoms of an HMPV infection include cough, fever, fatigue, respiratory illness, sore throat, body aches, and gastrointestinal issues in some cases. "We recommend seeking medical attention if such symptoms arise," he said.

Dr Madhu Nahar Roy, the Director of Internal Medicine at Paras Health Udaipur, underscored the importance of taking preventive measures. Practicing good hygiene such as washing hands frequently, wearing masks in crowded places and maintaining physical distance are effective ways to reduce the risk of transmis-



sion, Dr Madhu said. Strengthening immunity through a healthy diet, taking adequate sleep, and engaging in physical activity are also essential, he said. Experts said laboratory tests such as RT-PCR can detect the virus' genetic material, while antibody tests help identify past exposure.



"Imaging techniques like chest X-rays or CT scans may be advised for severe cases to evaluate respiratory involvement," Dr Madhu stated. Fomer ICMR Director General Dr Balram Bhargava said India's robust preparedness towards HMPV is built on the extensive infrastructure and experience gained

■ HMPV, that causes upper respiratory infection, recently gained attention following an outbreak in China

■ While it can affect people of all age groups, experts said India has not witnessed any unusual surge in cases

■ The HMPV typically spreads through the air, especially during winter and early spring

he said. Late last year, Dr Bhargava joined Molbio Diagnostics as an independent director.

Dr Ashok Kumar Singh, senior consultant at Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, Regency Hospital, Kanpur, emphasised public awareness can play a pivotal role in minimising the spread of HMPV. "Individuals must stay informed through credible sources and follow public health guidelines."

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has assured that HMPV has been in circulation globally, including in India, and there is no significant rise in influenza-like illness (ILI) or severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) cases. The government has also expressed confidence in the country's preparedness to manage any potential increase in respiratory illnesses.

during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Our preemptive and rapid testing capabilities, developed through diligent application of technologies like TrueNat, have made us well-prepared to manage any such outbreaks.

"We have clearly demonstrated that India was not only self-sufficient in testing during the COVID-19 pandemic but also capable of exporting testing kits to many parts of the world,"

national



The ancestors of many who have assembled here would have left the motherland (India-Tamil Nadu) about a 100, 200 years ago. With their untiring effort, sweat and sacrifice, they developed those countries

M K STALIN | TN CM

FIVE DRUG PEDDLERS HELD BY J&K POLICE

At least five drug peddlers were arrested in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district, said officials Sunday, adding that contraband substances have been recovered from them



All trapped workers rescued; FIR lodged

Kannauj Building Collapse: All 28 workers were pulled out safely by rescuers from the rubble of a collapsed under-construction building at Kannauj railway station following a 16-hour overnight operation, officials said Sunday.

An FIR has been registered against the contractor and an engineer for various offences including negligence and endangering lives, they said.

The rescue teams, including personnel from the national and state disaster response forces and the railways, worked through the cold winter night to clear the debris and pull out the trapped workers.

No fatalities have been reported, the officials said. Twenty-six workers have been admitted to various hospitals in Kannauj, while two with serious injuries were shifted to the Lala Lajpat Rai (LLR) Hospital in Kanpur, they said.

The workers at the LLR Hospital are out of danger, hospital sources said.

One of them has a head injury while the other sustained a leg injury, they said.

A complaint was filed by Vipul Mathur, Executive Engineer of the Railway Gati Shakti Directorate, at Farrukhabad Government Railway Police (GRP) station against the contractor and the engineer after the collapse of shuttering during the construction of a waiting room at the Kannauj railway station left the workers trapped.

The FIR was filed under sections 146 and 153 of the Railway Act, 1989, and Sections 125 (act endangering life or personal safety of others), 289 (negligent conduct with respect to machinery) and 290 (Pulling down, repairing or constructing any building without guarding probable danger to human lives) of the BNS.

According to the complaint, the incident occurred during the laying of the concrete slab when the shuttering suddenly collapsed, trapping labourers under the debris.

EAM to represent India at Trump's swearing-in



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will represent India at the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 47th President of the United States January 20.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Sunday that Jaishankar will also have meetings with representatives of the incoming Trump administration during his visit to the US. Trump had defeated Vice President Kamala Harris in the presidential election held in November.

Last month, Jaishankar said Trump has had a positive political view of India and it is in a much more advantageous position than many other countries to build "deeper" relations with his administration and take the bilateral ties forward. "On the invitation of the Trump-Vance Inaugural Committee, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will represent the Government of India at the swearing-in ceremony of President-Elect Donald J Trump as the 47th President of the United States of America," it said.

JD Vance will be the new US Vice President. "During the visit, the external affairs minister will also have meetings with representatives of the incoming administration, as also some other dignitaries visiting the US on that occasion," the

Jaishankar to visit Spain Jan 13-14

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will pay a two-day visit to Spain beginning Monday to review the overall trajectory of bilateral relations, nearly two-and-a-half months after Spanish President Pedro Sanchez visited India. Jaishankar will meet the leadership of Spain and hold discussions with his Spanish counterpart Manuel Albares on the entire gamut of bilateral relations, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Sunday. It will be his first visit to Spain as the external affairs minister.

MEA said in a statement.

There have been concerns in many countries over the Trump administration's policy over a range of sensitive issues including tariff, climate change and overall foreign policy priorities against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the situation in West Asia. It is for the second time Trump will be the US President. He served as the 45th President of the US from January, 2017 to January 2021.

There have been concerns in many countries over the new Trump administration's likely policy approach over a range of sensitive issues including tariff, climate change and overall foreign policy priorities against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the situation in West Asia.

Block-level weather info for farmers soon



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: The government wants to establish a permanent framework to continue the work of district agro-meteorological units (DAMUs), which had been operating in an ad-hoc manner until their closure last year, Ministry of Earth Sciences Secretary M Ravichandran has said.

PTI had reported in August last year that the government intended to revive DAMUs, which provided block-level weather-related information to lakhs of farmers, before their closure last year following recommendations from Niti Aayog. "As part of the pilot project, the Earth Sciences Ministry and the Agriculture Ministry provided weather information to farmers. Agricultural meteorologists in DAMUs analyze how weather conditions will affect crops. Their primary role is to offer advice to farmers. The system functioned well, but it should not remain ad-hoc; it needs to be made permanent," Ravichandran told PTI.

He said the government wants to establish a solid framework to carry out this vital work. An official source told PTI that the Earth Sciences Ministry has also written to the Prime Minister's Office about the importance of reviving DAMUs and also voiced concerns related to their closure. Asked whether financial con-

Agriculture in India continues to be vulnerable to weather vagaries despite self-sufficiency in food grain production, and uncertainty in the prediction of those events further add to the challenges for farmers

Heatwaves and floods have particularly caused major damage to crop production in India

straints were the main reason for winding up the project, the source dismissed it as a "misunderstanding". It was earlier reported that the Ministry of Earth Sciences wanted the Agriculture Ministry to bear the expenditure for DAMUs.

In August last year, a senior official had told PTI that the government intended to "formalize" DAMUs. "DAMUs were temporary in nature, with staff hired on a per-project basis. The ad-hoc nature of posts affected the forecast quality. There will be a permanent structure in place this time. The manpower will include both permanent and contractual staff," the official had said.

In 2015, the government launched the Gramin Krishi Mausam Seva (GMSV) to provide crop and location-specific detailed advisories to farmers, helping them in day-to-day decision-making. Over the years, 130 agromet field units (AMFUs) were set up in agro-climatic zones in the country in collaboration with the Indian

of the day note

A team of our new office-bearers came to meet me. They all came together after reconciliation. I have warned them that if the squabbling continues then I will appoint an administrator in the Sangha. They have agreed that they will work together

D K SHIVAKUMAR | K'TAKA DY CM

Tomorrow, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Z-Morh tunnel. This will allow the development of Sonamarg as a winter sports destination

OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM

In the last 30 years in Maharashtra, the BJP is the only party which crossed the 100-seat mark in three consecutive polls (2014, 2019 and 2024). PM Modi's leadership gave us confidence and BJP got 132 seats with strike rate of 89 per cent

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHARASHTRA CM

POST OF THE DAY



Why does the government consistently target the poor while structures like Kingfisher Towers remain untouched?

@ShivrattanDhill1

SHORT TAKES

71 died due to drug abuse in '24

Aizawl: Seventy-one people, including 11 women, died due to drug abuse in Mizoram in 2024, according to the Excise and Narcotics Department. The number of deaths was marginally lower than that reported in 2023. A total of 74 people had died due to drug abuse that year, it said. "Majority of them died due to heroin abuse," the department's spokesperson Peter Zohmingthanga said Sunday. A total of 1,881 people, including 230 women, have died due to drug abuse in the state since 1984 when the first drug-related death was reported, government data showed.

Man killed after two trucks collide

Pilibhit: A 25-year-old man was killed in a head-on collision between two trucks on the Bisalpur-Shahjahanpur road here Sunday, police said. The accident occurred near Chathiya village in Bisalpur area when Sajid Hussain (25) was transporting gravel from Bisalpur to Nigohi in his truck, Station House Officer (SHO) Sanjeev Kumar Shukla said. The driver of the other truck, Rehan from Pakwada area of Moradabad, fled the scene immediately after the crash, the officer said.

Beed: Another sarpanch dies

Mumbai: The sarpanch of a village was killed when a vehicle transporting fly ash rammmed into his motorcycle in Maharashtra's Beed district, police said Sunday. The accident occurred in the Mirwat Phata area on Saturday night, an official said. Abhimanyu Kshirsagar, the sarpanch of Saundana village in Parli tehsil, was heading to his village when a vehicle transporting fly-ash from a thermal power plant rammmed into his two-wheeler, he said.

BPSC EXAM ROW

Pappu Yadav's supporters disrupt traffic; 15 detained



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Jan 12: Road traffic movement was disrupted and several vehicles were vandalised in different parts of the state, following a 'Bihar Bandh' called by independent MP Pappu Yadav Sunday to protest alleged irregularities in the recently held BPSC examination.

Yadav, who represents Purnea in the Lok Sabha, chose to lead the charge in Patna where he moved about in an open vehicle wearing a

shroud claiming that the agitation wished 'death' for all those who were involved in malpractices that marred the 70th combined competitive examination (CCE) of the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) held December 13.

"It will be Ram Nam Satya Hai" for all be it BPSC officials or complicit coaching centre owners", Yadav said pointing to the slogan printed on the shroud chanted by Hindus during funeral processions.

Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav's supporters vandalised government vehicles, forced shop owners to close their shops during Bandh at several places in the state capital and other districts including Purnea, Katihar, Araria and Siwan.

Five Naxalites gunned down by security forces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bijapur, Jan 12: Five Naxalites, including two women, were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district Sunday, police said.

The firefight broke out in the morning in the forest of Bandepara-Koranjed villages under Madded police station limits when a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, Inspector General of Police, Bastar Range, Sundarraj P said.

The operation involving personnel of District Reserve Guard (DRG), Special Task Force (STF) and District Force started Saturday based on inputs about movement of Naxalites in the area which falls under Indravati National Park, he said.

With this, 14 Naxalites have been killed in separate encounters in the state in 2025.



Visitors during the International Kite Festival 2025 in Rajkot, Gujarat

PTI PHOTO

Having sleep disorders? Melatonin is no 'magic pill': Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: When 35-year-old Shruti Nagpal from Noida faced sleep issues, she tried 'melatonin gummies' on an experimental basis.

"They helped soothe my mind and eventually helped me sleep. I spoke to my doctor, who prescribed them for me as an experiment," said Nagpal, a media professional. However, melatonin isn't the quick fix. Experts advise against relying on the popular supplement and suggest concentrating on "sleep hygiene", which includes keeping a regular bedtime, relaxing your mind, staying active, and avoiding screens or devices at least an hour before sleep. Melatonin, available in vari-

ous forms like gummies, pills, and liquid, has become a go-to for many with sleep problems. For the unversed, the supplement is a synthetic version of the hormone produced naturally by the pineal gland in the brain that helps regulate sleep-wake cycles. Several health experts caution that while the supplement may seem like a safer choice, it is no 'magic pill'. They recommend that individuals struggling with sleep issues consult a psychiatrist or undergo psychotherapy, including cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), before turning to melatonin supplements. "People having underlying anxiety or depression are unlikely to respond to melatonin supplements. It is possible that



everything that happens during the day affects their night-time sleep." "They will need to consult with a psychiatrist, and therefore, should not resort to melatonin," says Dr Neetu Jain, who deals with sleep-related

breathing disorders at Pushpawati Singhania Hospital & Research Institute, New Delhi.

Supporting Dr Jain's point is Dr Sanjay Saxena, principal director and head of Neurology Department at Max Hospitals

Melatonin, available in various forms like gummies, pills, and liquid, has become a go-to for many with sleep problems

in Patparganj, New Delhi and Vaishali, Ghaziabad, as he recommends that individuals try CBT before resorting to pharmacological treatments for sleep related problems. CBT is a talking therapy in which a patient's thought processes are addressed to help them cope with challenges in life. The doctors, in general, are of the opinion that these sup-

plements are probably most beneficial for people with irregular work shifts (as long as it's a temporary situation), those crossing time zones, or individuals recovering from periods of poor sleep patterns, like during exam preparation. Melatonin levels are known to rise as the sun sets, reaching their peak between midnight and 3 am, before gradually decreasing. Shift-workers are especially prone to such disruptions, as their day and night differentiation is affected.

Health experts further clarify that melatonin supplements are not sedatives or sleep-inducing drugs, but rather "physiological supplements" that support the brain in restoring the quality, structure, and pattern of sleep.

international



To Donald Trump, from one old guy to another, give your head a shake! What could make you think that Canadians would ever give up the best country in the world -- and make no mistake that is what we are -- to join the United States?
JEAN CHRETIEN | FORMER PM, CANADA

B'DESH EASES VISAS FOR PAK

The interim government in Bangladesh has simplified the visa process for Pakistanis to further strengthen trade and economic relations. The present government had removed the need for clearance from Dhaka for Pakistani heads of missions while issuing visas, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Pakistan Iqbal Hussain said



of the day quote

India is growing, and on the move. Singapore has a good brand name in India and we have enjoyed very good ties with successive Indian governments
LEE HSIEN LOONG | SENIOR MINISTER, SINGAPORE

Russia's practice of first ignoring the problem, then admitting its inability to solve it, and ultimately leaving the entire Black Sea region alone with the consequences is yet another proof of its international irresponsibility
HEORHI TYKHVI | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN, UKRAINE

Simply put, the Taliban do not see women as human beings. They cloak their crimes in cultural and religious justification. These policies are a violation of human rights and have no basis in Islamic teachings
MALALA YOUSAFZAI | NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER

SHORT TAKES

Trump prosecutor Smith resigns

Washington: Special counsel Jack Smith has resigned from the Justice Department after submitting his investigative report on President-elect Donald Trump, an expected move that comes amid legal wrangling over how much of that document can be made public in the days ahead. The department disclosed Smith's departure in a court filing Saturday, saying he had resigned one day earlier. The resignation, 10 days before Trump is inaugurated, follows the conclusion of two unsuccessful criminal prosecutions against Trump that were withdrawn following Trump's White House win in November. At issue now is the fate of a two-volume report that Smith and his team had prepared about their twin investigations into Trump's efforts to overturn the results of his 2020 election and his hoarding of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate.

Impeached Yoon to skip first hearing

Seoul: South Korea's impeached president, Yoon Suk Yeol, will not attend the first hearing of the trial to determine whether he is removed from office or reinstated, due to concerns about his safety, Yonhap News reported Sunday, citing his lawyer. "The officials in the Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) and the police are trying to execute illegal and invalid arrest warrants through illegal methods, raising concerns about personal safety and mishaps," lawyer Yoon Kab-keun was quoted as saying. "In order for the president to appear for the trial, the issue of personal safety and security must be resolved." The Constitutional Court hearing is scheduled for Tuesday.

APOCALYPTIC WILDFIRES

LA blaze to be costliest in US history

A preliminary estimate put the damage, economic losses so far between \$135bn and \$150bn

Los Angeles, Jan 12: The wildfires that erupted this week across Los Angeles County are still raging, but already are projected to be among the costliest natural disasters in US history. The devastating blazes have killed at least 16 people and incinerated more than 12,000 structures since Tuesday, laying waste to entire neighbourhoods once home to multimillion-dollar properties. While it's still too early for an accurate tally of the financial toll, the losses so far likely make the wildfires the costliest ever in the US, according to various estimates. A preliminary estimate by AccuWeather put the damage and economic losses so far between \$135 billion and \$150 billion. By comparison, AccuWeather estimated the damage and economic losses caused by Hurricane Helene, which tore across six southeastern states last fall, at \$225 billion to \$250 billion. "This will be the costliest wildfire in California modern history and also very likely the costliest wildfire in US modern history, because of the fires occurring in the densely populated areas around Los Angeles with some of the highest-valued real estate in the country," said Jonathan Porter, the private firm's chief meteorologist. AccuWeather factors in a multitude of variables in its estimates, including damage



Six simultaneous blazes that have ripped across Los Angeles County neighborhoods since Tuesday have killed at least 16 people

to homes, businesses, infrastructure and vehicles, as well as immediate and long-term health care costs, lost wages and supply chain interruptions. The insurance broker Aon PLC also said Friday that the LA County wildfires will likely end up being the costliest in US history, although it did not issue an estimate. Aon ranks a wildfire known as the Camp Fire in Paradise, California, in 2018 as the costliest in US history up to now at \$12.5 billion, adjusted for inflation. The Camp Fire killed 85 people and destroyed about 11,000 homes. The LA County wildfires, which were fuelled by hurricane-force Santa Ana winds and an extreme drought, remained largely uncontained Saturday. That means the final tally of losses from the blazes is likely to increase, perhaps substantially. In a report Friday, Moody's also concluded that the wildfires would prove to be the costliest in US history, specifically because they have ripped through densely populated areas with higher-end properties. While the state is no stranger to major wildfires, they have generally been concentrated in inland areas that are not densely populated. That's led to less destruction per acre, and in damage to less expensive homes, Moody's noted. That's far from the case this time, with one of the largest conflagrations destroying thousands of properties across the Pacific Palisades and Malibu, home to many Hollywood stars



and executives with multimillion-dollar properties. Already, numerous celebrities have lost homes to the fires. "The scale and intensity of the blazes, combined with their geographic footprint, suggest a staggering price tag, both in terms of the human cost and the economic toll," Moody's analysts wrote. The report did not include a preliminary cost estimate of the wildfire damage. It could be several months before a concrete tally of the financial losses from the wild-

fires will be possible. **HOMES REDUCED TO ASH** Pacific Palisades residents who ventured back to their devastated neighborhoods Friday were shocked to find brick chimneys looming over charred waste and burnt-out vehicles as acrid smoke lingered in the air. "This was a house that was loved," Kelly Foster, 44, said while combing through the rubble where her house once stood. Foster's 16-year-old daughter, Ada, said she tried to get inside

Warnings of high winds could complicate firefighting efforts
Some 12,000 structures burned as over 22,000 acres turn to ash
Thousands homeless, public health emergency declared over smoke
Insurers face billions in claims, Biden pledges federal support

but "I just became sick. I just couldn't even... Yeah, it's hard." In Rick McGeagh's Palisades neighborhood, only six of 60 homes survived, and all that remained standing at his ranch house was a statue of the Virgin Mary. "Everything else is ash and rubble," said McGeagh, 61, a commercial real estate broker who, along with his wife, raised three children at their home. Denise Doss, 63, said she was anxious to return to her destroyed home in Altadena to see if anything was salvageable, but officials stopped her due to safety concerns. "At least to say goodbye until we can rebuild. I will let God lead me," Doss said.



Two NK soldiers caught by Ukraine

North Korea is estimated to have sent some 11,000 troops to support Russia in its war against Ukraine



Seoul, Jan 12: One of the two North Korean soldiers captured by Ukraine has claimed during questioning that he thought he was going for training, not to the war against Ukraine, Kyiv's security service has said. On Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukraine had captured two wounded North Korean soldiers in Russia's western Kursk region and that investigators were questioning them. The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) said it has questioned the two soldiers -- both allegedly in their 20s -- through Korean interpreters in cooperation with South Korea's National Intelligence Service as they do not speak Ukrainian, Russian or English, reports Yonhap news agency. It said that one of the sol-

ditions had a Russian military identification card in the name of another person registered in Russia. The soldier said he was given the document last autumn when he said some North Korean units took part in a one-week training event with Russian forces. "It is noteworthy that the prisoner ... emphasises that he was allegedly going for training, not to fight a war against Ukraine," the SBU said in a release. The North Korean with the Russian military ID said he was born in 2005 and has been serving in the North Korean mili-

Russia takes more territory

Moscow: Russian troops have taken control of the villages of Yantarne in the Donetsk region and Kalynove in the Kharkiv region of Ukraine, the Russian Defence Ministry said Sunday. Separately, the ministry said that over the past 24 hours, Russian forces have carried out strikes on Ukrainian military airfields, personnel and vehicles in 139 locations using its air force, drones, missiles and artillery.

in bandages from apparent wounds. "Immediately after being captured, the foreigners were provided with all the necessary medical care," it said. "They are being held in appropriate conditions that meet the requirements of international law." North Korea is estimated to have sent some 11,000 troops to support Russia in its war against Ukraine, according to South Korean officials.

Zelenskyy wants allies to honour vows

Kyiv: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called on allies Sunday to honour all promises to supply Ukraine with weapons, including those to counter Russian air attacks. Zelenskyy said that over the past week Russian forces had launched hundreds of strikes on Ukraine and nearly 700 aerial bombs and over 600 attack drones were used. Ukrainian air defences downed 60 out of 94 drones launched by Russia overnight, the air force said Sunday. It said that 34 drones were "lost", in reference to Ukraine's use of electronic warfare to redirect Russian drones. "Every week, the Russian war continues only because the Russian army retains its ability to terrorise Ukraine and exploit its superiority in the sky," Zelenskyy said on the Telegram messaging app.

SNIPPETS

Incumbent Croatian Prez favourite to win reelection in runoff vote

Zagreb: Croatia's incumbent President Zoran Milanovic was the overwhelming favourite to win reelection as he faced a candidate from the ruling conservative party in a runoff presidential vote Sunday. The left-leaning Milanovic comfortably won the first round of voting December 29, leaving his main challenger, Dragan Primorac, a forensic scientist who had unsuccessfully run for presidency previously, and six other candidates far behind. The runoff between the top two contenders was necessary because Milanovic fell short of securing 50% of the vote by just 5,000 votes, while Primorac trailed far behind with 19%. The election comes as the European Union and NATO member country of 3.8 million people struggles with biting inflation, corruption scandals and a labor shortage. Milanovic, 58, is an outspoken critic of Western military support for Ukraine in its war against Russia. He is the most popular politician in Croatia, and is sometimes compared to US President-elect Donald Trump for his combative style of communication with political opponents.

Chad's ruling party wins majority in election boycotted by Opposition

N'djamena: Chad's ruling party took the majority of votes in last month's parliamentary election, which was boycotted by the main opposition and which analysts had said would consolidate the president's political power, provisional results show. In what was the first parliamentary election in Chad in more than a decade, the ruling Patriotic Salvation Movement party won 124 out of 188 seats, while the voter turnout was 51.5%, according to the provisional results announced late Saturday by Ahmed Barchiret, head of the electoral commission. The parliamentary election, which also included regional and municipal elections, was the last stage of the country's transition to democracy after Mahamat Idriss Deby took power as a military ruler in 2021. The takeover followed the death of Deby's father and longtime president Idriss Deby Itno, who spent three decades in power. Deby eventually won last year's disputed presidential vote. The election was boycotted by more than 10 opposition parties, including the main Reformers party, whose candidate, Succes Masra, came second in the presidential election.

ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER

Kerch Strait oil spill continues to spread

Russia forms emergency task force as over 155,000 tons of contaminated sand and soil had been collected since oil spilled out of two tankers during a storm four weeks ago in the Kerch Strait

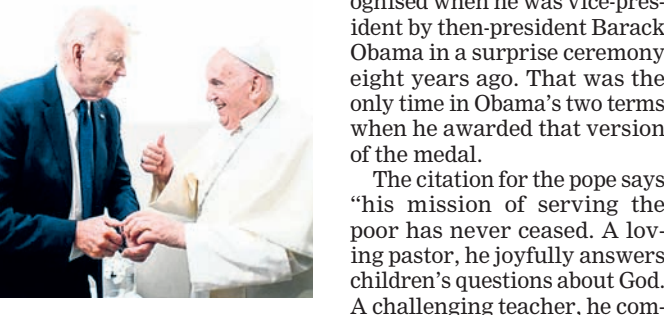


in the Kerch Strait from two storm-stricken tankers continues to spread a month after it was first detected, officials said. The task force, which includes Emergency Situations Minister Alexander Kurenkov, was set up after Russian President Vladimir Putin Friday called on authorities to ramp up the response to the spill, calling it "one of the most serious environmental challenges we have faced in recent years". The Emergencies Ministry said Saturday that over 155,000

tons of contaminated sand and soil had been collected since oil spilled out of two tankers during a storm four weeks ago in the Kerch Strait, which separates the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula from the Krasnodar region. Russian-installed officials in Ukraine's partially Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia region said Saturday that the mazut -- a heavy, low-quality oil product -- had reached the Berdyansk Spit, some 145 km north of the Kerch Strait. It contaminated an area 14 1/2-km long, Moscow-installed Gov Yevgeny Balitsky wrote on Telegram.

BIDEN AWARDS POPE MEDAL OF FREEDOM

Washington, Jan 12: President Joe Biden Saturday honoured Pope Francis with the Presidential Medal of Freedom with distinction, the highest civilian award given by the president, saying the pontiff was "a light of faith, hope, and love that shines brightly across the world". Biden had been scheduled to present the medal to the pope in person Saturday in Rome on what was to be the final overseas trip of his presidency, but Biden cancelled his travel plans so he could monitor the wildfires in California. The White House said Biden bestowed the award to the pope



during a phone call in which they also discussed efforts to promote peace and alleviate suffering around the world. It's the only time Biden has presented the honour with distinction during his presidency. Biden himself is a recipient of the award with distinction, recognised when he was vice-president by then-president Barack Obama in a surprise ceremony eight years ago. That was the only time in Obama's two terms when he awarded that version of the medal. The citation for the pope says "his mission of serving the poor has never ceased. A loving pastor, he joyfully answers children's questions about God. A challenging teacher, he commands us to fight for peace and protect the planet. A welcoming leader, he reaches out to different faiths". Biden is preparing to leave office January 20 and has doled out honours to prominent individuals, including supporters and allies, in recent weeks.

