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**BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY | JANUARY 13, 2025** 

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#### **Border tensions: B'desh** summons Indian envoy

Dhaka: Bangladesh Foreign Ministry Sunday summoned Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma over border tensions, the staterun 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 'Digi-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-themany 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.

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 preplanned 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.

**DSPL-316** 



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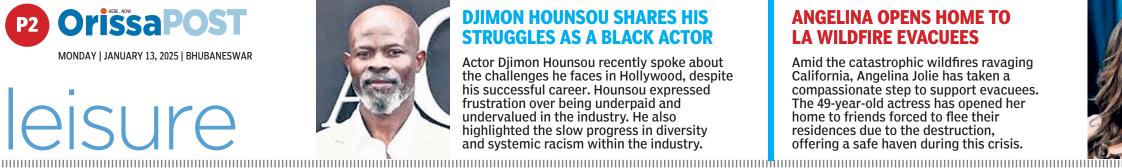
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# eisure



#### **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.



accuracy • reliability • trust

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 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.

You are likely to be in a romantic mood today. You may just end up falling in love to day. 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

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.

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.

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.

Ganesha advises vou not to take stress about small issues or matters. To avoid tension and to gain mental peace it 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 steadi ly you take the load off your shoulders, predicts Ganesha. Attentive and observant, vou meticulously plan your actions and ninimise 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.



Mumbai: Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan is obsessed with Gujarati food and gorged on yummy delicacies such as "kadi and undhiyoo' Kareena took to her Insta-

gram stories section, where she shared the pictures of the delicacies sent in by her friend Poonam Damania 'Yar kadi and undhiyooo.. Ev-

eryone knows my obsession Gujju food na... Thank you to my Poonie.... she wrote as the caption.

Last week, Kareena, who was seen holidaying in Switzerland with husband Saif Khan, and sons

actions

ly had

was

in

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 re-

portedly 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 Avushmann Khurrana as the lead.



sia, 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

> 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

mysterious things happening here," without

In other news, Sunny and her husband Daniel Weber renewed their wedding vows after 13 years of their marriage

gotten a warning so I could mentally pre-

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, Decem ber 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. IANS



Mumbai: Sonakshi Sinha, known for her calm demeanor and friendly interwith the paparazzi, recentan outburst at an event Mumbai. The actress, who 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. AGENCIES



danna 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 "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 '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

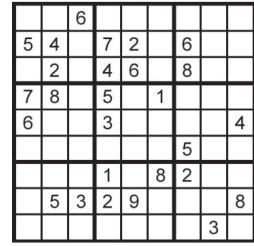
> "I'll be back soon enough just making sure my legs are fit for action (or at least fit for hopping). In the meantime. if you need me...I'll be the one in the corner doing a highly advanced bunny hop workout. HOP HOP HOP..." she wrote.

The actor was last seen in Sukumar's *Pushpa 2*, co-starring Allu Arjun. PTI



#### SUDOKU

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

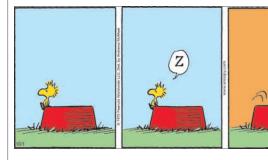


### SOLUTIONS

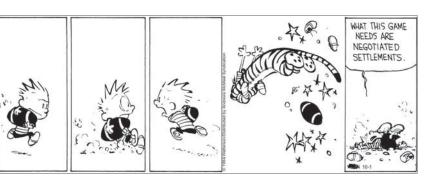
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#### **PEANUTS**



#### CALVIN AND HOBBES



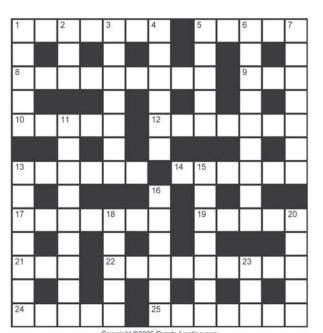
I NEED... FEATHERS IN MY DRINKING WATER!

#### BREVITY



## **CROSSWORD**

POST



#### 19 Breakfast bread

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

Down

2 Hole goal 3 Quito locale

1 Dried fruit

ingredient

21 Debate position

22 Gourmet

25 Pudding

24 Figure

- 4 Gym wear
- 5 Recurring
- theme

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

- 23 Self

6 Fellini flick,

7 Enclosed

territory

(5,4)

13 Pounded

5)

16 Back up

18 Standing

20 Polynesian

11 Signature tune

15 Bridge bid (2-

La \_\_\_ (5,4)

monarchy

SUDOKU

1 9

## owntown

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

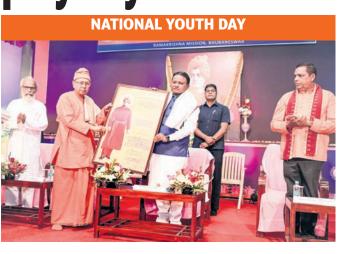


## Youth will play key role in '36 vision: CM

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 culture 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

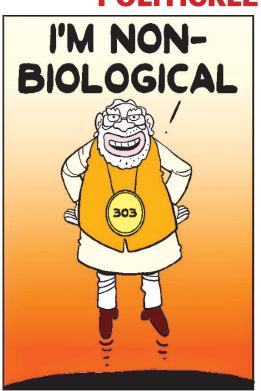
inspired Indian youth to take pride in their asceticism. He encouraged the youth to

strive for economic prosperity and establish India's cultural and spiritual ideas globally.

The program also featured speeches by Balasore MP Pratap Sarangi and Ekamar-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 Pokhariput, showcasing the enduring relevance of his teachings

### **POLITICKLE by MANJUL**





#### **Ayushman Bharat** MoU signing today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi will attend the MoU sighing ceremony for implementation of Ayushman

Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Arog. 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 Jual Oram will also be present during signing

### Drugs crunch hits SCB Niramaya centres

POST NEWS NETWORK

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 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 Nira maya centres on SCB premises, none of them are having medicines 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 worldclass 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 pa-

SCBMCH superintendent incharge 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 Mahayeer Temple along Chandrabhaga beach, under Konark police station, has raised serious environmental concerns, according to the re-

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: The Opposition BJD Sunday alleged that former Odisha governor Raghubar Das was a "contro versial" 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 confer ence here at the BJD headquar ters, 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 unceremo niously 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 Saroi Padhy said.

# STELLAR SHOW: Artistes perform during Adivasi Mela-2025 at Exhibition Ground in Bhubaneswar Sunday Every public space should be a safe space: Sanyasi

### Crucial meet on HMPV Jan 15

POST NEWS NETWORK

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 prepared-

ness 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.

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 every one 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.

# downtown/state



## **Govt opens help desk** for Maha Kumbh pilgrims



Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday said a dedicated 24x7 help desk with toll-free number (1800-345-1122) has been set up at Odisha Sate Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC) headquarters and in Ayodhya to assist passengers visiting Prayagraj where Maha Kumbh is being organised.

Passengers can book tickets in advance through the OSRTC website (osrtc.org) or mobile app, or by visiting the nearest OSRTC ticket counter,

The Chief Minister said the pilgrims will travel around 2.500 km on both sides for which comfortable arrangements have been made in the

Commerce and Transport department secretary Usha Padhee said that the passengers will pay the fare at the rate of ₹2.50 per km along with food. She said the OSRTC has also arthe Maha Kumbh Mela venue.

Commerce and Transport Minister Bibhuti Jena said that the state government has plans to continue such bus services even after the Maha Kumbh Mela and take pilgrims to places such as Avodhva, Varanasi, Mathura, Vrindavan, Shree Mahakaleshwar Temple and

The 45-day Maha Kumbh Mela is set to begin on Makar Sankranti and continue till Maha Sihvratri. Around 40 crore people from India and abroad are expected to participate in

#### **Special trains from across state**

As part of the efforts to facilitate easy travel for thousands of pilgrims heading to the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, the Indian Railways has launched special trains from and through ECoR/Odisha covering all parts

The trains baneswar-Tundla-Bhu-

cial covering districts Khurda. Cuttack, Jajpur and Keonjhar; Puri-Tundla-Puri Kumbh Special covering Puri, Khurda, Cuttack, Jajpur and Balasore; Titilagarh-Tundla-Titilagarh Kumbh Special covering Bolangir, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Sundargarh; Visakhapatnam-DDU (Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn)-Visakhapatnam Kumbh Special covering Rayagada, Bolangir and Nuapada; Visakhapatnam-Gorakhpur-Visakhapatnam Kumbh Special covering Ganjam, Khurda, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Angul, Sambalpur and Jharsuguda, Tirupati-Banaras-Tirupati Kumbh Special covering Rayagada Bolangir, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Rourkela, Sundargarh and NS-Banaras-NS Kumbh Mela Special covering Rayagada, Bolangir, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Rourkela.

As per ECoR, over 13,000 trains, including 10,000 regular trains, 3,134 special trains, 1,869 short-distance trains, 706 long-distance trains and 559 ring trains, will operate during the period which is 4.5 times more than the previous Kumbh.

Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has inaugurated several key initiatives to enhance Indian Railways' readiness for Maha Kumbh 2025 in Prayagraj region. These measures aim to provide safe, seamless, and technologically advanced services for millions of pilgrims.

Around 40 crore pilgrims are expected to visit during Maha



STREET FEST: Students dance to a popular number during the second Patha Utsav of this year in Bhubaneswar Sunday

### Patha Utsav promotes healthy environment: Min

Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: The second Patha Utsav of the year at Jagamara New Road witnessed overwhelming enthusiasm and response from the citizens when the street turned into a stage.

The event, launched by Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra, Ekamra-Bhubaneswar MLA Babu Singh, City Mayor Sulochana Das, Deputy Mayor Manjulata Kanhar, Principal Secretary Usha Padhee, BMC Commissioner Rajesh Prabhakar Patil, along with Standing Committee Chairpersons and

Corporators, drew scores of people from across the Capital

Attending the event, the H&UD minister said, "Patha Utsav is a good way of promoting a healthy environment and lifestyle, and we must encourage the people of Bhubaneswar to join it. He said that it is the responsibility of all of us to convey the message of creativity and innovation through this Patha Ustav to the people of the capital Bhubaneswar and strive to increase the confidence of the

The main stage in Sunday's Patha Utsav came alive with electrifying performances by renowned artistes, captivating the audience. Singer Aseema Panda and Satvajeet Pradhan showcased their melodious charm, while Rapper Big Deal energised the crowd with his dynamic beats. Adding to the vibrancy, the Jaydev Dance Group delivered a mesmerising performance, making the event an unforgettable experience.

Apart from the main stage, a slew of activities such as folk dances, art and craft exhibits, street performances, games, food stalls, rangoli and jhoti, Kiddo Kingdom, Yoga, events like 'Bhubaneswar Got Talent' and others captivated

On a lively Sunday morning the streets of Jagamara New Road came alive as the denizens enthusiastically participated in the street fest and enjoyed these vibrant offerings, creating a fes tive and engaging atmosphere

Earlier, the Bhubanesway Municipal Corporation (BMC) ushered in the New Year with the first Patha Utsav of 2025 January 5, transforming the bustling Janpath into a vibrant cultural corridor.

Patha Utsav, first launched in 2016, seeks to promote cultural engagement and foster a sense of community during the

#### Naveen extends help to slain BMC worker's kin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: Former chief minister and BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik has announced that he would bear the study expenses of both minor daughters of the BMC employee who was killed here in broad daylight a

The 36-year-old man, Sahadev Nayak, was a supervisor of sanitation workers engaged by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC).

He was also a 'Police Mitra' and helped the police deal with drug trafficking in the city. He was killed on Rasulgarh flyover January 8.

The former chief minister and Leader of Opposition in Odisha Assembly also provided financial assistance of ₹50,000 to the deceased's family.

"I met Naveen Patnaik and he has given me ₹50,000 to perform the last rites of my husband and assured me that he would take care of the studies of my daughters," the deceased BMC worker's wife told reporters.

She met Patnaik at Naveen Niwas Saturday. Sahadev Nayak had gone to Naveen Niwas with his family and wished the BJD president on the occasion of the New Year. The leader of the opposition also expressed his commitment to stand with the deceased's family in their fight for justice regarding the murder.

Meanwhile, the police have arrested five people, including two women, in connection with Nayak's murder.

#### WEATHER

Max Temp 25.6° Min Temp 81% 88% Humidity

**FORECAST** 

ForecastFog/mist in the morning and mainly



### Arms seized in Malkangiri



Malkangiri, Jan 12: A huge cache of arms and ammunition has been seized in a dense forest in Malkangiri district, police said Sunday.

The arms dump, suspected to be of Maoists, was unearthed when District Voluntary Force (DVF) personnel were conducting a search operation in Jinelguda forest area under the jurisdiction of MV-79 police station Saturday, Malkangiri Superintendent of Police Vivekananda Sharma said.

The seized items, which were found buried in the ground, included one self-loading rifle, two

magazines, four ammunition charger clips, 50 rounds of 7.62 mm SLR ball ammunition, two rounds of .303 ball ammunition, one magazine pouch, daily use items, a syringe, a mobile phone with SIM and some Maoist liter-

ature, the SP said. Sharma said they suspect that the red rebels, who had set up camps in the area, fled the spot. leaving behind the items, in the

wake of the search operations. "The seized arms and ammunition belong to Maoist cadres of AOBSZC (Andhra-Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee) and were aimed to target civilians and security forces,'

#### Man hurt as bike crashes into car

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: A 30-year-old man sustained grievous injuries when his speeding motorcycle hit a stationary car from the rear near Vani Vihar Square on National Highway-16,

Sunday afternoon. Inspector in-charge at Saheed Nagar police station Suchitra Birya Das said the victim, who has been admitted to Capital Hospital, could not be identified immediately. "The cops are awaiting the man's recovery. Meanwhile, efforts are underway to locate his relatives, and inform them about the mishan".

he added Das said the car (OR 22 9777) was heading toward Khandagiri from Rasulgarh when it broke down on the highway. While a mechanic was fixing the car, the motorcyclist lost control and crashed into the rear end of the four-wheeler. The impact tossed him into the air, resulting in in-

juries to his arms and legs. Das said the bystanders and locals rushed the victim to Capital Hospital with the assistance from Saheed Nagar police.

### ACSIL hikes sugarcane price by ₹420 per tonne



Berhampur, Jan 12: The managing committee of Aska Cooperative Sugar Industries Ltd (ACSIL) in Ganjam district has increased sugarcane price by ₹420 to ₹3,500 per tonne this year, officials said.

The factory will also bear the transportation charge of sugar cane beyond the 10-km distance this time, ACSIL managing director Sushant Kumar Panda said Saturday.

"Considering all aspects, including the financial condition of the factory and the cost factor in sugarcane cultivation, the managing committee has fixed the price of cane at ₹3,500 per tonne in consulting with the administration," he said.

Earlier, the Ganjam district sugarcane growers' association had demanded that the cane price be fixed at ₹4,500 per tonne and threatened not to supply sugarcane if the factory authorities did not consider their demand.

'We have appealed to the government to provide an additional input subsidy of ₹1,000 per tonne to sugarcane growers," said the association president Sameer Pradhan.

The factory authorities decided to commence crushing of the harvest from January 17 and targeted to process over 50,000 tonne sugarcane this year.

Last year, the factory had crushed 49,255 tonne sugarcane,

The industry provided ₹16.37 crore to farmers to purchase sugarcane last year, and the amount would go up to ₹18 crore due to the increase in cane price this year, he said.

Panda said the authorities have also decided to procure sugarcane from adjoining Navagarh and Khurda districts, besides Ganjam, to run the factory for more days.

#### Inter-college talent hunt by IMIS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 12: The Institute of Management and Information Science (IMIS) Saturday launched Inter-Col lege Talent Hunt, Uth Got Tal ent 2025, with participation of over 158 students representing 22 colleges. The event, which featured six distinct competition categories, was hosted at Swagat Vihar Campus.

Attending the event, IMIS chairman KK Beuria, director Usha Kamilla, and secretary Preetiraj Patnaik, shared valuable insights with the students on choosing the right career path, excelling in their future endeavors Following the competition, the winners across various categories were awarded with cash prizes, mementos, and certificates.

Professor Anil Kumar Mishra concluded the event with a vote of thanks to students. staffers, and professors. He also expressed gratitude to the students, faculty, and staffers for their contributions to the event's successful execution.

## Balanced diets key to combat nutrition crisis in India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 12: Shifting to balanced diets is key to combat the alarming nutrition crisis, caused by unhealthy diets, in India, said health experts.

According to the latest report of the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN), India is facing a health crisis, with 56.4 per cent of the total disease burden attributed to unhealthy dietary practices.

Unhealthy eating habits, including the consumption of processed foods high in salt, sugar, and fats, have become alarmingly prevalent, with the proliferation of fast-food chains and the easy availabil-

'India faces a unique and alarming nutrition crisis, with abdominal obesity being more prevalent than overall obesity. More than 50 per cent of the population suffers from diet-related disorders, including obesity, diabetes type 2, fatty liver, etc," said Hemalatha R, ex-director of ICMR-NIN.

Hemalatha said this while delivering a keynote address at the 30th Continuing Medical Education (CME) seminar recently organised by the Physicians Association for Nutrition India (PAN India) in collaboration with Indian Medical Association (IMA) Bangalore. Non-Communicable Diseases

account for cent of all mortality in the country. Unlike the much-developed western world, where NCDs

**According to the latest ICMR-NIN** report, India is facing a health crisis, with 56.4% of the total disease burden attributed to unhealthy dietary practices

typically manifest later in life, India faces these diseases at a much younger age. Alarmingly, two-thirds of Indians with NCDs fall within the 26-59 age group, the most productive years of their lives. Most of it is due to unhealthy diet choices and other lifestyle The ICMR-NIN study high-

lights that 56 per cent of the disease burden is due to an unhealthy diet. This trend poses significant challenges not just to individual health but also to the nation's economic and social fabric.

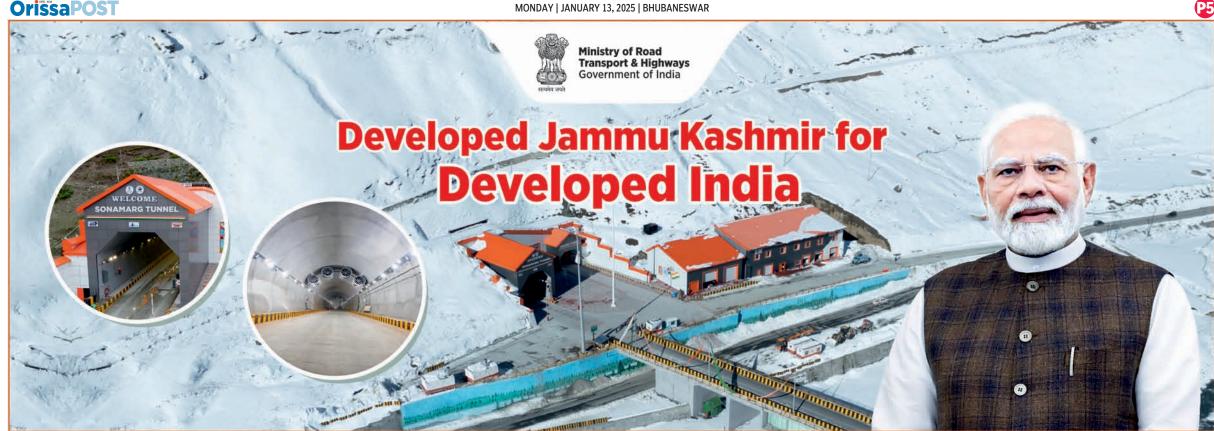
"Unhealthy diets account for over 56 per cent of the country's disease burden, and the impact begins as early as foetal development, with pregnant women consuming processed foods and sugars risking their children's cognitive health," Hemalatha said. "This underscores the urgent need to shift towards balanced diets rich in pulses. legumes, whole grains, vegetables, and fruits, aligning with global recommendations to combat this alarming un-

healthy diet," the expert added G Rajendiran, MBBS, MD, DM (Cardiology), Prof & Head of Preventive Cardiol ogy, PSGIMSR, Coimbatore Director-VR Heart health initiative, also emphasised the importance of whole food plant-based diet in prevention and management of cardio vascular diseases. This gains importance given the increasing prevalence and mortality despite the recent medical ad vances, she said.

#### SSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS OUR **BOOKING STATIONS** CONTACT

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### **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

### Narendra Modi

**Prime Minister** 

Monday, Date: 13th January, 2025 I 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

#### **Gulam Ali**



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taste of the bi-





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

THE MOTHER



### On The Threshold

t'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 vear 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 vour work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy.

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



#### 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.



up the sales slip. The crook

looked at the slip and said, "This

intended to spend. Can you show me something less expensive?

**GEOPOLITICS** 

## **AMERICAN CATASTROPHE**

zarre 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.

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.

**WHAT** 

**STANDING** 

**DO WESTERN** 

**DEMOCRACIES** 

**HAVE NOW TO** 

**DEMAND THAT** 

**OR POLITICIAN** 

INTERNATIONAL

**ANY REGIME** 

**ABIDE BY** 

**RULES AND** 

NORMS?

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



**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

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 Bolsheviks 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 pro posed 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 onetime 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.

> Emeritus Professor of War and Society and Emeritus Professor of History at Princeton University.

The writer is

#### 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** 

TO THE EDITOR

are most welcome to contribute letters

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(100 words), articles and

words). Contributors are

numbers and full postal

columns (between 600-1000

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 con-

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.

#### Work-life balance

cern is climate change, which

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 Subrahmanyan'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 Vivekanan da's teachings, linking discipline to a positive self-image He emphasised respect for oneself and others as the founda tion 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



## TWO STATES





# **Crimes drop slightly in Delhi**

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

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

| 2024     | 2023   |
|----------|--|
| 2,076    | 2,141  |
| 2,037    | 2,345  |
| 362      | 381  |
| 504      | 506  |
| 1,510    | 1,654  |
| 33       | 43   |
| 6,493    | 7,886  |
| 1,17,563 | 1,58,965   |
|          | 2,076<br>2,037<br>362<br>504<br>1,510<br>33<br>6,493 |

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.

युवा उड़ान योजना

राष्ट्रीय युवा दिवस

युवाओं को 1 साल की अप्रेंटिसशिप,

हर महीने मिलेंगे 8.500 रूपए

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. He said 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.

In every district, in respect of such criminal cases, a special committee will be set up under an additional police superintendent, for expeditious completion of cases. The CM asserted that the police department was functioning independently in his regime; stern action was being taken against rowdy elements and crimes have been prevented on a large scale.

The Assembly adopted amendment Bills providing for more severe punishments for rape, than provided in the central law, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), against the backdrop of the sexual assault of a varsity student here in December 2024. Chief Minister Stalin piloted the Bills to amend the BNS and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 in its application to Tamil Nadu and also the TN Prohibition of Harassment of Woman Act, 1998 and these were passed.

Under the fresh provisions, 14 years of Rigorous imprisonment (RI) is the minimum punishment for rape in Tamil Nadu and it may extend to RI for life, which is the remainder of the convicted person's natural life and fine. BNS provides a minimum punishment of 10 years and it may extend to imprisonment for life and fine. Twenty years RI is minimum punishment for rape if committed by certain class of persons including a police officer, a public servant, member of the armed forces, staff of jail or hospital, a teacher. and a person who who is in a position of trust or authority. The punishment may be RI for life as well, that is the

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 remain der of the convict's natural life and also a fine. In BNS the maximum is, imprison ment 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, whatso ever, 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 Prohi bition of Harassment of Wom an 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

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, Harvana.

"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 com-

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

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



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 Bhartiya 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 allega-

### NGO claims 474 homeless perished

mental health.

दिल्ली में कांग्रेस है ज़रुरी

Congress leader Sachin Pilot with Delhi Congress President Devendra Yaday, Delhi In-charge Oazi Nizamuddin and others during the launch of 'Yuva

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.

Udaan Yojana', at DPCC office in New Delhi

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



"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 organisa-

tion 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 popu-

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

and

thrive. A clear

understanding

tural fabric of our

cities is crucial for

#### 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 Saundarva 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.

Vellore, Madurai, Salem, Erode and Tiruppur also being on the top

of the list. "Cities foundations of opportuni-PRESIDENT, AVTAR GROUI ty. They shape how women live

Tiruchirappalli, 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 of the core prin-SAUNDARYA RAJESH | FOUNDERciples and cul-

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-

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

isting government data.

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 Thi ruvananthapuram 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, Guru gram 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

#### 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





is Maha Kumbh, and in the last Kumbh,

and this time we are expecting more than 35 crore pilgrims. Arrangements are also being made like that

MANOJ KUMAR SINGH UP CHIEF SECRETARY

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 AMIT SHAH I UNION HOME MINISTER The state

government is working diligently to create 4 lakh government iobs and 6 lakh

private-sector employment opportunities within five years BHAJANLAL SHARMA | RAJASTHAN CM

#### 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 Iharkhand'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 staterun 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

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

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

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 derisive term his party coined to refer to AAP. He said there is widespread anger against Kejri-

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Jan 12: Tension gripped Chamarajapet 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 Davananda 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.



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

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.

### 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

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 Decem-

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 demonstra-

tion of SpaDeX will make India the fourth nation to master the complex technologies that are crucial for its future missions, such as the Bharativa 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.

#### **Indonesian President** set to grace R-Day parade as chief guest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto is set to grace the upcoming Republic Day celebration in the national capital as the Chief Guest, people familiar with the matter said Saturday.

It is learnt that Subianto is unlikely to travel to Pakistan immediately after concluding his trip to India after New Delhi raised the issue. Jakarta planned a trip to Pakistan by the Indonesian President after his visit to New Delhi, Pakistan media had reported

India is yet to formally announce this year's Republic Day chief guest. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold wide-ranging talks with Subianto during his visit. Every vear. India invites world lead ers to attend the Republic Day celebration. Last year, French President Emmanuel Macron was the chief guest.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi graced the occasion in 2023. There was no Republic Day Chief guest in 2021 and 2022 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, then Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was the chief guest at the Republic Day celebration. In 2019, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa was the chief guest at the Republic Day parade, while in 2018, leaders of all 10 ASEAN countries attended the event. In 2017, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan was the chief guest at celebration. while then French President Francois Hollande graced the occasion in 2016. In 2015, then US President Barack Obama watched the parade.

In 2014, ex-Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was the chief guest at the celebration, while Bhutan king Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck attended the parade in 2013.

### 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.

Terming 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 Swasthva 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 ICCU 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 begin ning 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.



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

### 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.

immunity Strengthening 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 infra-

structure 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

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

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 man-

age 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,"

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

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

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has as sured that HMPV has been in circulation globally, including in India, and there is no sig nificant 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.

# 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

#### **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





office-bearers came to meet warned them that if the squabbling continues then I will appoint an administrator in the Sangha. They have agreed that they will work

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





confidence and BJP got 132 seats with strike rate of 89 per cent DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHARASHTRA CM





target the poor like Kingfisher

It's disgraceful that the burden of transforming Gurgaon into a shoulders of the underprivileged.

### 71 died due to

drug abuse in '24

SHORT **TAKES** 

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 drugrelated death was reported,

#### Man killed after two trucks collide

government data showed.

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 Chathiva village in Bisalpur area when Sajid Hussain (25) was transporting gravel from Bisalpur to Nigohi in his truck, Station House Officer (SHO) Sanieev Kumar Shukla said. The driver of the other truck. Rehan from Pakwada area of Moradabad, fled the scene immediately after the crash, the

#### Beed: Another sarpanch dies

Mumbai: The sarpanch of a village was killed when a vehicle transporting fly ash rammed 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 rammed into his two-wheeler, he said.

# Block-level weather EAM to represent India at Trump's swearing-in info for farmers soon



New Delhi, Jan 12: The government wants to establish a permanent framework to contimue the work of district agrometeorological 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 "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 DA-MUs and also voiced concerns related to their closure.

garies despite self-sufficiency

n food grain production, and

uncertainty in the prediction of

eatwaves and floods have particularly caused major damage to crop production

challenges for farmers

straints were the main reason for winding up the project, the source dismissed it as a "misunderstanding". It was earlier renorted 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 (AM-FUs) were set up in agro-climatic zones in the country in

search (ICAR). Each AMFU caters to four to five districts.

In 2018, the government decided to extend the reach of the service by setting up 530 district agromet units on the premises of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK). However, the Covid pandemic impacted the process, and only 199 DAMUs could be set up, each with two contractual employees -- SMS Agromet and Agromet Observer. In a meeting of the Expenditure Finance Committee held in February 2023, a senior Niti Aayog advisor suggested reevaluating the "necessity of providing staff at each DAMU" The official suggested the MoES may have "centralized units instead of field units as the collection of data is automated".

On January 17, 2024, the IMD wrote to all the DAMUs. asking them to wind up their operations by the end of the financial year 2023-24. Several politicians, including Union minister Nitin Gadkari and Congress MP Jairam Ramesh. had opposed the move.

Over the last one year, the Maharashtra-based Agrometeorological Units Association has written to the prime minister, members of Parliament, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Ministry of Earth Sciences, and Agriculture Ministry, requesting their intervention. DAMU employees said lakhs of farmers depended on them for crucial agromet advisories, which have helped increase their resilience against worsening weather and climate impacts, reducing their losses and the claim amount under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bi-

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



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 **KANNAUJ BUILDING COLLAPSE** 

#### All trapped workers rescued; FIR lodged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kannauj/Kanpur (UP), Jan 12: 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 en dangering lives, they said. The rescue teams, includ-

ing 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.

pital are out of danger, hospital sources said. One of them has a head inju-

The workers at the LLR Hos-

ry while the other sustained a leg injury, they said. A complaint was filed by Vip-

ul Mathur, Executive Engineer of the Railway Gati Shakti Directorate, at Farrukhabad Gov ernment Railway Police (GRP) station against the contractor and the engineer after the col lapse of shuttering during the construction of a waiting room at the Kannauj railway station left the workers trapped.

The FIR was filed under sec tions 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 construct ing 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

#### **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 Yaday 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

#### **Five Naxalites gunned** down by security forces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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

The gunfight 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, Bas-

tar 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 Raikot, Guiarat

### 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 varifor 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 sleepwake 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

ous forms like gummies, pills,

and liquid, has become a go-to

to melatonin supplements. "People having underlying anxiety or depression are unlikely to respond to melatonin supplements. It is possible that

therapy (CBT), before turning

everything that happens during the day affects their night-time

who deals with sleep-related

breathing disorders at Pushsleep." "They will need to consult with a psychiatrist, and Supporting Dr Jain's point therefore, should not resort to melatonin," says Dr Neetu Jain,

pawati Singhania Hospital & Research Institute, New Delhi.

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 supplements are probably most beneficial for people with irregular work shifts (as long as it's a temporary situation), those crossing time zones, or individ uals 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?** 

#### **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



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

LEE HSIEN LOONG SENIOR MINISTER, SINGAPORE



inability to solve it. and ultimately leaving the entire Black Sea region alone with the consequences is vet another proof of its international irresponsibility HEORHII TYKHYI | FOREIGN

MINISTRY SPOKESMAN, UKRAINI



tural and religious justification. These policies are a violation of human rights and have no basis in Islamic teachings MALALA YOUSAFZAI I

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

#### 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 him 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 Kabkeun 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 LA blaze to be costliest in US history

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

AGENCIES

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

The total damage and economic loss from this Six simultaneous blazes that have wildfire disaster could

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.

reach nearly 4 per cent of the

annual GDP of the state of

IONATHAN PORTER | CHIEF

METEOROLOGIST,

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

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,



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 wildfires 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 McGe agh, 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 salvage able, 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

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

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 Zelensky 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-

**COING TO TRAINING, NOT WAR** 



diers had a Russian military identifi-As with all cation card in the these two North Korean name of another ldiers are receiving person registhe necessary medical tered in Russia. The soldier said OLODYMYR ZELENSKY he was given the document last autumn when he said some North Korean units took part in a one-week train-

ing 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 military since 2021. The other was born in 1999 and has been serving since 2016 as a scout sniper, the SBU said, citing preliminary information.

The SBU also released video footage appearing to show the two captured men -- both of them

#### 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

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 leftleaning 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 Bartchiret, 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 Transformers 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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, Jan 12: An emergency task force arrived in Russia's southern Krasnodar region Sunday as an oil spill



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.

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



BIDEN AWARDS POPE MEDAL OF FREEDOM

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-pres ident 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 differ ent faiths".

Biden is preparing to leave office January 20 and has doled out honours to prominent individuals, including supporters and allies, in recent weeks.

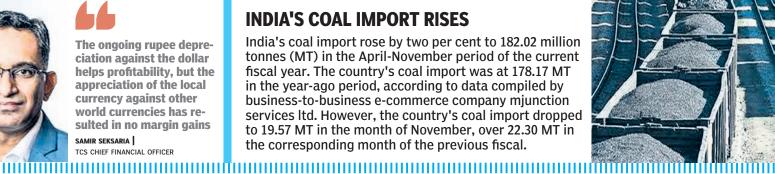
# Business



The ongoing rupee depreciation against the dollar helps profitability, but the appreciation of the local currency against other world currencies has resulted in no margin gains

#### **INDIA'S COAL IMPORT RISES**

India's coal import rose by two per cent to 182.02 million tonnes (MT) in the April-November period of the current fiscal year. The country's coal import was at 178.17 MT in the year-ago period, according to data compiled by business-to-business e-commerce company mjunction services ltd. However, the country's coal import dropped to 19.57 MT in the month of November, over 22.30 MT in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal.





to come out with six to seven papers containing sets of questions that will cover

various aspects of statutory audits in order to enhance the quality and level of interactions between auditors and audit committees/ board directors of companies

AJAY BHUSHAN PRASAD PANDEY NFRA CHIEF





age ticket size during the first nine months of this fiscal year has been around



demand in this premium segment has been very robust because of inadequate supply

PRADEEP KUMAR AGGARWAL SIGNATURE GLOBAL CHAIRMAN

#### SHORT **TAKES**

#### Finmin to meet heads of banks

New Delhi: Finance Ministry has called a meeting of heads of Public Sector Banks Wednesday to review progress of various financial inclusion schemes, including Jan Suraksha and Mudra Yojana. The meeting, which would see participation from representatives of private sector banks, is scheduled to be chaired by Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju. According to sources, the meeting to be chaired by the Secretary would also discuss and review the progress of various financial inclusion schemes including PM SVANidhi Schemes. The finance ministry from time to time launched various drives to achieve saturation under Pradhan Mantri Jan dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY).

#### Supply of gas partially restored

New Delhi: The government has increased cheaper gas supply to city gas retailers IGL, Adani-Total, and Mahanagar Gas, restoring a major part of the allocation that was cut in 2024, according to regulatory filings by the companies. The government, in October and November last year, had cut supplies of the so-called APM Gas (low-priced natural gas coming from old fields such as Mumbai High and Bassein fields in the Bay of Bengal) to city gas retailers by as much as 40 per cent in view of limited output. This led to city gas retailers hiking CNG prices by ₹2-3 per kg and planning more increases as they replaced lost volumes with higher-priced

#### Celebs buy OYO shares

New Delhi: Actors Madhuri Dixit, Amrita Rao, and Bollywood producer Gauri Khan are among celebrities who bought shares of travel tech platform OYO over the past few months. Gauri Khan bought 2.4 million shares of OYO during the recent Series G funding round concluded in August 2024 where the company raised over ₹1.400 crore from a consortium of investors, sources told PTI. Of late, there is a growing trend of actors and celebrities diversifying their investment bets into high-growth startups aiming for handsome returns once these companies go public.

## **FPIs withdraw ₹22k-cr so far in Jan**

Foreign investors have scaled back their investments in Indian equities significantly amid global and domestic headwinds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: Foreign investors have withdrawn ₹22,194 crore from Indian equities this month, driven by expectations of a weak earnings season, a steady rise in the US dollar, and concerns over tariff war during Donald Trump's presidency.

This came following an investment of ₹15,446 crore in the month of December, data with the depositories showed.

Foreign investors have scaled back their investments in Indian equities significantly amid global and domestic headwinds.

"This exodus of foreign money from the Indian markets could be attributed to multitude of factors, such as expectation of yet another weak earning season, concerns over the tariff war under Trump's presidency,

slowdown in GDP growth, still high inflation numbers and uncertainty over the commencement of the interest cut in India," Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Invest-

Additionally, record low level of Indian rupee, surge in US bond yields coupled with rich valuation of Indian markets also makes Indian equities relatively unattractive for foreign investors

According to the data, For-

eign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) offloaded shares worth ₹ 22,194 crore from Indian equities so far this month (till January 10).

FPIs have been sellers on all trading days except January 2.

'The single major reason for the relentless selling by the FPIs is the steady rise in the dollar index which is above 109 now. The surge in the 10-year bond yield to above 4.6 per cent is ensuring capital flows from emerging markets like India," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

The overall trend indicates a cautious approach by foreign investors, who scaled back investments in Indian equities significantly in 2024, with net inflows of just ₹427 crore.

This contrasts sharply with the massive ₹1.71 lakh crore ne inflows in 2023

### Inflation data, Q3 earnings to drive markets this week



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: Investors will take cues from the December quarter corporate earnings, with blue-chips like Infosys, Reliance Industries scheduled to report their results this week. in addition, inflation data and trading activity of foreign investors will also be crucial in dictating market trends, analysts said.

Movement of crude oil prices and the dollar index will also be tracked by investors. The strengthening of the US dollar, along with rising US bond yields, impacted investors' confidence last week.

"The Indian equity markets are poised for a volatile week ahead, as investors eagerly await the release of Q3 earning reports from major companies. Prominent names such as Infosys, Reliance Industries, HCL Technologies, HDFC AMC, HDFC Life Insurance Company, and Axis Bank are set to unveil their financial performance, which is likely to significantly impact market sentiment," Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd. said.

Adding to the market's dynamic, a tug-of-war between Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) and Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) continues to unfold, he said.

"India's CPI release Monday will be a key factor," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

WPI inflation data is scheduled to be announced Tuesday. Last week, the BSE benchmark slumped 1,844.2 points or 2.32 per cent, and the Nifty dropped 573.25 points or 2.38 per cent.

"The sharp decline in the market is attributed to mul tiple factors, including sustained foreign fund outflows subdued expectations for Q3 earnings, continued weakness in the Indian rupee against the US dollar, and rising US 10-year bond yields.

"Additionally, a strengthening dollar index and a sharp rebound in crude oil prices, raising inflationary concerns, further dampened investor sentiment. Puneet Singhania, Director at Master Trust Group, said.

India's industrial production (IIP) growth accelerated to a six-month high of 5.2 per cent vear-on-vear in November 2024, riding on the increased festive demand and pick up in the manufacturing sector, according to the official data released Friday.

"Looking ahead, corporate earnings will be in the spotlight, with major companies including IT giants, releasing their Q3 results. Macroeconomic data, such as India's inflation rate will also play a crucial role in shaping market direction On the global front, updates on the US economy, particularly labour market data and inflation trends, may impact FII flows. A spike in crude oil prices will add inflationary pressure. Overall, market vol atility is expected to remain as investors react to a mix of earnings, macroeconomic data, and global cues," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit? Financial

#### ment Research India, said. Trump 2.0, AI to influence Mcap of 5 of most-valued

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: The combined market valuation of five of the top-10 most-valued firms tumbled ₹1,85,952.31 crore last week, with HDFC Bank taking the biggest hit, in-line with a weak trend in domestic equities.

firms tumbles ₹1.85L-cr

Last week, the BSE benchmark slumped 1,844.2 points or 2.32 per cent, and the Nifty dropped 573.25 points or 2.38 per cent.

While Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and ITC faced erosion from their market valuations, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bharti Airtel, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever and the latest entrant in the top-10 pack -- HCL Technologies, were the gainers.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank dropped by ₹70,479.23 crore to ₹12,67,440.61 crore. The Kolkata-based diversified entity ITC's valuation tumbled ₹46,481 crore to ₹5,56,583.44 crore.

The mcap of State Bank of India slumped ₹44,935.46 crore to ₹6,63,233.14 crore and that of Reliance Industries eroded by ₹12,179.13 crore to ₹16,81,194.35 crore. ICICI Bank's valuation declined by ₹11,877.49 crore to ₹8,81,501.01 crore. However, TCS added ₹60,168.79 crore taking its mcap to ₹15,43,313.32 crore.

Shares of Tata Consultancy Services jumped nearly 6 per cent Friday after the IT services firm reported an 11.95 per cent jump in December quarter net profit to ₹12,380 crore.

The market valuation of HCL Tech jumped ₹13.120.58 crore to ₹5,41,539.01 crore. The mcap of Hindustan Unilever rallied ₹8,564.26 crore to ₹5,73,758.44 crore.



ical tensions, the potential for a renewed US-led trade war under President-elect Donald Trump, rising sustainability-driven barriers, China's overcapacity in key sectors, and rapid advancements in AI will significantly impact global trade in 2025, according to experts. They said Indian exporters

and importers should work hand in hand with the government to deal with these challenges. India, they said, need to prioritise their AI (artificial intelligence) strategy as it promises to transform trade logistics and supply chain management and reshape traditional trade patterns.

"AI is fast emerging as an important vehicle for future trade's journey. The AI-driven digital transformation is poised to boost not only services trade. but it may also create whole new categories of tradable AI-powered goods -- from autonomous vehicles to robotics and beyond," trade expert and Hi-Tech Gears Chairman Deep Kapuria said.

He said while geopolitical tensions are beyond the competency of the private sector to influence, businesses from the developing world need to invest resources to comply with growing needs to meet sustainability parameters both environmen-

tal and social. "Complying with sustainability indicators is also important for companies to get integrated into GVCs (global value chains)



gence Directive make it legally mandatory to ensure supply chain becomes sustainable, Kapuria said.

Mumbai-based exports and Founder Chairman Technocraft Industries SK Saraf said that the domestic industry has to invest heavily in new age technologies to become competitive and tap opportunities.

"The exporters will have to look for ways to increase exports to the US as imposition of high tariffs on Chinese goods by America would open up huge potential for them," Saraf said.

US President-elect Trump has pledged to impose higher tariffs on countries like China.

Kapuria said Washington's approach is bound to invite retaliatory actions that together could cause significant disruption in global supply chains and trade and FDI (foreign direct investment) flows.

"After years of shocks, first the Covid-19 pandemic, followed by Russia-Ukraine war, and crisis in the Middle East, tional trade relation. They are exploring engagement with new partners to suit their economic and national security concerns," he added. Kapuria also said with geo-

political shifts and a growing emphasis on sustainability, countries have to implement policy measures to ensure coherence between trade and environmental goals, aligning their long-term trade objectives with global trends. Large economies like the

EU are resorting to trade agreements to drive their sustainability agenda in partner

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Ashwani Kumar said there is a need for a certified agency to measure carbon emission from domestic manufacturing

"We have asked certain foreign agencies to work with us in this direction as EU measures would impose serious issues for exporters in India,"

#### **CII'S 10-POINT AGENDA ON EASE OF BIZ**

Services, said.

**New Deini:** Anead of the upcoming Budget, industry body Cii Sunday suggested a 10-point agenda to drive ease of doing business reforms, aimed at reducing compliance burden, simplifying regulatory frameworks, and improving transparency. Among the "urgent policy interventions", the industry body has recommended that all regulatory approvals -- central, state and local levels -- must mandatorily be provided only through the National Single Window System. It has also pitched for expediting the process of dispute resolution by improving the capacity of courts and placing greater reliance on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism. For streamlining environmental compliances, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) said, a unified framework could be introduced, which consolidates all requirements into a single document. Emphasising that easy access to land is important to facilitate new or expanding businesses, it said that states may be incentivised to develop an online integrated land authority with an objective to streamline land banks, digitise and integrate land records, provide information on disputed land and guide necessary reforms.

## Tougher US sanctions to curb Russian oil supply to India, China

The new sanctions will push China and India back into the compliant oil market to seek more supply from the Middle East, Africa and the **Americas** 

REUTERS

New Delhi/Singapore, Jan 12: Chinese and Indian refiners will source more oil from the Middle East, Africa and the Americas, boosting prices and freight costs, as new US sanctions on Russian producers and ships curb supplies to Moscow's top customers, traders and analysts said.

The US Treasury Friday imposed sanctions on Russian oil producers Gazprom Neft and Surgutneftegas, as well as 183 vessels that have shipped Russian oil, targeting the revenues Moscow has used to fund its war with Ukraine.

Many of the tankers have been used to ship oil to India and China as western sanctions

and a price cap imposed by the Group of Seven countries in 2022 shifted trade in Russian oil from Europe to Asia. Some tankers have also shipped oil from Iran, which is also under sanctions.

Russian oil exports will be hurt severely by the new sanctions, which will force Chinese independent refiners to cut refining output going forward, two Chinese trade sources said. The sources declined to be named as they are not authorised to speak to media.

Among the newly sanctioned ships, 143 are oil tankers that handled more than 530 million barrels of Russian crude last year, about 42% of the country's total seaborne crude exports, Kpler's lead freight analyst Matt Wright said in a note.

Of these, about 300 million barrels was shipped to China while the bulk of the remainder went to India, he added

'These sanctions will significantly reduce the fleet of ships available to deliver crude from Russia in the short term, pushing freight rates higher,' Wright said.



Singapore-based trader said the designated tankers shipped close to 900,000 bpd of Russian crude to China over the past 12 months.

"It's going to drop off a cliff," he added.

For the first 11 months last year, India's Russian crude imports rose 4.5% on year to 1.764 million bpd, or 36% of India's total imports. China's volume, including pipeline supply, was up 2% at 99.09 million metric tons (2.159 million bpd), or 20% of its total imports, over the same period. China's imports are mostly

Russian ESPO Blend crude, sold above the price cap, while India buys mostly Urals oil. Vortexa analyst Emma Li

said Russian ESPO Blend crude exports would be halted if the sanctions were strictly enforced, but it would depend on whether U.S. President-elect Donald Trump lifted the embargo and also whether China acknowledged the sanctions

The new sanctions will push China and India back into the compliant oil market to seek more supply from the Middle East, Africa and the Americas, the sources said.

Spot prices for Middle East, Africa and Brazilian grades have already risen in recent months on rising demand from China and India as supplies of Russian and Iranian oil tightened and became more expensive, they added.

"Already, prices are rising for Middle Eastern grades," said an Indian oil refining official.

"There is no option than that we have to go for Middle Eastern oil. Perhaps we may have to go for U.S. oil as well.

A second Indian refining source said the sanctions on Russian oil insurers will prompt Russia to price its crude below \$60 a barrel so Moscow can continue to use Western

Harry Tchilinguirian, head of research at Onyx Capital

insurance and tankers

Group said: "Indian refiners the main takers of Russian crude, are unlikely to wait around to find out and will be scrambling to find alternatives in Middle Eastern and Dated-Brent related Atlantic

Basin crude. "Strength in the Dubai benchmark can only rise from here as we are likely to see ag gressive bidding for February loading cargoes of the likes of Oman or Murban, leading to a tighter Brent/Dubai spread,' he added.

Last month, the Biden administration designated more ships dealing with Iranian crude ahead of tougher action expected from the incoming Trump administration, lead ing the Shandong Port Group to ban sanctioned tankers from calling into its ports in the eastern Chinese province.

As a result, China, the main buyer of Iranian crude, will also turn to heavier Middle Eastern oil and most likely will maximise its offtake of Canadi an crude from the Trans-Moun tain pipeline (TMX), Tchilinguirian said.

# Dominant display by eves Nagal suffers early exit

India records their highest ODI total of 370 against Ireland

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rajkot, Jan 12: A collective batting performance headlined by Jemimah Rodrigues' maiden hundred formed the cornerstone of India's commanding 116-run win against Ireland in the second women's ODI here Sunday as the hosts took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the threematch series.

India scored a massive 370 for five riding on three half-centuries and a ton before restricting Ireland to 254 for 7 in the stipulated 50 overs.

It was the elegant skipper Smriti Mandhana, who was first off the blocks with an attacking 73 off just 54 balls, while Rodrigues' first hundred (102 off 91 balls) ensured a smooth finish for the hosts.

Newcomer Pratika Rawal (67 off 61 balls) and seasoned Harleen Deol (89 off 84 balls) also made merry on a sub-par bowling attack.

Ireland batted steadily but never had the firepower to surpass a gigantic Indian total. Save Christina Coulter Reilly's 80, there wasn't much fight from the other batters as off-spinner Deepti Sharma emerged as the pick of the Indian bowlers with figures of 3 for 37. Seamer Titas Sadhu got 1 for 48 in 10 overs.

Earlier, India's total was based on two big stands -- 156 off 19 overs between Mandhana and Rawal and 183 off 28 overs between Rodrigues and Deol. In all, Indian batters smashed

JEMIMAH'S MAIDEN TON SETS UP 116-RUN WIN AND SEALS SERIES FOR INDIA

IN ALL, BATTERS SMASHED AN ASTOUNDING 44 **BOUNDARIES AND** THREE SIXES

**Today, the important thing** for me was to be till the 50th over. Getting runs is not a problem, I am good at that, but being till the end was important and glad I could do that

JEMIMAH RODRIGUES

an astounding 44 boundaries and three sixes in 50 overs.

As far as Rodrigues was concerned, her record has been one that flattered to deceive with just six half-centuries across

But once she got the boundary off medium pacer Arlene Kelly, the relief was palpable as she did a mock guitar-playing act with her willow.

"It has been a long wait to get this hundred. Glad that the team gave me a role at No 4 and I could deliver," Rodrigues told broadcasters Star Sports at the innings break.

"Today, the important thing for me was to be till the 50th over. Getting runs is not a problem, I am good at that, but being till the end was important and glad I could do that.'

She said during their 183-run stand, it took some time for her and Deol to assess the nature of the track.

"Having Harleen there, initially we took time to assess the conditions. I know I can accelerate but while I took time, Harleen spoke to me to keep believing. We can't take any team lightly, we have followed domestic cricket here, 390 has been chased," she said.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, Jan 12: A profligate Sumit Nagal's Australian Open campaign ended in a straight-set defeat against world number 25 Tomas Machac in the men's singles event here Sunday

The top Indian singles player failed to capitalise on his chances, losing 3-6 1-6 5-7 to his opponent form Czech Republic, who dominated with his supe-

rior consistency and precision. Nagal, ranked 91st, started the match confidently, dropping just two points in his first three service games.

However, a double fault and a string of forced and unforced errors saw him lose his serve in the seventh and ninth games, handing Machac the opening

In the second set, Nagal had an early chance to break Machac in the opening game, but the Czech player held firm, saving the breakpoint.

From there, Machac seized control, wrapping up the set in just 36 minutes as Nagal struggled to keep up.

Trailing by two sets, Nagal mounted a spirited fightback in the third set, securing an early break and racing to a 3-0 lead, which he extended to 5-3.

However, a flurry of errors, including another double fault, allowed Machac to stage a comeback with a crucial break.

The Czech player capitalised on the momentum, closing out the match and ending Nagal's

Last year, Nagal made headlines by reaching the Australian Open main draw through the qualifiers and stunning higher-ranked Alexander Bublik in the first round before

bowing out in the second. This time, his early exit against Machac marks the end of India's campaign in the singles event. However, Indian representation continues in the doubles category.

Last year's men's doubles champion Rohan Bopanna, who clinched the title with Australia's Matthew Ebden, will pair up with Colombia's Nicolas Barrientos this year.

HISTORIC KNOCK

#### Teen slams 346 in U19 women's ODI match

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Alur. Jan 12: Fourteen-vearold Mumbai opener Ira Jadhav became the first Indian to score a triple hundred in Under-19 cricket, when she made a 346 against Meghalava in the U19 Women's One Day Trophy here Sunday.

Ira, a student of the Shara dashram Vidyamandir, the alma mater of Sachin Tendulkar, Vinod Kambli and Ajit Agarkar made her runs in 157 balls with 42 fours and 16 sixes.

This is also the highest score in Youth List A matches by an Indian but the world record in the segment stands in the name of Lizelle Lee of South Africa. who made 427 in 2010 in a do mestic match. Jadhav, who went



Premier League auction, how ever has been named among the standbys for India's U19 T20 World Cup squad for the tournament to be held in Malaysia.

An admirer of India batter Jemimah Rodrigues, Jahdhav's triple hundred and her 274-run stand for the second wicket with skipper Hurley Gala (116, 79 balls) powered Mumbai to a mammoth 563 for three.

Meghalaya were bowled out for a mere 19, an inning that contained six ducks, as Mumbai recorded a massive 544-run

#### SHORT **TAKES**

#### **IPL to follow ICC's Code** of Conduct regulations

Mumbai: The Indian Premier League will follow the International Cricket Council's Code of Conduct regulation for participating players during the upcoming season which will start March 21 while the Women's Premier League will be played across four cities, the governing council decided Sunday, While BCCI vice-president and former IPL chairman Raieev Shukla had told medianersons that the cash-rich league will commence from March 23, a senior GC member clarified that it will start either March 20 or 21. It's learnt that the decision to follow the ICC Code of Conduct was taken during Sunday's meeting. "From now on, ICC's sanctioned penalties will be imposed for Level 1, 2 or 3 offences, Till date, IPI had its own Code of Conduct but going forward, Playing Conditions will be followed as per ICC T20I regulations," an IPL GC member told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

#### Fresh blow for Shakib

Dhaka: Shakib Al Hasan suffered a fresh setback ahead of the Champions Trophy after failing a second test of his bowling action, keeping him suspended from rolling his arm over in both domestic and international cricket. Shakib had earlier failed an independent assessment of his bowling action at Loughborough University, an ICC-accredited testing center in the UK. The result, which was reported on December 15, 2024, had already prevented him from bowling his left-arm spin

# Hyderabad Toofans beat Kalinga Lancers



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rourkela, Jan 12: Hyderabad Toofans registered a commanding 5-1 win over Vedanta Kalinga Lancers to move to the second spot in the men's Hockey India League here Sunday.

Gonzalo Peillat scored a brace while Maico Casella, Tim Brand and Arshdeep Singh slotted a goal each for the Toofans. Alexander Hendrickx was the lone goal scorer for the

Kalinga Lancers got off to a dream start as they opened the scoring in the fifth minute. The goal came via a textbook display of a penalty corner conversion as the injection came in perfectly for Hendrickx, who drilled his effort into the goal with a thunderous strike.

However, their joy was shortlived as the Toofans struck back within a minute as seasoned Peillat rifled his attempt past goalkeeper Krishan Pathak.

The Toofans took the lead in astounding fashion in the 21st minute when Casella scored one of the top contenders for the goal of the tournament.

Zachary Wallace played a lovely diagonal aerial pass for Casella on the right flank and the Argentine fired a mindblowing shot on the volley, from the tightest of angles, into the roof of the net.

The side from Hyderabad went on to score again in the final play of the second quarter as Argentine-born German national team player Peillat struck his second goal via yet another delightful drag-flick.

The Lancers had taken off their goalkeeper in search of goals and Arshdeep made the most of that by looping the ball into an empty net. That wrapped up the contest.

## Kerala Blasters to face OFC

A win will result in the Juggernauts' fourth straight unbeaten game against the Kochi-based side

Kochi, Jan 12: Kerala Blasters FC will play Odisha FC in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 here at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium Monday. Kerala will aim to further their unbeaten home record against the Juggernauts, while Odisha FC will aim to end their three-game-long winless streak in the competition.

A win will result in the Juggernauts' fourth straight unbeaten game against the Kochi-based side, levelling their previous such stretch from November 2019-February 2021.

Kerala Blasters FC have been solid at home, keeping a clean sheet in their last game (3-0 vs Mohammedan SC). However. they haven't recorded back-toback home clean sheets since 2019. Meanwhile, the last Odisha FC endured a longer streak without wins was in early 2023 (four games). They will want to overcome their poor away form to climb higher in the standings.

Odisha FC are seventh in the points table with 21 points from 15 matches, winning five clashes and drawing six times. Kerala Blasters FC follow them in ninth place, garnering 17 points from as many matches. Both teams are vying to stay in contention for playoff spots, with the sixthplaced Mumbai City FC having notched 23 points from 14 games. making this clash crucial in the



mid-season run.

Odisha FC are the third-highest goal-scoring team in the league thus far, finding the back of the net 29 times, with Diego Mauricio's seven strikes leading the charge. Kerala Blasters FC are sixth in this regard with 23 goals. Both these sides have kept only three clean sheets each though, highlighting their defensive concerns

Kerala Blasters FC have dropped 15 points from winning positions against Odisha FC in the ISL, their highest such tally against any single team. This indicates that the Juggernauts have rarely ever been dragged

out of a contest against the Kochi-based side, regardless of the scales tilting in the latter's favour briefly at times

Noah Sadaoui has been instrumental for the Kerala Blasters FC, contributing 10 goals (6 goals, 4 assists) and winning eight points for his side. Kerala Blasters FC are unbeaten in games where Sadaoui has scored this season (W4 D2). including their reverse fixture against Odisha FC.

Sergio Lobera has recorded nine wins in 12 matches against Kerala Blasters FC in the ISL (D2 L1). Another victory would make him the first manager in league history to secure 10 wins against a single opponent.

Odisha FC have netted 11 goals from set-pieces this sea son, the second-highest tally while Kerala Blasters have con ceded 12 goals from set-pieces,

the most by any team. Odisha FC head coach Sergio Lobera, too, requested his team to put up a collective front to en counter Kerala Blasters FC in the coming match. "We cannot focus on one or two players, it's teamwork at the end of the day. We need to work hard, press high to keep possession and not allow them to have the ball in our half," he said.

### Inaugural Kho Kho WC: India, Nepal to clash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 12: Teams competing in the Kho Kho World Cup, beginning here Monday, are thrilled to be a part of the action with competitors saying the event will bring out the best in them not just in terms effort but strategic thinking as well. India will play their opening

match against Nepal Monday. A total of 23 teams in men's and women's section will compete in the tournament with the final to be held January 19.

On Sunday, the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, the venue of the competition came alive with the participating teams receiving a taste of India's hospitality.

'Kho Kho is a very beautiful yet taxing sport, where you get to run around freely while still engaging your mind," said Konrad, a member of the Polish men's team. "There's a wonderful balance between physical ac-



he added. His counterpart in the

the Polish players will make up

for their relative inexperience by playing energetically.

While we are newcomers to Kho Kho, our energy is boundless. It's been incredible watching the other teams in action especially India – and these past few months of training have enhanced our strategic understanding of the game," said Karolina.

'We are taking this tournament very seriously," says Matshidiso, coach for the South African women's team. "South Africa is going to give a tough fight to India in the tournament." Australian women's team member Bridgette said strategic thinking made the sport really engaging.

"I really enjoy it because it combines the playful freedom of a children's game, where you can run around freely, with elements that require strategic thinking. This mix of physical activity and mental challenge makes it particularly engaging," said Bridgette.

### Saikia elected unopposed as new BCCI secy



Mumbai, Jan 12: Former Assam cricketer Devajit Saikia and Prabhtej Singh Bhatia have been elected unopposed as the new BCCI secretary and treasurer, respectively, at the Special General Meeting held here Sunday

Saikia and Bhatia were the

only names in the final list of contesting candidates released by Achal Kumar Jyoti, the BC-CI electoral officer, who previously served as the Chief Elec-

tion Commissioner of India. "Congratulated Shri @lonsaikia dangoriya on being elected as the Secretary and Shri @prabhtejb ji as the Treasurer of the Board of Control

for Cricket in India (BCCI along with the Apex Council Members of Assam Cricket Association at BCCI's Mumbai office, today. Wishing you both tremendous success and fulfillment in your new endeav ors! May your leadership and expertise take Indian cricket to new heights!" Assam Cricket Association president Taranga Gogoi posted on X.

Saikia, who played four first-class games for Assam as a wicketkeeper-batter, was the acting secretary of the BCCI after Jay Shah took over as ICC Chairman December 1. He previously served as BCCI's joint secretary, the post which is slated to be filled via another election process.

On the other hand, Bhatia stepped into the treasurer's role after his predecessor Ashish Shelar left the post after being inducted as a cabinet minister in the Maharashtra state gov ernment.

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