



RASHMIKA DEFENDS 'ANIMAL'

Actor Rashmika Mandanna defends blockbuster movie 'Animal' which has been slammed by many for its misogynistic theme

LEISURE P2



US VETOES UN RESOLUTION

The US has vetoed an immediate ceasefire resolution on the Israel-Hamas conflict at the UN Security Council

INTERNATIONAL P10



INDIA FACES PROTEAS TEST

A young Indian team is set to face a sturdy South African side in a three-match T20 International starting Sunday

SPORTS P12



A THING OF BEAUTY: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, along with 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman VK Pandian, during the inauguration of 'First Odisha Concours D' Elegance Vintage and Classic Car Exhibition' at Baranunda playground in Bhubaneswar, Saturday (Report P4)

Justice eludes POCSO victims

Over 2.43L child sexual abuse cases pending for trial in fast-track courts across India & 11,940 in Odisha

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: Speedy justice continues to elude lakhs of child sexual abuse victims as more than 2.43 lakh such cases in India and nearly 12,000 cases in Odisha (ranking fifth in the country) were pending in various fast-track special courts (FTSCs) till January 31 this year. This dismal justice delivery comes in the backdrop of the much touted claims of the Centre's robust policy and financial commitment, claims a research paper published by a non-profit.

As per the data, Uttar Pradesh tops the list of pending cases under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) with 67,153 cases while Maharashtra comes a distant second by registering 33,072 cases pending in different FTSCs. Likewise, West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha have 22,164, 15,594 and 11,940 pending POCSO cases, respectively. The research paper - 'Justice Awaits: An Analysis of the Efficacy of Justice Delivery Mechanisms in Cases of Child

PENDENCY BLUES

Uttar Pradesh	67,153
Maharashtra	33,072
West Bengal	22,164
Bihar	15,594
Odisha	11,940

Sexual Abuse in India' - released by India Child Protection Fund (ICPF) said that even if no new cases are added to the list, the country will need at least nine years to clear this backlog.

Commenting on Odisha's context, advocate in Orissa High Court Sagar Panigrahi says three factors were mainly responsible for the delay. "Firstly, the FTCs are also assigned to adjudicate other matters. Secondly, the culprit in a majority of the cases is the prosecution, which doesn't show the required alacrity in filing the chargesheet on time. And finally, during the Covid pandemic cyber-related POCSO cases witnessed a sharp rise," he said.

Two gene therapies for sickle cell get FDA nod

AGENCIES

Washington, Dec 9: Regulators Friday approved two gene therapies for sickle cell disease that doctors hope can cure the painful, inherited blood disorder that afflicts mostly Black people in the US.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the US said the one-time treatments can be used for patients of 12 years of age and older with severe forms of the disease. One, made by Vertex Pharmaceuticals and CRISPR Therapeutics, is the first approved therapy based on CRISPR, the gene editing tool that won its inventors the Nobel Prize in 2020. The other is made by Bluebird Bio and works differently.

"Sickle cell disease is a rare, debilitating and life-threatening blood disorder with significant unmet need," FDA's Dr Nicole Verdun said in a statement announcing the approvals. "We are excited to advance the field especially for individuals whose lives have been severely disrupted by the disease."

The two gene therapies are the first approved in the US for sickle cell disease. The FDA has previously given go-ahead to 15 gene therapies for other conditions. In the US, an estimated 1,00,000 people have sickle cell and about a fifth of them have the severe form.

Man kills wife, takes head to police station

Bhubaneswar: A 35-year-old man allegedly killed his wife in Nayagarh district Saturday suspecting that she was involved in an extramarital affair, and surrendered at the police station with her severed head. Accused Arjun Bagha walked into Banigochha police station with the severed head of his wife Dharitri. "The headless torso was recovered and probe started," said Laxman Dandasena, IIC of Banigochha PS.

Students walk 25km to meet Collector

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Dec 9: Fourteen students of Badaraisingh Ashram School under Sadar block in Rayagada district, Saturday, left the school hostel and walked around 25 km to lodge their grievances with the district Collector regarding alleged torture by the their headmaster and mismanagement in school and hostel. The students aged between 10

and 14 years ran away from their school hostel at 3am and walked through the jungle to the reach the district Collectorate.

They, however, failed to meet the Collector as it was second Saturday (holiday). They met the local MLA and SC/ST Development and Minority Welfare Minister Jagannath Saraka at the Circuit House and narrated their ordeal. The students alleged that they

left the school due to 'torture' by school authorities.

They alleged that they are not being provided with proper food and are beaten up by the headmaster Biswamitra Suna when they ask for food.

On being informed, additional district welfare officer Malaya Ranjan Chinara and welfare extension officer Prakash Kumar Nayak met the students and tried to figure out their problems.

Telangana BJP MLAs shun oath taking

Hyderabad: Newly-elected BJP MLAs of Third Telangana Legislative Assembly stayed away from taking oath alleging that AIMIM legislator Akbaruddin Owaisi was appointed as Pro Tem Speaker in violation of rules.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



You mean MPs shouldn't accept expensive gifts like handbags, watches, monogrammed suits...

₹250 crore & counting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: The seizure of "unaccounted" cash after the Income Tax (I-T) department raided an Odisha-based distillery group and entities linked to it is expected to reach ₹290 crore, making it the 'highest-ever' black money haul by any agency in a single operation, official sources said Saturday. The I-T department has deployed about 40 large and small machines to count the currency notes and brought in more department and bank staffers to finish the process, which began December 6 following raids against Boudh Distillery Private Limited and others, the sources said.

Besides these, more vehicles have also been requisitioned by the department to transport the seized cash to government banks in the state.

A premises linked to Congress's Rajya Sabha MP from Jharkhand, Dhiraj Prasad Sahu, was also searched as part of the operation, the sources said.

Sahu's staff expressed their inability to get a comment from the MP when PTI called on his phone for a reaction to the I-T department's action.

The tax sleuths are now recording the statements of various company officials and others, the sources said, adding that the counting of cash is expected to be over by Saturday. The total seizure of unaccounted cash is expected to be about ₹290 crore, they told PTI.

'Inspector Tiwari' written on cash bag kicks up row

BOLANGIR: Amidst I-T raids, 'Inspector Tiwari' written on a cash bag containing ₹5 lakh kicked up a controversy, giving another angle to the huge cash haul. Questions are now being raised on the purported 'inspector's' connection with Sudapada distillery. It is, however, unclear about the department to which the person belongs to. According to reports, one deputy commissioner rank officer with surname 'Tiwari' was serving in the Excise department a few years ago. However, he has been transferred to somewhere else. This apart, a police official bearing the surname 'Tiwari' is also embroiled in controversy.

Cash amounting to more than ₹250 crore has been seized till now and the money is continuously being deposited in government bank branches in Odisha, the sources said. Most of the currency notes are of ₹500 denomination.

This is the highest-ever cash seizure made by an agency in the country as part of an action against a single group and its linked entities, the sources said.

Some of the high-value seizures in the past include one from 2019 when the GST Intelligence raided a Kanpur-based businessman and seized cash amounting to ₹257 crore and another instance where cash amounting to ₹163 crore was unearthed by the I-T department during searches against a road construction firm in Tamil Nadu in July 2018.

Apps for 'undressing women' gain traction

AGENCIES

Washington, Dec 9: A whopping 24 million people visited undressing websites and apps that use artificial intelligence (AI) to undress women in photos in September alone, indicating the soaring popularity of such platforms, a report by Bloomberg said quoting social network analysis company Graphika.

According to the report, many of these undressing or 'nudify' services use popular social networks for marketing. For instance, since beginning of this year, the number of links advertising undressing apps increased more than 2,400 per cent on social media, including on X and Reddit, the researchers said. The services use AI to recreate an image so that the person is nude. Many of the services only work on women, said the report.

These apps are part of a worrying trend of non-consensual pornography being developed and distributed because of advances in AI - a type of fabricated media known as deepfake



pornography. Its proliferation runs into serious legal and ethical hurdles, as the images are often taken from social media and distributed without the consent, control or knowledge of the subject. The soaring popularity corresponds to the release of several open source diffusion models, or AI that can create images that are far superior to those created just a few years ago, Graphika said. Because they are open source, the models that the app developers use are available for free.

"You can create something that actually looks realistic," said Santiago Lakatos, an analyst at Graphika, noting that previous deepfakes were often blurry.

One image posted to X advertising an undressing app used language that suggests customers could create nude images and then send them to the person whose image was digitally undressed, inciting harassment. One of the apps, meanwhile, has paid for sponsored content on Google's YouTube, and appears first when searching with the word 'nudify'. While searching with key word 'nudify' top six apps/websites that pop up are: DeepNude, Nudify.online, SoulGen, Promptchan AI Image Generator, Candy.AI and Undress.vip.

A Google spokesperson said the company doesn't allow ads "that contain sexually explicit content". "We've reviewed the ads in question and are removing those that violate our policies," the company said.

Top six apps/websites under the search 'nudify' are: DeepNude, Nudify.online, SoulGen, Promptchan AI Image Generator, Candy.AI and Undress.vip.

Every dish becomes tasty with Patanjali Spices Pure and Healthy

Our ancestors researched on food science to make food nutritious and tasty thus, they added spices to it. They aid digestion to keep the body healthy and enhance immunity. But these benefits can only be reaped when spices are pure and their formulation is scientific. Patanjali range of spices is prepared with the method inherited from our ancestors.

Coriander seeds, Black Pepper, Green and Black Cardamom, Chaat Masala, Pav Bhaji Masala, Fenugreek Seeds, Black Mustard, and Fennel etc. are also available besides above-mentioned spices.

leisure



JULIA ROBERTS TALKS ABOUT THE 'HARDEST DRUG' SHE'S EVER DONE

Hollywood star Julia Roberts confessed the 'hardest drug' she has ever tried using. Roberts was speaking on Watch What Happens Live with Andy Cohen. Host Cohen asked: "Julia Roberts, what is the hardest drug you've ever tried?" The star then hesitated as she replied: "Mushrooms."

CHARLIE PUTH WANTS TO SHOW FANS 'HOW MUSIC IS MADE'

Singer-composer Charlie Puth wants to take his fans behind the magic of creating music. He revealed that his headlining performance at his upcoming concert is going to emphasise 'showing the layers' behind the creation of some of his biggest tracks.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You will share wonderful moments with your beloved today. Go ahead and learn some musical instrument, suggests Ganesh: it's a beautiful way to convey emotions. And it provides a perfect means to woo someone anew. Join a class before the mood wanes.

TAURUS

It is highly unlikely that you will be emotional and sentimental today, predicts Ganesh. Adopt a laid-back attitude towards life to feel at ease. Public servants will have encouraging and affirmative results in their efforts. Your competency will be put to test at the work place.

GEMINI

If you have children, they will be a pampered lot today, says Ganesh. Your affection, however, may not have its desired impact. Children are known to be unpredictable, but keep an eye on their activities, especially today. You may entertain your loved ones with a sumptuous dinner tonight.

CANCER

Today, you will need to rise above your emotional leanings and will have to choose between doing the right thing and keeping your loved ones happy. So far, you have managed to strike a balance. It is about time that you learn to deal with your fears, suggests Ganesh.

LEO

Friendships are supposed to last forever. But it all depends on whether or not the friend is around when most needed. Today, your pals may turn to you for help, and sure enough, you will be there to extend all the support you can, says Ganesh. Get ready to make new acquaintances today, some of whom may go on to become life-long friends.

VIRGO

You are the banner carrier for those around you today, giving hope and inspiring. Clad yourself in robes of the perfect family man. This should spread warmth and love, and will work wonders in improving relationships.

LIBRA

Call it two sides of the same coin, but today, you shall have the uncanny desire to be your own master and servant. But this day is all set to be animated and eventful and full of life. Expect a few run-ins with the opposite sex, as you are bound to attract quite a few of them, mainly because of your killer good looks. Hitting the gym pays its dividends, says Ganesh.

SCORPIO

You may find yourself sulking in your shell today, feels Ganesh. One event or another may lead you to shut out work. Hindsight and bitterness will not lead you anywhere, so Ganesh advises that you must steer clear of negativity.

SAGITTARIUS

A nice, easy and pleasant day is on the cards. Your professional approach will bring you much appreciation, especially in the way you handle complicated problems. The way you balance people's opinions will help you make many friends.

CAPRICORN

Recognition and rewards are awaiting you at work, and unlike in most cases, colleagues won't be envious of your success. They will, in fact, provide the much-needed motivation for taking up new and challenging projects, says Ganesh. For those of you looking to switch jobs, wait awhile, this may not be the right time.

AQUARIUS

Today, your social butterflies will set hearts fluttering! Also, whatever you have been working on will reach completion now. You do have a great vision, but you're lost when it comes to executing your plans. Ganesh assures success if only you are a little more practical!

PISCES

The focus today is on touching base with your near and dear ones, says Ganesh. It is likely that you will renew some old associations in a social function, or in matters related to business. You are likely to surge ahead of your competitors when it comes to work related matters.



'Sara never auditioned for Animal'

Mumbai: Quelling the speculations circulating in the industry, an insider has refuted claims that Bollywood actress Sara Ali Khan underwent an audition for the film *Animal*, directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga. Sara Ali Khan, celebrated for her noteworthy debut in Kedarnath and her recent portrayal in the successful film *Zara Hatke Zara Bachke*, Sara Ali Khan has solidified her position as one of the industry's leading actresses. Known for her desi girl persona and relatable appeal, Sara's presence in the Bollywood landscape has garnered immense attention. Contrary to rumours suggesting Sara's involvement in the casting

process for Sandeep Reddy Vanga's *Animal*, an industry insider has clarified that the actress did not participate in any audition for the film. The insider said, "Sara Ali Khan never auditioned for the Sandeep Reddy Vanga's film *Animal*". Currently riding the wave of success with the acclaim received for *Zara Hatke Zara Bachke*, Sara Ali Khan has a promising lineup of projects in her pipeline. Her upcoming ventures include *Murder Mubarak* alongside Vijay Varma and *Metro Inn Dino* with Aditya Roy Kapoor, adding to the actress's diverse portfolio.

Loyola celebrates its Annual Sports Day



Bhubaneswar: The highly anticipated Annual Sports Day of Loyola School unfolded Saturday here with unparalleled vigour. The event opened with a parade, featuring students from all four houses marching in impeccable coordination, led by the School President. The torchbearers for the event were ten students selected to represent CISCE in the School Games Federation of India. The event was formally inaugurated by SK Priyadarshi, IPS, Commissioner (Bhubaneswar-

Cuttack Police), the Chief Guest for the day. The day was packed with a plethora of sports events, including the worm race, zig-zag race, sprints of 50m, 75m, 100m, and the thrilling 4x100m relay race, engaging boys and girls from LKG to Std XII. The cheers from parents, teachers, and fellow students echoed throughout the grounds, creating an electrifying atmosphere. Adding a visual spectacle to the event, students from LKG to Std XII showcased vibrant and colourful drill

displays on various themes such as Healthy Rhythm, Shapes, Earthly Chimes, Sakura, Asian Games, Spectrum of Life, and World Peace. Rector Father Augustine and Principal Father Amaladoss graced the occasion, awarding medals to the deserving winners. The success of Sports Day resonated not only in the athletic prowess demonstrated but also in the culmination of relentless hard work and training by the participants.

MYSOGYNY SLUR ON ANIMAL

Rashmika defends her character

Mumbai: While *Animal* is making and breaking records at the box office, the film is also being heavily criticized by netizens and social media users as many have accused Sandeep Reddy Vanga and Ranbir Kapoor of glorifying misogyny in the action entertainer. Many were unhappy about Ranbir Kapoor aka Ranvijay aka *Animal* cheating on his wife Geetanjali, played by Rashmika Mandanna in the film. Speaking about the inner strength of her character and describing her power, her importance in the family, among others, the actress penned an emotional note showcasing her connect with the role she essayed, as she wrote, "Gitanjali ?????? If I were to describe her in a sentence ... it would be the only force at home holding her family together. ? She is pure, real, unfiltered, strong and raw. ?? At times as an actor, I would question some of Gitanjali's actions.. And I remember my director telling me -

this was their story. Ranvijay's & Gitanjali's.. it was their love and passion, their families and their lives- this is who they are.. ?? She went on to add, "In a world full of all violence, hurt and unbearable pain - Gitanjali would bring peace trust and calm.. She would pray to her Gods to keep her husband and her kids safe.. She was the rock that weathered all the storms..?? She would do anything in her power for the sake of her family. Gitanjali is absolutely beautiful in my eyes, and in some ways she is like most women who are standing strong and protecting their families day in and day out..?? Happy one week to us #Animal team."



Odisha Fashion Week from Feb 16



(L-R) Elios CEO Santosh Acharya, Russian filmmaker Svetlana Levicheva and Director-PR, Elios, Ranjan Kumar Acharya at the presser

Bhubaneswar: In a bid to promote handloom artisans of the state, Odisha Fashion Week (OFW), a three-day fashion show with participation of national and international models, will be held here at a City hotel from February 16. It was revealed during a press meet at the hotel, Saturday. "This will be the biggest show in Odisha's fashion history," claimed Santosh Acharya, the CEO and Founder of Bangalore-based Elios, a company which is set to organise the event. Elios has established itself in the

Svetlana Levicheva, a London-based internationally acclaimed model and filmmaker from Russia is also present at the first press meet for the event

the glamour world by conducting fashion shows with national and international models as showstoppers in cities like Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore. He came to limelight by offering breaks to top stars like Anushka Sharma, Deepika Padukone and Ileana D' Cruz in model industry at the beginning of their career. The presser was also attended by Svetlana Levicheva, a London-based internationally acclaimed model and filmmaker from Russia. She is also a filmmaker who has been felicitated on a number of occasions at Cannes Film Festival.

FUN post

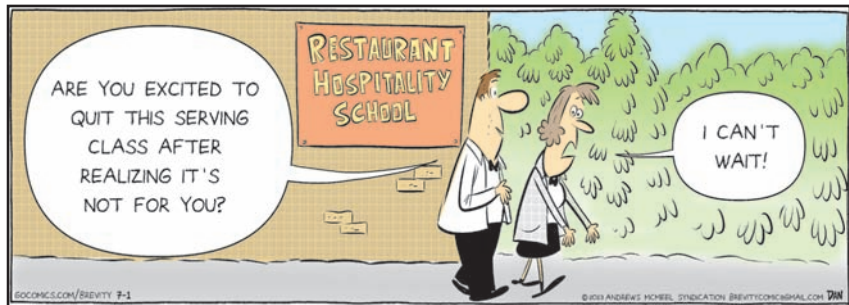
PEANUTS



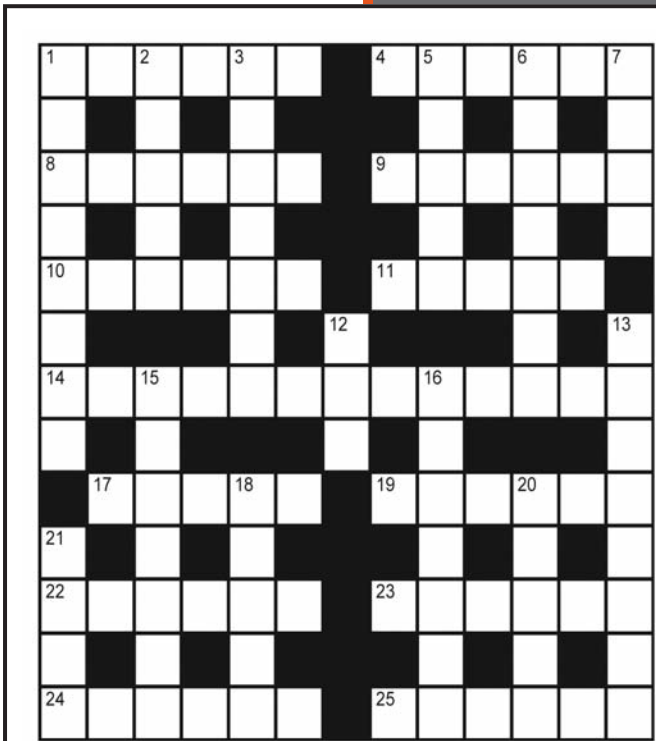
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



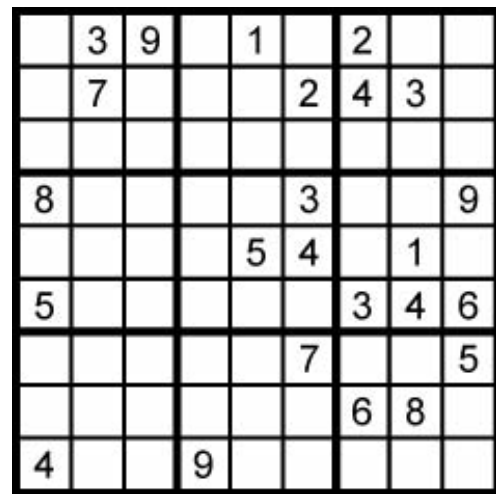
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 African grasslands
 - 4 Cave
 - 8 Trondheim locale
 - 9 Jaconet, e.g.
 - 10 Fancy vessels
 - 11 Bicycle part
 - 14 Postal destination (6,7)
 - 17 Buttinsky
 - 19 Calling
 - 22 Fisherman
 - 23 Ushers
 - 24 Henry Morgan, e.g.
 - 25 Spanish urban area
 - 3 Farm vehicle
 - 5 Boxer's stat
 - 6 Aardvark fare
 - 7 Ocean predator
 - 12 Pickle container
 - 13 Caffè latte
 - 15 Brambird
 - 16 Ram Stoker character
 - 18 Blatant
 - 20 Pillow filler
 - 21 Zither's cousin

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



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

EMPLOYABILITY BOOST

College students and teachers take part in a programme on NUA Odisha at Baliyatra Ground in Cuttack, Saturday



I-T RAIDS: SLUGFEST INTENSIFIES

BJP urges CM for CBI probe; BJD accuses Oppn of 'dirty politics'; Congress distances itself from Jharkhand MP Dheeraj Sahu

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: With the Income Tax (I-T) department recovering over Rs 250 crore during raids at multiple locations linked to Congress MP Dheeraj Prasad Sahu-owned Boudh Distillery Pvt Ltd and its entities in Odisha, the BJP demanded a CBI probe into, what they alleged, the collusion of state apparatus in the scam.

The BJD, meanwhile, accused the Opposition of doing 'nasty politics' by dragging name of the regional party in the incident.

Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal said, "How can Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik remain silent over such a shameful event taking place in Odisha? The I-T officials have seized huge amounts of black money just under the nose of the CM."

Targeting the BJD government, the BJP state president alleged that the leaders of the regional party in Odisha were providing protection to the Congress Rajya Sabha MP from Jharkhand whose family was involved in the liquor trade and stashing black money.

"If a central agency (I-T department) could get clue regarding the black money in Odisha, what was the state police, Excise department, Intelligence and the Economic Offences Wing



doing all along?," he asked.

The BJP leader also asked Patnaik to order a CBI probe into the matter. "The relationship between Sahu brothers and BJD leaders are subject of an investigation," he said, adding that the state government had not conducted re-auction or re-tendering of the Out Still Shops for the last 24 years.

"While the BJP national leaders target the Congress MP in Jharkhand over the recovery of black money, the BJP leaders in Odisha unnecessarily drag the BJD. They will not succeed in their evil designs," a fresh statement issued by the BJD said, adding, "The Odisha BJP leaders should carefully read the X post of Prime Minister."

BJD MLA Satyanarayan Pradhan rejected Samal's allegations and claimed that no BJD minister or MLA was ever linked

with the liquor traders whose black money have been seized by the I-T department.

"We welcome the raids conducted by the I-T department. It seems some BJP leaders of western Odisha are connected with the recovered money and the businessman. All the facts will come out after investigation," he said.

Congress spokesman Rajani Mohanty said his party demands a judicial investigation into the incident or a court-monitored SIT probe to ascertain the truth.

Meanwhile, the Congress distanced itself from its Jharkhand Rajya Sabha MP Dheeraj Sahu after the recovery of a huge amount of cash from a liquor company linked to him.

"The Indian National Congress is in no way connected with the businesses of Dheeraj Sahu, MP. Only he can explain, and should explain, how huge amounts of cash have been reportedly unearthed by the income-tax authorities from his properties," AICC general secretary Communications Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan sought to know the source of 'benami wealth' seized from the liquor traders. He said it was a matter of concern that such a large amount of benami money was recovered.



TAKING STOCK: 5T Chairman VK Pandian, along with officials including SP KV Singh, reviews progress of Srimandir Heritage Corridor project in Puri, Saturday

PANDIAN REVIEWS HERITAGE CORRIDOR PROJECT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman VK Pandian reviewed the progress of Heritage Corridor Project in Puri, Saturday.

During the early morning visit to the Holy City, Pandian also reviewed the arrangement for queue management and traffic control around the 12th-century shrine for smooth

entry of pilgrims into the temple.

The 5T Chairman, who recently joined BJD, oversaw the progress of ongoing projects like landscaping work, mutt restoration and queue management system from Shree Parking at JBPC and Marichikot to Dolabedi.

Pandian emphasised on substantial progress on Dolabedi restoration, Emar Mutt,

Panjabi Mutt, Uttarparswa Mutt and facade painting.

Pandian inspected and reviewed the landscaping work on the south, west and north sides of the shrine. He directed officials to complete work on the buffer zones and landscaping on all sides by next week.

The completion of the effluent treatment plant (ETP), garbage chutes, and shifting of

the sub-station will be done as per the schedule given earlier.

The timeline was also made for the completion of the electrical work and the shifting of utilities near 'Meghanad Pachiri' (boundary wall).

The 5T Chairman also visited the Jagannath Ballava area, Shree Marga (road) and Pramod Udyan and instructed officials to expedite all work.

1.14 lakh fake job cards in Odisha junked

UP ACCOUNTS FOR HIGHEST NUMBER OF DELETIONS OF 2,96,464 CARDS OUT OF THE TOTAL 7,43,457

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: More than 7.43 lakh fake job cards under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) were deleted in 2022-23, of which over 1.14 lakh were in Odisha, according to Minister of State (MoS) for Rural Development Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti.

In a written response to a question this week, Jyoti shared data on fake job cards. The data showed 7,43,457 fake job cards were deleted in 2022-23 and 3,06,944 in 2021-22.

Uttar Pradesh accounted for the highest number of deletions (2,96,464) on account of job cards being fake in 2022-23. In 2021-22, 67,937 fake job cards were deleted in the state.

Odisha came second with 1,14,333 job cards being deleted in 2022-23 and 50,817 in 2021-22.

In Madhya Pradesh, 27,859 fake job cards were deleted in the last



fiscal and 95,209 in 2021-22. The corresponding figure for Bihar was 80,203 and 27,062. In Jharkhand, 70,673 job cards were deleted in 2022-23 and 23,528 the previous year.

In Andhra Pradesh, while the number of deleted fake job cards was 1,833 in 2021-22, it increased manifold to 46,662 in the last fiscal.

Rajasthan saw deletion of 45,646 fake job cards in 2022-23 and 14,782

in 2021-22. In West Bengal, whose MGNREGS payments have been pending for the last two years over allegations of corruption, 5,263 job cards were deleted in 2022-23 for being fake and 388 in 2021-22.

Jyoti said deletion and updation of job cards is a continuous process, and as per Section 25 of the Act, whoever contravenes its provisions shall on conviction be liable to a fine

which may extend to Rs 1,000.

"Also, Aadhaar seeding has been made mandatory for the de-duplication of the beneficiary database to prevent fake job card issuance," she said. In a written reply to another question, Jyoti informed the Lok Sabha that 6,47,8345 new job cards were issued in 2022-23. "In 2021-22, 1,20,63,967 new job cards were issued, while in 2020-21, the year that saw COVID-19-induced lockdown, 1,91,05,369 new job cards were issued," the MoS said.

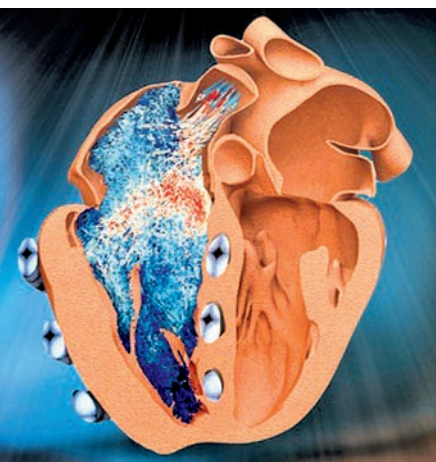
According to a reply given by Rural Development Minister Giriraj Singh in the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon Session, job cards entailing over 5.18 crore workers were deleted in 2022-23, which was an increase of 247.06 per cent compared to 2021-22, when the figure stood at more than 1.49 crore.

Jobs cards are deleted for various reasons, including these being fake or duplicate and when a beneficiary move out of a panchayat area or dies.

Man held for robbing security guard in City

BHUBANESWAR: The twin city Commissionerate Police Saturday arrested a man on charges of assaulting and robbing a private security guard under Badagada police limits here in October this year. Rahul Kumar Sahoo, who was on the run after committing the offence, was arrested from Canal Road area here early Saturday morning, ACP (Zone-IV) SN Muduli said. Giving details, the ACP said Prakash Pati, a security guard at a showroom under Badagada police limits, lodged a complaint alleging that he and his colleague - Gouranga Das - were in their room October 12 night when Sahoo came and robbed his mobile phone as well as other valuables after assaulting them. "After preliminary investigation, we found that Sahoo had multiple cases of petty crimes registered against him with Mancheswar and Kharavel Nagar police," the ACP said. Sahoo has been arrested on the basis of a case registered against him under multiple Sections of the IPC and Arms Act, the top cop pointed out.

Indian-origin engineer designs replica of heart's right chamber



THE RIGHT VENTRICLE IS ONE OF THE HEART'S 4 CHAMBERS, ALONG WITH THE LEFT VENTRICLE AND THE LEFT AND RIGHT ATRIA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New York, Dec 9: A team of US engineers, led by one of an Indian-origin, has developed a robotic replica of the heart's right ventricle, which mimics the beating and blood-pumping action of live hearts.

The realistic model developed by a team at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) can aid the development of better heart implants and shed light on understudied heart disorders.

The right ventricle is one of the heart's four chambers, along with the left ventricle and the left and right atria. Of the four chambers, the left ventricle is the

journal Nature Cardiovascular Research, the team described a model that includes real heart tissue, explanted from a pig's right ventricle which was treated. The team then fit a silicone wrapping around it, which acted as a soft, synthetic myocardium, or muscular lining.

Within this lining, the team embedded several long, balloon-like tubes, which encircled the real heart tissue, in positions that the team determined through computational modelling to be optimal for reproducing the ventricle's contractions.

The researchers connected each tube to a control system, which they then set to inflate and deflate each tube at rates that mimicked the heart's real rhythm and motion.

"Conventional tools often fail to capture the intricate mechanics and dynamics of the right ventricle, leading to potential misdiagnoses and inadequate treatment strategies," Singh said.

The artificial ventricle can be tuned to mimic healthy and diseased states. The team manipulated the model to simulate conditions of right ventricular dysfunction, including pulmonary hypertension and myocardial infarction. They also used the model to test cardiac devices.

'Restrict missile testing during turtle nesting'

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: The state government has urged the DRDO to restrict missile testing off the Odisha coast in February and March - the mass nesting season of the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles, an official said Saturday.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has two major missile testing ranges in the state - Chandipur in Balasore district and the APJ Abdul Kalam Island, formerly Wheeler Island, in Bhadrak district, he said.

"It is an annual practice to request the DRDO to restrict testing during this time as these locations are close to the famed Gahirmatha sanctuary, which is considered the cradle of Olive Ridley turtles," the senior official of the state Forest department said. The DRDO adheres to the state's request every year, he said.

At a meeting chaired by Chief Secretary PK Jena December 7, it was also decided to request the DRDO to appoint a nodal officer who will coordinate with the Fisheries department for protecting the turtles.

Lakhs of Olive Ridley turtles visit the state's coast every year for mating and laying eggs. While mating starts in January, the mass nesting begins in February at Gahirmatha beach in Kendrapara district, Rushikulya beach in Ganjam and the confluence of the Devi river and Bay of Bengal in Puri district.

These turtles are sensitive and it is feared that missile testing might have an adverse impact on their mating and mass nesting, the official said.

During the last season, a record 6.56 lakh turtles had laid eggs at Rushikulya rookery and 5.12 lakh turtles turned up for mass nesting at Gahirmatha beach, he said.

Advertisement for Cable TV Show 2024, SAARC Region's Largest 25th Annual CATV & Broadband Show, featuring sponsors like Allinforce, Meghbela, and others.

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CM unveils vintage, classic car exhibition

The event showcases over 50 meticulously restored and impeccably preserved cars from across India including Rolls Royce 20/25 of 1934, A Bugatti TSS Grand Prix of 1929, Ford V of 1932 and Jaguar MK 2 Saloon of 1962



were displayed, each narrating its unique story of refinement and sophistication from vintage Rolls-Royces to classic Jaguars, the event offered a rare glimpse into the evolution of automobile design and engineering.

The highlight of the event was the special inauguration ceremony, where Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik commended the organizers for their initiative in preserving and showcasing the heritage associated with vintage and classic auto-



The event is organised with the support of Odisha Tourism's 'Odisha-India's Best kept Secret', in association with HMCI, EIMG, VCCCI, HCAL and KVCCC. Dharmaditya Patnaik, the curator of Odisha Concours and a vintage car collector himself, expressed his gratitude and enthusiasm for the overwhelming response to the event. He said, "We are thrilled to witness the success of the exhibition, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for inaugurating this historic event."

The exhibition venue transformed into a splendid canvas where automobile masterpieces

mobiles. He expressed his delight at the diverse collection on display and emphasised the importance of such events in fostering a deeper appreciation for our automobile legacy.

The success of the event not only marks a momentous occasion for vintage and classic car enthusiasts but also establishes a foundation for future editions of this prestigious event. The organizers, participants, and patrons alike look forward to the continued growth of the Odisha Concours as a significant platform for celebrating the artistry and heritage of automobile craftsmanship.



CAPTIVATING MOVE: A scintillating performance by the disciples of Shree Dance Akademy of Bhubaneswar at Bhanja Kala Mandap, Saturday. This was part of the first day event titled Srinityotsava being organised by the Akademy. Odissi dance Guru Durgacharan Ranbir was the chief guest and Basant Kumar Panda, Project Director - Center for Excellence in Odia Language and Sikatha Das, Chief Executive of Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra Odissi Research Center attended as the guests of honour respectively

KIMS doctors relieve woman of 7 yrs long pain

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: In a first of its kind surgery in Odisha, doctors at the Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) recently performed a minimally invasive procedure known as 'balloon microcompression' to bring relief to a woman grappling with excruciating facial pain for the last seven years.

The patient was suffering from trigeminal neuralgia, a debilitating condition triggered by sharp, stabbing, and electric shock-like pain. "This condition is so distressing that it's often referred to as the 'suicidal disease,' considering the extreme anguish it inflicts," informed a staff of the hospital. Rajendra Sahoo, consultant

in pain and palliative medicine at KIMS, and his team performed the advanced procedure on the women, which was completed within 30 minutes. "The patient was seen smiling in the recovery ward, liberated from the persistent pain. Able to eat comfortably without experiencing any further agony, she was discharged the following day, marking a dramatic transformation in her quality of life," the staff informed.

"The severity of the pain among patients suffering from trigeminal neuralgia could last from a few seconds to minutes. Daily routines like brushing, chewing and even speaking become unbearable," explained Sahoo. After exploring options like



radiofrequency ablation and balloon microcompression, Sahoo said he opted for the latter due to the lower risk of side effects, such as corneal ulcer or kerati-

tis, compared to radiofrequency ablation.

"The minimally invasive procedure involved using a 14-G needle under general anaesthesia, avoiding any incisions or sutures. Guided by fluoroscopy, a specialized X-ray machine, we could access the base of the skull, targeting the 'foramen ovale,' a small opening. The balloon was then carefully inflated for 90 seconds precisely at the 'trigeminal ganglion,' the source of the agonizing pain," Sahoo explained.

KIIT and KISS founder Achyuta Samanta congratulated the team for their success, emphasising the institution's commitment to offering advanced healthcare services with care and compassion.

'Hydrogen in steelmaking to reduce carbon footprint'

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: At a time when the world is grappling with the need to meet climate targets, an industry leader in steelmaking said Saturday that increased use of hydrogen in steel production could significantly reduce the carbon footprint.

"Hydrogen is a crucial component that can help the steel industry transition to a more environmentally friendly future, as it is crucial for reducing emissions throughout the steelmaking process," said Tata Steel CEO and managing director TV Narendran.

The steel industry is a major emitter of greenhouse gases, accounting for about 8 per cent of the carbon footprint worldwide, he said, adding Tata Steel is committed to a more sustainable and environment-friendly future. Narendran was speaking as the chief guest at inauguration of the three-day annual convention of the Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE), which began at the Siksha 'O' Anusandhan Deemed to be University (SOA).

The inaugural session was chaired by INAE President Indranil Manna. Damodar

Acharya, chairman of SOA's Advisory Board and Chairman of INAE's Bhubaneswar chapter.

Pointing out that the transition to green technology in India will be challenging, Narendran said that transition is essential to meeting climate targets, while the transition from coal to hydrogen was being seen as the future of steel production.

Tata Steel had initiated a pilot project at its Jamshedpur plant to assess the practicality of using hydrogen as a reducing agent in steelmaking, he said.

The company aims to blend hydrogen with carbon to create a more sustainable alternative to the traditionally carbon-heavy steel production process, Narendran said.

In India, Narendran said, most of the capacity addition in steel production was happening in the eastern part of the country that face operational and technical challenges to go green.

Tata Steel has its steel plants at Jamshedpur and Kalinga Nagar in Odisha, he said, adding there was great potential for growth in the steel industry in recycling.

"In fact, recycling may surpass mining in the next few decades," he said.

Achievers of 55 DAV schools feted

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: The DAV Unit VIII organised a programme on its campus Saturday to felicitate the academic achievers from 55 DAV schools across the state along with teachers with highest QPI

The achievers showcased their exuberance in BSE, CBSE, ICSE, CHSE, BBA and B.Com examinations for the session 2022-23 and brought laurels to the entire fraternity of DAV Odisha.

ARO, Sujata Sahu read out the results of the achievers on this occasion.

Joining as the chief guest, Finance and Energy Principal Secretary Vishal Kumar Dev appreciated the achievement of students and teachers and said,

"You can reach the pinnacle of success by considering failure as a challenge and improving your shortcomings".

Institute of Chemical Technology Director PR Vavia appreciated the achievers and motivated them to choose the field of Chemical Engineering.

Regional Director Keshaba Chandra Satapathy congratulated



the students and wished them good luck for the future. Regional Officer LN Pradhan conveyed his warm greetings to everyone.

The guests present of this occasion were ARO Surendra Kumar Bhoi, Chairmen, SMC MM Panda, Arun Kumar Rath, Omkar Nath Mohanty, Santosh Satapathy, Kanchanbala Patnaik and Balaram Sahoo.

Ama Odisha Nabin Odisha coordinators appointed

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik appointed 16 coordinators for smooth implementation of Ama Odisha Nabin Odisha programme, Saturday.

The coordinators are Kailash Chandra Sahu for Angul, Ranjan Bag for Balasore, Sanjay Das for Bhadrak, Yargana Ramabhadra Rao for Gajapati, Badrinarayan Patnaik, Bhawanipatna sub division Kalahandi and Aditya Nanda, Dharmagarh sub division Kalahandi, Rajiv Patra Kandhamal, Sreemayee Sweta Singha Mishra for Khurda, Lata Sahu Koraput sub division, Koraput, Tulasi Kirsani, Jeypore subdivision Koraput,

Chitta Patnaik, Malkangiri, Amarendra Kar Rairangpur sub-division, Mayurbhanj, Sunil Kumar Das, Baripada sub division Mayurbhanj, Manjula Majhi, Nabarangpur Gangadhar Panda, Nayagarh Ram Lal Hansh, Nuapada, Patana Gourishankar Rao, Rayagada Sidhanta Das, Sambalpur and Jodendra Singh Sundargarh subdivision, Sundargarh.

It may be recalled that Ama Odisha Nabin Odisha programme was launched recently by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik with special focus on development of digital infrastructure and preservation of our rich cultural heritage and Jagannath culture in our villages.

OMM leads millets' journey from local to global

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 9: After India's proposal to celebrate 2023 as the International Year of Millets was recognized at the United Nations, millets suddenly became a trending topic. While the world only took notice of the benefits millets offered in 2023, Odisha Millets Mission has been promoting the grain since 2017 with a goal to usher in a millet revolution in Odisha.

As the largest contributor of millets in Asia, India plays an important role in millet farming and sustainable nutritional practices worldwide. Among the highest contributors in the country, Odisha plays a significant role in millet promotion and adoption across the state and the country. "The Odisha Millets Mission

represents a success story for many impoverished farmers in Odisha, who can now sell their yields at higher prices and can afford to make better lifestyle choices for their families," said a state government official.

The recently held International Convention on Millets highlights the role the state plays as a guiding example in the county when it comes to knowledge regarding millets. With over 190 panellists and close to 2,500 farmers from various states attending the convention, rich discussions were held at the event about policy roadmaps, emerging technologies and advanced training.

With unpredictable climatic conditions and a high population dependent on farming, agricultural practices in Odisha are going through a tough phase

The recently concluded International Convention on Millets highlighted the role Odisha plays as a guiding example in the county when it comes to knowledge regarding millets

ODISHA MILLETS MISSION

With over 190 panellists and close to 2,500 farmers from various states attending the convention, discussions were held at the event about policy roadmaps, emerging technologies in the field and advanced training for farmers

year-around. Returning to their roots, the Odisha Millets Mission promotes millet cultivation and addresses food security issues for over 5 million vulnerable households in the state. "Millets are resilient to harsh and sudden environmental changes, making them a reliable source of income and nutrients. They can

easily withstand elevated CO2 levels and, under certain parameters, can be called the crop of the future," said the official.

OMM serves as a model for countries with limited resources and environmental capabilities that are seeking various methods to enhance their nutritional diversity. This model can help

these countries reduce their dependency on a few staple crops like wheat or rice while also reducing production costs due to lower fertilizer and other farming support requirements.

Practices such as incentivizing farmers, assisting in establishment of self-sufficient organizations working for their welfare, and providing necessary training for better yields are among the various methods that the Odisha Millets Mission has introduced in the past few years to ensure the success of this initiative. Several countries struggling with similar issues can take this model as an example and collaborative efforts on a global scale can help mitigate threats like world hunger and malnutrition once and for all, said experts.

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SC debars defaulter mining firms from tender process



POST NEWS NETWORK

STATE GOVT HAS FAILED TO ATTACH THE PROPERTIES OF DEFAULTING FIRMS AS CERTIFICATE CASES ARE PENDING IN THE COURT

THIS HAS PROVED A BLESSING IN DISGUISE FOR THE DEFAULTING FIRMS AS THEY CONTINUE TO BUY TIME

Keonjhar, Dec 9: The Supreme Court has debarred the mining firms from participating in tender processes until and unless they clear their outstanding penalties, a report said Saturday. Acting on the order, Soudamini Sethy, additional secretary of Steel and Mines department, issued a letter-9937, dated October 3, 2023 to the Director of Mines. The apex court passed the order August 14 this year while hearing a writ petition filed by a social outfit 'Common Cause' against the Union government and others. The letter follows this order of the apex court. Many mining firms are alleged to have extracted minerals beyond the permissible limits and transported those to various destinations without having environmental clearance. As a result, roads in the mining areas and elsewhere in Keonjhar district have been severely damaged. Excessive mining has also resulted in air and water pollution and severely contaminated

the river water. After large scale protests ensued, the Supreme Court intervened in the matter. It formed a commission under Justice MB Shah and directed to probe the matter and submit a report before it. During its probe, the Shah Commission found out how various mining firms have mined minerals in complete violation of norms. These firms were found to have extracted minerals in excess sans environmental clearance. The owners and lessees raked in the mullah by transporting the minerals to various destinations. The commission also found out how firms extracted and transported minerals by violating mineral concession rules,

while another firm had earned big bucks by engaging in other mining works. In his report, Justice Shah also pointed out that lack of proper disposal of waste in the mines has resulted in environmental pollution adversely impacting common people in the mineral bearing district. He directed to make an assessment of environmental pollution arising out of excess mining and decided to impose penalty on the mining firms. While some firms paid the penalty, others dilly-dallied in payment of fines. As a result, the state government filed certificate cases against the defaulting firms and launched process to confiscate their properties. Some of the defaulting firms paid their fine when the matter was sub-judice in the court while rest of the defaulting firms went on buying time on various pretexts and filed cases in the tribunals and courts. Meanwhile, the state government has failed to attach the properties of defaulting firms as the certificate cases are pending in the court. This has proved a blessing in disguise for the defaulting firms as they continue to buy time. A social activist Mukhtar Ahmed said that it is unfortunate how the defaulting firms have managed to approach other judicial forums when the Supreme Court has directed to collect penalty from them. Observers have demanded not to further assign lease of any mine to the tainted firms or individuals involved in mining scam.



BEAUTIFICATION DRIVE: Artists make a wall painting as part of a beautification drive at Burla town under Sambalpur Municipal Corporation, Saturday. OP PHOTO

NHRC summons Keonjhar Collector

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec 9: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued summons to the District Collector, Keonjhar directing him to personally appear before it January 19, 2024 over delay in submission of report regarding allotment of houses under Central and state schemes to members of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities in Hatadihi block in the district.



This was stated here by human rights activist and senior advocate of Supreme Court Radhakanta Tripathy to mediapersons, Saturday. The commission pulled up the lackadaisical attitude of the Collector in submission of replies and his own contradictions in verbal submissions and written replies. More than 200 poor families from the SC and ST communities in Mangarajpur village under Sadanga panchayat in Hatadihi block of the district are not only

deprived of houses but also lack basic amenities and bare necessities of life. Considering the gravity of the issue, the commission held a virtual hearing August 4, 2023 with respect to 40 cases relating to alleged discrimination against potential beneficiaries of PM-Awas Yojna in Odisha. During the hearing, Anu Garg, Development Commissioner-Cum-Additional Chief Secretary, Sushil Kumar Lohani, Principal Secretary, Panchayat Raj & Drinking Water department and Ashish Thakare, District Collector, Keonjhar, were present. During the hearing, the NHRC observed that the verbal submissions were different from the reports that their office had submitted to the commission. During the hearing, the District Collector verbally submitted that case no-464/18/7/2023, was related to 140 households, out of which 45 beneficiaries had been granted the benefit of PMAY and another 45 in rural hous-

OPGC ash pond embankment caves in; polluted water floods farmlands



POST NEWS NETWORK

Brajrajnagar, Dec 9: Paddy and vegetable crops on hundreds of acres of farmland were destroyed after the embankment of ash pond no-3 of Odisha Power Generation Corporation (OPGC) caved in at Banharipali under Lakhanpur block of Jharsuguda district, Saturday. The incident occurred at 8am when a breach occurred on the embankment. The waste water from the pond spilt over and flooded several acres of farmlands in the area. The breach which was initially 10 feet in width soon got enlarged into 30 feet in width. The polluted water has inundated nearby Sardhapali and Kantatikra villages damaging paddy and vegetable crops downstream, sources said. As the ash water gushed into Sardhapali

village, residents carrying their essentials rushed upon the embankment fearing threat to their lives. On the other hand, Saradhapali and Kantatikra villagers assembled outside the plant's gate and staged a sit-in demanding compensation for the crop loss. On being informed, Tehsildar Sadakar Kumbhar, ABDO Gopal Krushna Mishra, SDPO Chintamani Pradhan, and senior official of OPGC Nishikant Das rushed to the spot and took stock of the situation. They then called residents of both the villages and held discussions over compensation. Later, it was decided to hold a meeting Monday and take steps on doling out compensations. The ash water continued gushing towards the farmlands when reports last came in.

Wild bear mauls man to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, Dec 9: A contractor of the Bharatmala Project was mauled to death by a wild bear near Bhatarasiuni village in Nabarangpur district Saturday. The deceased was identified as Brijesh Kumar Dwibedi, 50, of Maihar village in Madhya Pradesh. He was engaged in a road work under the Bharatmala Project and was residing here inside a temporary tent along with some other labourers along the under-construction road.

₹18cr for Daringbadi development

POST NEWS NETWORK

Daringbadi, Dec 9: Tourists will soon get the comfort and luxurious experience of 5-star facilities as the state government has sanctioned ₹18 crore for the development of Daringbadi tourist site in Kandhamal district, a report said Saturday. Daringbadi, the Kashmir of Odisha, will witness further development with the funds sanctioned by the state government. Earlier, the state government had sanctioned several lakhs for the development of this tourist site. The matter came to the fore after block officials Friday launched efforts to identify land for the developmental projects to come up at Daringbadi. The lands were identified on roadside of National Highway-59 and near the eco-retreat location. Tehsildar Sarat Sabar, BDO Gadadhar Patra, junior engi-



neer Pradip Kumar Swain of Works department identified the land under the direct supervision of deputy Speaker Saluga Pradhan of the state Assembly. The Works department has been assigned the project which will utilise the funds and revamp the tourist site. Reports said that every year the footfall of tourists is increasing at Daringbadi for which traffic and parking problems are also rising. The rush of tourists and parking problem is adversely affecting the local denizens. Realising the problem, the Tourism department has made special plans for up-gradation of the tourist site. A part of the funds will be used for building six cottages on six acres of land at an expense of ₹3 crore. Tourists interested for night stay can have five-star facilities in these cottages. There tourists will also have parking facilities. A cafeteria will also be built at the site where tourists can have food. A photography zone will be built and tracking zone will be established for entry of tourists. A parking zone will also be built near Daberi while the butterfly park and coffee garden will be renovated.

Pangolin rescued; two wildlife criminals held

PNN & AGENCIES

Raygada, Dec 9: The Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha Crime Branch Saturday arrested two wildlife criminals from Raygada district and seized one live pangolin and other incriminating materials from their possession. STF sources here said, acting on a tip off, a team of STF conducted a raid on NH-326 (Berhampur-Raygada) near Akhusingi Square under Padampur police limits of Raygada district and arrested the wildlife criminals. STF identified the accused as Samsan Raita (45) of Gajapati district and Asmin Sabar (28) of Raygada. A case has been registered in this regard and the accused persons will be forwarded to the Court of SDJM, Gunupur. The live pangolin was handed over to DFO, for safe custody. Investigation is underway.



TALENT SEARCH: Girls perform a tribal dance on the third day of zone level programme 'Sargi Phula' held at Ekalavya Adarsha Abasika Vidyalaya at Bhabanipur in Sundargarh, Saturday. OP PHOTO

Pre-activated SIM biz busted; 1 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Basudevpur, Dec 9: Police here have busted an illegal pre-activated SIM card business and arrested a person under this police limit in this connection, Friday. The accused was identified as Bidyadhar Sahu from Bhagapur village under Aruha panchayat and Basudevpur block in Bhadrak district. According to the reports, Bidyadhar was a wholesaler of SIM cards and used to sell those to various retailers. He was involved in activating SIM cards illegally by using IDs and biometrics of customers multiple times to achieve his sales target set by the service providers. The incident came to the fore after the Ministry of Telecommunications, flagged concern about a duplicate SIM card activation racket in Odisha, and updated the same to the state Crime Branch. As per the instruction of Bhadrak SP Varun Guntupalli, a case (720/23) was registered at Basudevpur police station and an investigation launched in this regard. Police then arrested the accused and seized pre-activated SIMs from his possession.

<p>बँक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र Bank of Maharashtra एक परिवार एक बैंक</p>	<p>BANK OF MAHARASHTRA SAMBALPUR BRANCH Shivlok Complex, Gaiety Talkies Road, Near Gole Bazar, Sambalpur -768001, Ph.: 6370704855, Email Id: bom1824@mahabank.co.in</p>		<p>POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule - 8(1)]</p>
	<p>Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of Maharashtra under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of the powers conferred under sub-section (12) of section 13 read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower/Guarantor to repay the amount mentioned in the notice plus interest and expenses thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken physical possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Bank of Maharashtra for an amount stated below with interest & expenses thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.</p>		
<p>Name & Address of the Borrower/Guarantor</p>	<p>Description of the Security Interest taken over possession</p>	<p>Liabilities due on the specified date as per Notice</p>	<p>Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession</p>
<p>Borrower: M/s. Hotel Maa Shakti, Prop.: Mr. Brundaban Sahu, Address: At: Ashoka Talkies Road, Near Hotel Nikki, Sambalpur, Odisha-768002. Also At: F-1, Saraswati Enclave, Near City Station, P.O.: Dhankauda, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha-768005 / Guarantor: Mrs. Karishma Sahu, W/o.: Mr. Brundaban Sahu, At: F-1, Saraswati Enclave, Near City Station, P.O.: Dhankauda, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha-768005</p>	<p>Land bearing Chaka Khata No.: 97, out of Non Consolidable Plot No.: 69, Area: Ac.0.045 Dec. (Four Decimals Five Cents), situated at Mouza: Dhankauda, P.S.: Sambalpur No.: 24, Tahasil: Sambalpur No.: 221, Dist.: Sambalpur, in the Sadar Sub-Registration elaka of the District Registration Jurisdiction of Sambalpur, Standing in the name of Mrs. Karishma Sahu, W/o.: Mr. Brundaban Sahu, Bounded by East: Chaka Plot No.: 70, West: Chaka Plot No.: 69, North: Mouza: Sambalpur Town Unit No.: 16, Sarla, South: Chaka Plot No.: 68</p>	<p>₹38,91,654/- as on 17.08.2023 + interest & other charges thereon</p>	<p>17.08.2023 / 05.12.2023</p>
<p>Place: Sambalpur Date: 05.12.2023</p>		<p>Chief Manager & Authorised Officer Bank of Maharashtra</p>	



Whenever in your life, you meet with a hardship, take it as a boon from the Divine's Grace and it will become so.

THE MOTHER



Blind to Condition

Last week, I wrote about South Asia remaining poor compared to nations in Asia, which have done something different from us. The task is to figure out what we are doing wrong or differently and what is undeniably different about us and them. It cannot only be, as is argued, that it is the form of economic system that is to blame. We have tried managing the economy through central planning (India in the 1950s and 1960s), through license raj (India through the 1980s), through 'liberalisation' (Pakistan beginning in the 1960s and India from 1991). We have returned to the same things we were doing before (import substitution in India in the 1970s and today). We have had some success and created sectors where we are leaders (India for a quarter century or so in information technology enabled services and Bangladesh today in garments).

It cannot be that we do not have, or have not tried to have, hard power. We have developed nuclear weapons, we have spent large sums on our militaries. Pakistan sends 17% of all government spending to the army, India and Bangladesh send 9%. We have tried to be strong — the misguided word used here is 'muscular', and run large parts of the sub-continent through the military (Kashmir and the North East in India, Balochistan in Pakistan). We have tried to remain defiant. We have joined Western alliances (Pakistan in the 1960s), we have remained non-aligned (India in the 1950s) and we have tried a patchwork of things in between.

But the end result is the numbers we looked at in the previous column. The world's GDP per capita per year is an average of \$12,262. China is slightly ahead of the world average and Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are one fifth. We were five times less than the global average in 1960 also, when the globe was at \$459 and India at \$82. Note that this is per person income and of the world's 7.7 billion people, South Asia contributes a full 23%. Meaning we are a drag on the world's economy and productivity and have been for 60 years, at more or less the same rate.

There must be something we are missing. What is it? The World Bank says that intra-regional trade between Bangladesh, India and Pakistan accounts for 5% of our total trade, compared to South East Asia where the number is five times higher. Trade annually here is \$23 billion though it should really be over \$100 billion. Why? The problem is purely man-made. The World Bank says that "border challenges mean it is about 20 percent cheaper for a company in India to trade with Brazil instead of a neighbouring South Asian country" and that the main problem is "a broad trust deficit throughout the region."

It adds that South Asia is "one of the least integrated regions in the world in terms of trade and people-to-people contact. Putting aside traditional concerns and taking joint action can develop cross-border solutions to shared issues, strengthen regional institutions, improve infrastructure and connectivity, and advance trade policy."

Why should it take outsiders to tell us what is obvious? But unfortunately it does. The World Bank adds that regional cooperation has the potential to produce significant gains across all countries of South Asia because the gap in trade is \$44 billion annually. We have the space to reduce the 50% higher cost for container shipments in South Asia compared to developed nations. But it can happen only if we are less hostile and more open to each other than we are and have been. This is the one thing we have not tried. We have not opened ourselves to each other and returned to the sort of geography and economy that we had before 1947. Indeed, we have not devolved internally power from the Union to the states and further along either.

In his book "The 10 rules of successful nations" Ruchir Sharma writes that "among the largest emerging nations, trade amounts to 60% of GDP on average, and countries well above that average tend to be major export manufacturers, led by the Czech Republic (142), Vietnam (210), Malaysia (131), and Thailand (117)." He adds something that will not surprise us: "Meanwhile, South Asia remains fenced off. Isolation, lawlessness, and the lingering bitterness produced by regional wars have made it difficult for India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka to open borders, and so far, no leader has stepped forward to ease hostilities."

India's trade to GDP has in fact fallen from 58% of GDP in 2014 to 44% today, with Pakistan at 30% and Bangladesh at 28%.

Is it possible that we can open ourselves to each other? If so, in what realistic way given all the difficulties and ingrained historical resistance? And if achieved, what are the effects this can have on our societies? I do not know if by doing this we can repeat what Taiwan and Japan and South Korea did, but I do know that it removes the one restraint that we have deliberately put on ourselves and can eliminate ourselves. The fact that it is not even discussed widely today in the region, despite all three states being democracies, tells us something about how blind we have become to our condition. And how satisfied and unambitious our political parties are with the way things continue to remain in the South Asia as we enter the second quarter of the 21st century. Let us make an attempt, however modest, to change that.



Aakar Patel

How satisfied and unambitious our political parties are with the way things continue to remain in the South Asia as we enter the second quarter of the 21st century

THE FOSSIL-FUEL INDUSTRY NOT ONLY HAS A SEAT AT THIS YEAR'S CLIMATE TALKS, IT IS AT THE HEAD OF THE TABLE



Nikki Reisch

Amid record heatwaves, intensifying and costly extreme weather events, and increasingly dire warnings that climate change is literally killing us, calls to abandon fossil fuels grow louder. But the fossil-fuel industry is doubling down with investments in new oil and gas projects and major corporate mergers, walking back climate pledges, and making false promises that they can keep pumping without polluting. We need to ditch fossil fuels. But how?

The answer is unlikely to emerge from this year's petrostate-hosted United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, which could deliver a political commitment to phase out fossil fuels but won't chart the pathway to a fossil-free future. To address what UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called "the poisoned root of the climate crisis," we must look beyond the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to forge new forums fit for this purpose.

The good news is that the Guterres, the pope, numerous national governments, and bodies like the International Energy Agency have joined the growing global call for a phaseout of coal, oil, and gas. At the UN Climate Ambition Summit in September, governments acknowledged that the climate crisis is a fossil-fuel crisis. The question is not whether to move beyond oil and gas, but how.

The bad news is that the fossil-fuel industry, buoyed by record-breaking profits in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, seems impervious to such pressure. Worse, these colossal profits are being reinvested in more oil and gas development. As climate disasters intensify before our eyes, the industry responsible for nearly 90% of carbon dioxide emissions is betting that its dirty products will be a mainstay of the global economy for decades to come.

To force a change, we must expose the economic fragility that

FOCUS FOSSIL FUELS

CORPORATE CAPTURE



Focusing only on carbon ignores all the other negative effects of fossil fuels, including their impact on health, such as the eight million premature deaths from air pollution annually

ment to fossil fuels, rather than a replacement for them, and that champions carbon capture and offsets, despite abundant evidence that neither leads to significant emissions reductions. Contrary to what Al Jaber suggested earlier this year, the problem is not just with fossil-fuel emissions; it is with fossil fuels themselves. Focusing only on carbon ignores all the other negative effects of fossil fuels, including their impact on health, such as the eight million premature deaths from air pollution annually.

Though fossil fuels are overwhelmingly to blame for climate change, our UNFCCC-led climate regime has failed to address them, even before the industry was handed the gavel. For decades, the international body that should be leading the fossil-fuel phaseout has conspicuously avoided the issue. Neither the 1992 UN Climate Convention nor the 2015 Paris climate agreement mentions oil, gas, or coal.

This omission was not some casual oversight. It is a symptom of a deeper crisis in global climate governance. Because UNFCCC decisions require a consensus among 198 members, powerful countries can block progress and assure lowest-common-denominator outcomes, or none at all. COP28 further underscores the need for alternative processes to manage the decline of fossil fuels, free from the influence of those who profit from them. Every day provides new reminders of why we need to phase out oil, gas, and coal. Fortunately, initiatives like the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance, and the Global Parliamentarians' Inquiry offer new ideas about how to do it. Governments must commit to a forum dedicated to fossil-fuel phaseout so the real work of ending the fossil-fuel era can begin.

The writer is Director of The Climate and Energy Program at the Center for International Environmental Law.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

fossil-fuel dependence creates and its broader toll on human rights. Reliance on oil, gas, and coal makes communities more vulnerable to supply disruptions, affecting everything from heating and transportation to food prices. Such disruptions fall hardest on the most impoverished populations while boosting the industry's profits.

It is worth recalling that fossil-fuel companies underperformed the market for the ten years preceding the war in Ukraine. That decade of decline reflected long-term energy-transition trends that the recent uptick in earnings has not changed. With fossil-fuel demand projected to peak globally by 2030, oil and gas remain a bad bet.

Part of the problem is that governments have responded to price volatility by increasing fossil-fuel subsidies, rather than imposing windfall taxes. They also have continued to approve new oil and gas projects, including offshore in protected ocean areas. Planned production is double what's compatible with the target of limiting global warming to 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels; there is simply no room for new oil and gas supply if the world is to avoid climate catastrophe.

Fossil fuels appear competitive only because their production has been subsidised and their producers insulated

from the costs associated with the damage they cause. The industry's negative externalities, long borne by frontline communities, are now being imposed on people around the world in the form of wildfires, hurricanes, floods, and droughts. If we compelled fossil-fuel companies to shoulder the losses they long saw coming, and redirected public funds to renewable solutions, oil and gas assets would be exposed as the liabilities they are.

This points to another big problem: corporate capture. Although climate litigation is key to holding the industry accountable, the challenge is not just to make polluters pay for the harms they cause. We also must diminish their outside influence on climate policy. Despite the best efforts of movements like Kick Big Polluters Out, the fossil-fuel industry not only has a seat at this year's climate talks; it is at the head of the table.

There sits Sultan Al Jaber, the CEO of the United Arab Emirates' national oil company, which is currently pursuing its own expansion plans. Al Jaber, COP28 president, is intent on portraying the fossil-fuel industry as the hero, not the villain, in the fight against climate change. Yet this is a well-known survival strategy for an industry in long-term decline. So, too, is the UAE's advocacy of an "all of the above" approach that promotes renewables as a comple-

SPECTRUM ELECTORAL BONDS

Unlimited, unaccounted & unidentified

The Electoral Bond Scheme (EBS) was introduced as a money bill in Budget 2017-18, with the ostensible objective of cleansing the system of political funding. It has been challenged by civil society organisations like ADR as opaque with serious implications for conducting free and fair elections. After prevaricating for over five years, during which time 29 tranches of electoral bonds have been funded by anonymous corporates, the Supreme Court is expected to give its verdict on the validity of this opaque process. The Solicitor General has argued that the donor's privacy trumps over right to know of a voter and that 'more contribution going to party in power is the norm'. Such outlandish arguments fly in the face of a liberal democracy which puts a premium on transparent conduct of public affairs, effective opposition to majoritarian trends and accountability to citizenry and constitutional morality.

Apart from fraudulent misuse of money bill provision, the EBS has scheme has arm twisted every possible act and provision to run its course. Section 29C of the

RPOP Act has been amended so that the candidates do not have to render a statement of funds received under EBS to the ECI. Section 13A of IT Act 1961 was amended exempting candidates from keeping account of money received through EBS. It also removes the cap of 7.5% of average of net profit during the last three years. The FCRA (2010) has been amended allowing foreign companies to provide funds even if their share in the Indian company exceeds 50%. In a nutshell, the entire scheme was legally firewalled to be unlimited, unaccounted, and unidentified political funding by the corporates!

The major trigger came for this when the government promulgated the Right to Information Act. It may be recalled that the SC came out of its cocoon of orthodoxy and examining the procedural aspects only to the importance of an open government that is responsible and accountable to its citizens in the SP Gupta Vs UOI case (1981). It served as a milestone for a spate of PIL which were filed by civil society watchdog organisations like PUCL, ADR & Common Cause. By keeping

the information regarding donations received by political parties from corporates by the citizenry, the EBS clearly goes against the fundamental pillar of democracy — freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1). The most definitive ruling in the context of election was given in ADR Vs UOI (2002) when it made it mandatory for candidates to reveal their financial and criminal antecedents. The court also struck down S33A & 33B of the RPOP Act which tried to ban providing information. In PUCL vs UOI (2003) the court decreed that the State is under obligation to create conditions so that rights under Art 19(1)(a), like the right to receive information, can be effectively enjoyed by citizens.

Democracy envisages conducting free and fair elections and the right to information is a basic feature of democracy. The present EBS is a retrograde measure that legitimises crony capitalism, militates against transparency, incentivises corrupt practices, and bolsters the nexus between politicians and big business. Recourse to a money bill for amending the law to relate electoral funding to pre-empt a debate in the

Rajya Sabha has subverted the legislative scheme. As things stand the present scheme has not only emasculated the authority of the ECI but also impaired its ability to conduct free and fair elections by not providing a level playing field to all political parties. It has also constrained its powers of supervising funds of parties.

When the 29th tranche was released in November 4 on the eve of election to five assemblies, it was widely believed that it will benefit the BJP immensely. This has proved to be prophetic. Now that the general election is due in five months' time, the SC should rise to the occasion and establish credibility of an independent institution and bust the contemptible contention that privacy of a corporate donor will override right to informed voting. Jurist Fali Nariman wrote in his eminently readable autobiography Before Memory Fades: "Judiciary is like oxygen in the air: It is not enough that the judges are independent of executive. They must have courage." That moment of reckoning for the SC has come in the EBS petition.

The writer teaches Constitutional Law.



Satya Narayan Misra

DEMOCRACY ENVISAGES CONDUCTING FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS AND THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION IS A BASIC FEATURE OF DEMOCRACY

Cautious approach

Sir, This refers to "No plans to loosen rates: RBI," Orissa POST, Dec 9. The RBI has kept its key lending rates unchanged for the fifth time in a row, even as reining in inflation continues to be its top priority. Though inflation dropped to 4.87% in October, it is likely to remain above the 4% medium-term target for a while. The RBI has adopted a cautious approach in a bid to strike a balance between economic stability and sustainable growth. According to the RBI Governor, the near-term inflation outlook would be considerably influenced by uncertain food prices, with rising global sugar prices being a cause for concern. But, the government has done well by taking several steps this year to contain food inflation, such as banning the export of wheat and imposing curbs on the export of sugar, onion and rice. However, the better-than-expected 7.6% growth in the July-September quarter has spurred the RBI to revise its forecast for economic growth in the ongoing financial year to 7% from 6.5%. This move bears testimony to India's impressive show as the world's fastest-growing major economy. With the manufacturing sector back on track, Indian economy will hopefully remain resilient amid global headwinds. Robust growth can also help it withstand inflationary pressures more effectively.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Uphold rights

Sir, Governments of the world are duty-bound to secure the right of every individual. Right to equality and freedom from discrimination, right to life, right to liberty, right to personal security are some basic universal human rights. Right to privacy, right of believing and choosing a religion and freedom of opinion are others. Race, colour, religion, sex, language, leanings, origin — none should come in the way of human beings fully enjoying their rights. When interference in rights becomes a routine, then inequality becomes the rule. Since poverty and discrimination are also precursors of inequality, any social, economic and cultural corrections should be applied to set right the above. Peace and development are interrelated; both cannot flourish without each other. But both cannot grow together if the human right of a person is not valued.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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WISDOM CORNER

- Learning never exhausts the mind. LEONARDO DA VINCI
- To live without Hope is to Cease to live. FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY
- Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower. ALBERT CAMUS

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1786: Encyclopaedia Britannica first published. The first part of the first edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the oldest continuously published and revised work in the English language, was published and advertised for sale in Edinburgh on this day in 1768.
- 1901: First Nobel prize awarded. Five years after the death of Swedish chemist and inventor, Alfred Nobel's, the first Nobel Prizes were awarded.
- 1909: Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf became the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature, cited for "the lofty idealism, vivid imagination and spiritual perception that characterize her writings."
- 1948: U.N. General Assembly adopts Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The document proclaimed, for the first time, fundamental human rights were to be universally protected.
- 1996: South African President Nelson Mandela signed a new constitution that completed a transition from a long period of white minority rule (apartheid) to full-fledged democracy.



Controversy around T'gana CM's residence

For then-ruling BRS, Pragathi Bhavan symbolised the development and pride of Telangana while for Congress and other opposition parties it was a sign of "autocratic" rule

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 9: Ever since the Congress government assumed office in Telangana Thursday, the Chief Minister's official residence at Begumpet in the heart of the city has been the centre of action. From dismantling of the iron fencing in front of the premises to change of its name, conduct of Praja Darbar and entry of curious citizens to smudging the name of former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on the inauguration plaque, the events of the last two days reflect the change of guard. Day after taking oath, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy made his first visit to Pragathi Bhavan, which had been a key point of contention between ruling and opposition parties for the last seven years. Still residing at his personal residence in Jubilee Hills, Revanth Reddy stayed at the official residence for an hour, receiving representations from citizens who had turned up for Praja Darbar. Till December 3, when the results of Assembly elections were announced, Pragathi Bhavan was the hub of power. For then-

ruling BRS, it symbolised the development and pride of Telangana while for Congress and other opposition parties it was a sign of "autocratic" rule. They often used to describe it as a fort or a palace which is out of bounds for citizens. No wonder that immediately after coming to power, Revanth Reddy renamed Pragathi Bhavan as Jyothirao Phule Praja Bhavan. After taking oath as the Chief Minister December 7, he had declared that Praja Darbar will be held there the next day. He had also mentioned in the speech at the swearing-in ceremony that soon after taking over the Congress government dismantled the iron fencing at Pragathi Bhavan to give people unrestricted access to the place. The authorities used bulldozers and gas cutters to remove the huge iron fencing which had eaten away a part of the busy road and was seen as a hurdle in free flow of vehicular traffic. Hundreds of people had queued up at the Chief Minister's official residence since Friday morning for Praja Darbar and submitted their representations on their problems to the Chief Minister.



Some of them, who could get a chance to meet him, said till a day ago they could not have even imagined entering the premises. However, many people who were waiting in queues since early morning and those who came later, had to return disappointed. With the dismantling of iron fencing and by holding Praja Darbar, Revanth Reddy has tried to make a strong statement. In February, BRS leaders had lodged police complaints against Revanth Reddy for allegedly calling on the Maoists to blow up the Pragathi Bhavan. The state Congress chief had made the controversial remarks while addressing the gathering in Maoist-affected parts of Mulugu district during his 'Hath se Haath Jodo' padayatra. "Like the Naxalites had set blasts in the forts earlier, what if they blast Pragathi Bhavan with dynamite? Pragathi Bhavan is like a fort, there is no entry for the poor," he had said.

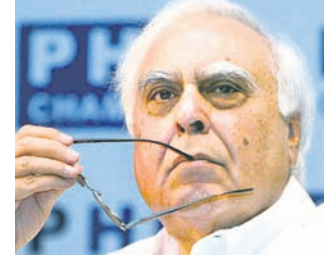
When the gates of Praja Bhavan were opened for people Friday, there were many curious citizens taking selfies or sitting in the open spaces. Dramatic scenes were witnessed at the building, which was the hub of power and a high security place till a couple of days ago. A Congress supporter smudged KCR's name on the inauguration plaque. The campus was inaugurated November 24, 2016 during the first term of the BRS. There have been many controversies surrounding its construction. It was in 2004 that then Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh YS Rajasekhara Reddy (YSR) had built a CM camp office at a cost of Rs 810 crore. After KCR became the first Chief Minister of newly-created Telangana, he did not occupy the CM camp office on the advice of Vaastu experts. It was considered "inauspicious" as YSR had reportedly moved in without

performing rituals and he had died in a helicopter crash in 2009, a few months after leading Congress back to power for a second term. His successor K Rosaiah had to resign on health grounds while N Kiran Kumar Reddy, the last Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh, had to face a crisis leading to bifurcation of the state. KCR moved in only after a completely new complex was built. KCR and his wife Shobha Rao had participated in elaborate rituals for Gruhapravesham (housewarming) performed by his spiritual guru, Chinna Jeeyar Swamy. Since then, KCR had been under attack from opposition for his alleged superstitious beliefs and huge public money spent on constructing the palatial complex, at cost of hundreds of crores and which was of no use to people. They targeted him for remaining confined to four walls and denying people access to it. KCR, however, had defended building Pragathi Bhavan saying it is a public property and will serve as the official residence of Chief Ministers who will occupy the post after him. The government has been spending Rs 1 crore every year on its maintenance. After losing power, KCR and his family quietly left the premises but it is still not known if Revanth Reddy will shift there with his family or use the facility only as an office.

Sarma, Saikia flay Sibal over Myanmar remark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Dec 9: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has hit back at lawyer Kapil Sibal for saying the state was once a part of Myanmar. Leader of the opposition in Assam assembly, Debabrata Saikia, wrote to Sibal asking him to withdraw the statement. Sibal, while appearing before the Supreme Court earlier this week during a hearing on the citizenship issue, said Assam was a part of Myanmar and it was handed over to the British in 1824 after the latter conquered part of the territory.



Saikia, in a letter to Sibal Saturday, claimed that this incorrect representation of Assam history is very unfortunate and it has hurt the pride and prestige of Assam. It seems the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind and AAMSU might have provided you with incorrect information about Assam history and your team has failed to cross check the data before presentation, he said. The Congress leader said the history of Assam is that of a confluence of the Austroasiatic, Tibeto-Burman (Sino-Tibetan), Tai and Indo-Aryan cultures. Assam was ruled by the Ahom for six centuries and though invaded over time, it was never a vassal or a colony to an external power until the third Burmese invasion in 1821, and subsequently the British ingress into Assam in 1824 during the First Anglo-Burmese War, he said. Saikia has urged Sibal to withdraw the statement and render a public apology before the public of Assam for mis-representation of Assam's glorious history.

Those who do not have any knowledge about history, they should refrain from commenting

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | CM, ASSAM

Reacting to the statement, Sarma had Friday said Assam was never a part of Myanmar, except a brief period of occupation. "Assam was never part of Myanmar. It is true that people from there (Myanmar) had clashed with our people during Ahom rule. And for a brief period of around one-two months, we were under an occupation-like situation of Myanmar," the chief minister said. Those who do not have any knowledge about history, they should refrain from commenting, Sarma said.

Telangana BJP MLAs refuse to take oath before Owaisi



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 9: The newly-elected BJP MLAs in Telangana Saturday stayed away from state Assembly on the first day, protesting appointment of AIMIM MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi as the protom Speaker. All eight MLAs of the saffron party boycotted the proceedings after a decision taken by state BJP president G Kishan Reddy. Kishan Reddy told media persons at BJP office that the Congress government appointed Akbaruddin Owaisi as protom Speaker under a secret deal with the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM). He said that since Congress

has a narrow majority in the Assembly and the government may collapse any time, it joined hands with AIMIM. However, Kishan Reddy, who is also a Union minister, claimed that Owaisi is not the senior most MLA. The BJP also complained to Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan about his appointment. T Raja Singh was the first BJP MLA who had refused to take oath before Akbaruddin Owaisi. In the previous Assembly too, he had refused to take oath before AIMIM's Mumtaz Ahmed Khan, who had served as protom Speaker. All eight BJP MLAs had gathered at the BJP office in the

The 8 BJP MLAs were reportedly planning to proceed to the Assembly. However they dropped their plan on a direction from the party's central leadership

T Raja Singh was the first BJP MLA who refused to take oath before Akbaruddin Owaisi. In the previous Assembly too, he had refused to take oath before AIMIM's Mumtaz Ahmed Khan

morning. Kishan Reddy felicitated them. Protesting against the decision of the party MLAs to attend the House, Raja Singh left the party office in a huff. He did not accompany them during their visit to the temple at historic Charminar. The BJP MLAs also paid tributes to Dr BR Ambedkar at the statue at Tank Bund and were reportedly planning to proceed to the Assembly. However, they dropped their plan on a direction from the party's central leadership. Following this, Kishan Reddy announced at a news conference that party MLAs will not take oath before Akbaruddin Owaisi. He said the party MLAs will take oath after a regular Speaker is elected.



TALL KID: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma feeds 'Parijat' after announcing name of the first giraffe calf to be born in the Guwahati zoo, Saturday

Assam to have text books in tribal languages

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, Dec 9: The Assam government has decided to introduce tribal languages into the basic education curriculum and use a multilingual teaching medium, according to state education minister Ranoj Pegu. The state administration has been finalising the plan for introducing these languages as a medium of teaching in the foundational and preparatory phases of school education, Pegu said. The SCERT would supply the textbooks. "The textbooks will now be accessible in tribal languages such as Mising, Deuri, Dimasa, Tiwa, and others. It will take effect with the upcoming session in the schools," an official said. Taking to his X handle, the state education minister wrote, "Held a discussion with the linguistic organisations of Mising, Rabha, Tiwa, Deuri, Karbi, Dimasa, Hmar and Garo communities to finalise the road map for the introduction of these languages as medium of instruction in the foundational and preparatory stages of school education." He further wrote, "It has been broadly agreed upon to proceed with a multilingual approach so that students can start primary education in their mother tongue and subsequently switch over to regional or English language."

Free travel for women in TSRTC buses

CM REVANTH REDDY LAUNCHES TWO SCHEMES AS PART OF SIX POLL 'GUARANTEES' OF CONGRESS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Dec 9: Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy Saturday launched implementation of two of the six guarantees given by Congress party to people in recently concluded Assembly elections. He inaugurated the scheme for free travel for women in state-owned TSRTC buses and enhancement of coverage under Rajiv Arogyasri scheme from current Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh. Women Minister Seethakka and Konda Surekha flagged off the bus in the presence of the entire Cabinet and Congress MLAs in Assembly premises. Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari and boxing champion Nikhat Zareen were also present. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, protom Speaker Akbaruddin Owaisi and ministers unveiled zero tickets of TSRTC and new logo and posters



of Rajiv Arogyasri scheme to formally launch both the schemes. Speaking on the occasion, Revanth Reddy said that the Congress government is implementing two of its six guarantees on the birthday of party leader Sonia Gandhi. He said December 9 has special significance for Telangana as it was on this day in 2009 that the then UPA government announced initiating the process for formation of Telangana state. He described Sonia Gandhi as the mother of Telangana. He reiterated that all six guar-

antees will be fulfilled in 100 days to turn Telangana into a welfare state. Girls and women of all age groups and transgender persons, who are domicile of Telangana, can travel free in Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) buses within the state borders. They can travel in Palle Velugu and Express, city ordinary and

city Metro buses. Travel in interstate Express and Palle Velugu buses will be free up to the borders of Telangana. The women can travel by showing any identity card. The financial coverage under Rajiv Arogyasri, a health insurance scheme for Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, has been doubled to Rs10 lakh per annum per family.

Memorial park soon at site of firing on tribals

The new Congress government in Telangana has allotted one acre of government land at Indervelly village in Adilabad district for development of a memorial park at the site where several Adivasis were killed in police firing 42 years ago. Hours after A Revanth Reddy assumed office as the CM, the government issued an order allotting the land for beautification and development of 'Smruthi Vanam' near Amara Veevula Stupam or martyrs' memorial. He has thus fulfilled his promise made to Adivasis of Adilabad last year. The martyrs' column, a red-painted structure with a hammer and sickle symbol at the top, was built in memory of tribals killed in police firing April 20, 1981. It was demolished allegedly by police in 1986 but was rebuilt by tribals. Till a few years ago, the tribals were not allowed to hold meetings in Indravelli to pay homage to the martyrs. The tribals have welcomed the decision of the Congress government to build a memorial park and termed it long-awaited justice for the martyrs and their families.

Assam plans socio-economic study of indigenous Muslims

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Dec 9: The Assam government said it will conduct a socio-economic assessment of indigenous Assamese Muslims of the state. The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here Friday. A socio-economic assessment of indigenous Assamese Muslims will be conducted through the Directorate of Minority Affairs and Char Areas, Sarma posted on X. The meeting decided that the Directorate of Char Areas Development, Assam, will be renamed as the Directorate of Minority Affairs and Char Areas, Assam. The cabinet also gave in-principle approval to the issue of detailed procedure or standard operating procedure (SOP) for



permitting traditional buffalo and bullfights that are organised during Magh Bihu. The SOP aims to ensure that no deliberate torture or cruelty is carried out on the animals and their well-being is provided for by the organisers during the annual buffalo fights, an integral part of the centuries-old Assamese cultural tradition. The council of ministers sanctioned Rs 259 crore to construct libraries across the state. For

inculcating the habit of reading among students, libraries for children and adolescents, and digital infrastructure will be created under the 'Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment 2023-24'. The scheme aims at commencing construction of new libraries and procurement of books, furniture, computers with internet connectivity in 2,197 village panchayats and 400 municipal wards.



Miss Amazonas Ileana Marquez kisses her daughter, after winning the Miss Venezuela 2023 pageant, whose winner will participate in the Miss Universe 2024 contest, in Caracas, Venezuela



Ukrainian soldiers train in a trench during Combined Arms Training in Wedrzyn, Poland



Artists greet before their performance during the first North East Gorkha Cultural Festival celebration, at Singrijan village of Chumoukedima, Nagaland



A farmer sprays insecticide on cabbage in Nadia, West Bengal



A man salvages belongings from his house that was hit in an overnight Israeli strike in the southern village of Majdal Zoun, Lebanon, Friday. Violence along the Lebanon-Israel border has been ongoing since the war between Israel and Hamas started two months ago



A newly-inducted officer during the passing out parade at Indian Military Academy (IMA) in Dehradun



Students of Patna Women's College take part in a campaign on the Human Rights Day in Patna



A woman carries a poster during a demonstration in support of the Palestinian people in Lisbon

REUTERS/PTI PHOTOS

national

of the day quote

The power of listening to others is important in every sphere of life. It is enormously liberating to yield that space to others. The problem with our society is that we are not listening to others...we are listening only to ourselves

BY CHANDRACHUD | CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

India has had an exceptionally difficult challenge along the northern borders in the last three years and the country responded to it very resolutely

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

The world is looking to India with hope today. Between 2014 and 2023, India has risen from its position as the 11th to the fifth economy in the world. Never before did the country make so big a leap during 75 years of independence

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Cop injured

Srinagar: Suspected militants shot at a Jammu and Kashmir police constable in Bemina area of the city here Saturday, officials said. The policeman has been rushed to a nearby hospital after the attack, they said. Constable Mohammad Hafiz was fired upon by militants at Hamdaniya Colony in Bemina locality, the officials said. Hafiz is a resident of Karnah in north Kashmir's Kupwara district but presently lives in Bemina, they said.

Body found

Mumbai: The Mumbai police have registered a case after the body of a newborn baby was found inside a dustbin on the premises of a civic-run hospital, an official said Saturday. According to the police official, a sweeper at the Lokmanya Tilak Municipal General Hospital, popular as Sion hospital, discovered the body of a newborn baby inside a dustbin of a washroom. He informed the on-duty doctors about the discovery. The doctors sent the body for post-mortem and alerted the police.

4 students drown

Mumbai: Four women students of a private institute drowned in the sea at Devgad in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district Saturday afternoon while a male student was missing, police said. The deceased were part of a group of 35 students of Sainik Academy, a training institute in Pimpri Chinchwad near Pune, said an official.

20 Naxalites surrender

Sukma: Twenty Naxalites, including five women cadres, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's worst insurgency-hit Sukma district Saturday, police said. They turned themselves in before senior police officials here citing disappointment with "inhuman" and "hollow" Maoist ideology, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan said.

Wall collapse: Toll rises to 8

Mau (UP): The death toll in a wall collapse during a pre-wedding function in Ghosi in Uttar Pradesh rose to eight Saturday with four more persons succumbing to injuries, a senior official said. Twenty people were undergoing treatment in different hospitals. On Friday, three women and a child had lost their lives after the wall suddenly collapsed on them. According to police, the wall was recently constructed.



The actions of the Jammu and Kashmir administration hint towards the Supreme Court passing a verdict on petitions related to Article 370 of the Constitution, which might be against the interest of the country

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP CHIEF

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin Saturday announced Rs 6,000 relief to people affected by cyclone Michaung and also increased payout under other categories including compensation for flood-hit crops



ISIS case: 15 arrested in NIA raids

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: In a massive crackdown on the ISIS terrorist organisation, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Saturday arrested its 15 operatives during multiple raids across Maharashtra and Karnataka, an official said.

The arrested accused included the leader of an ISIS module who was administering 'bayath' (oath of allegiance) to new recruits, a spokesperson of the federal anti-terror agency said.

Several NIA teams swooped down on as many as 44 locations in Padgha-Borivali, Thane, Mira Road and Pune in Maharashtra, and Bengaluru in Karnataka early Saturday morning, and apprehended the 15 accused for allegedly promoting terror and terror-related acts and activities of the proscribed organisation, the official said.

Huge amounts of unaccounted cash, firearms, sharp-edged weapons, incriminating documents, smart phones and other digital devices were seized during the raids, conducted as part of the NIA's ongoing efforts to disrupt and demolish the attempts of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), also known as Islamic



The arrested accused included the leader of an ISIS module who was administering 'bayath' (oath of allegiance) to new recruits, a spokesperson of the federal anti-terror agency said

The ISIS has been spreading its terror network in India by putting in place localised ISIS modules and cells in various states of the country, the spokesperson said

State, to carry out violent acts of terror and take innocent lives, the spokesperson said.

The official said the accused, operating on the directions of their foreign handlers, had been actively involved in various terrorist activities, including fabrication of improvised explosive devices, for furthering the violent and destructive agenda of the ISIS.

"The investigations have revealed that the accused, all members of the ISIS Maharashtra

module, were operating from Padgha-Borivali, where they had hatched the conspiracy to spread terror and carry out acts of violence across India.

"Pursuing the path of violent jihad (holy war), Khilafat, ISIS etc., the accused had aimed to disturb the peace and communal harmony of the country and to wage a war against the Government of India," the spokesperson said. The official said initial investigations have revealed that the arrested accused had self-declared the village of Padgha in rural Thane as a "liberated zone" and as "Al Sham".

They were motivating impressionable Muslim youths to relocate from their place of residence for strengthening the Padgha base, the spokesperson said. The official said Saqib Nachan, the main accused and the leader of the ISIS module, was also administering 'bayath' (oath of allegiance to the Khalifa of ISIS) to the persons joining the proscribed organisation.

The ISIS has been spreading its terror network in India by putting in place localised ISIS modules and cells in various states of the country, the spokesperson said.

Mamata seeks meet with PM over GST dues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 9: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Saturday said she has sought an audience with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to press the demands for the financial dues which the Centre owes to the state.

Banerjee told reporters at Bagdogra near Siliguri in north Bengal that she will be visiting the national capital and sought an appointment in any of the three days between December 18 and 20.

"I will go to Delhi accompanied by few MPs of the party this month and have sought an audience with the prime minister to press for the state's dues which the Centre owes to us," she said. "I have sought an appointment with the prime minister in any of the days on 18, 19 and 20th of this month," she added.

Banerjee alleged that the Centre is collecting GST from the state but "not sharing" the proceeds. "Many of the funds which the state is eligible for getting under various central schemes like MGNREGA are also not forthcoming. The state is being deprived of its financial dues from the Centre," the Chief Minister said.

BSP suspends Danish for 'anti-party' activities

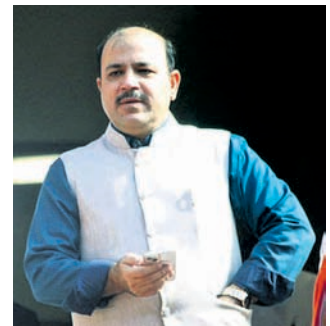
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: The Bahujan Samaj Party Saturday suspended its Lok Sabha member Danish Ali for "anti-party" activities, with the Amroha MP denying the charge and asserting that he only raised his voice against the BJP-led government's "anti-people" policies.

In a brief statement, the party's Uttar Pradesh unit said Ali has been suspended for anti-party activities.

The move came a day after Ali walked out of Lok Sabha proceedings along with other opposition members to protest against the government's motion to expel TMC member Mahua Moitra for "unethical conduct". Other Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) members remained seated in the House.

Ali has been actively joining opposition ranks in attacking the BJP and its policies even though the Mayawati-led BSP has maintained a distance from the ruling alliance as well as the opposition. Satish Chandra Misra, the party's general secretary, said in a letter to Ali, "You were



told verbally many times that you should not make any statement or take any action against the policies, ideology and discipline of the party, but despite this you have been continuously acting against the party." Misra reminded Ali that he was a member of HD Deve Gowda's Janata Dal (Secular) till 2018. "...On the request of Deve Gowda, you were given a ticket from Amroha as a candidate of the Bahujan Samaj Party and before giving this ticket, Gowda had given an assurance that you will always follow all the policies and instructions of the Bahujan Samaj Party and will work in the interest of the party," the letter read.

Lekhi denies answering Hamas question in LS



The unstarred question number 980, titled "Declaration of Hamas as Terrorist Organisation", was put by Congress MP Kumbakudi Sudhakaran

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: A political row broke out after Minister of State for External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi said she had not approved a question tabled in the Lok Sabha Friday on declaring Hamas a terrorist organisation, prompting the government to issue a clarification that it was a "procedural error".

As opposition parties latched onto Lekhi's remarks and described the incident as a "serious breach and violation of rules", the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issued a statement, saying the unstarred question "needs a technical correction in terms of reflecting Shri V Muraliedharan as the Minister of State replying to the Parliament Question".

"This is being suitably undertaken," the ministry added. "You have been misinformed as I have not signed any paper with this question and

this answer," Lekhi said in response to a post on X on the issue. The unstarred question number 980, titled "Declaration of Hamas as Terrorist Organisation", was put by Congress MP Kumbakudi Sudhakaran.

"I have reported this breach to the PMO and (External Affairs Minister) S Jaishankar and made a phone call to the foreign secretary, and told them to investigate. Action should be taken against those who have done this," Lekhi told a press conference.

"We have noted that Lok Sabha unstarred question number 980 answered on December 8 needs a technical correction in terms of reflecting V Muraliedharan as the Minister of State replying to the question. This is being suitably undertaken," MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said.

Congress and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) leaders took a dig at Lekhi as the minister's public statement came close to the heels of the Lok Sabha expelling Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Mahua Moitra on charges of sharing her log-in ID and password with persons associated with a Dubai-based businessman.

Marital rape not an 'offence' if wife is 18 or above: Allahabad HC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Prayagraj (UP), Dec 9: The Allahabad High Court has observed that marital rape cannot be considered an offence under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) if the wife is above the age of 18.

The court made these remarks while acquitting a husband of charges of committing an 'unnatural offence' against his wife. While holding that the accused in this case cannot be convicted under Section 377 of the IPC, the bench of Justice Ram Manohar Narain Mishra stated that marital rape has not been criminalised in this country as yet.

The High Court also noted that since the petitions seeking the criminalisation of marital rape are still pending before the Supreme Court, there is no criminal penalty for marital rape



when the wife is 18 years of age or older until the top court decides the matter.

The Allahabad High Court, endorsing a previous observation of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, also stated that there is no place for any 'unnatural offence' (as per IPC Section 377) to take place in a marital relationship.

In her plea, the complainant alleged that their marriage was an abusive relationship, and the husband allegedly subjected her to verbal and physical abuse and

coercion, including acts of sodomy. The court convicted him under sections related to cruelty by the husband or relatives of the husband (498-A) and voluntarily causing hurt (IPC 323) while acquitting him of charges under Section 377.

Earlier this year, the Supreme Court agreed to list pleas to criminalise marital rape. The Central government had submitted before the top court that criminalising marital rape would have "social ramifications".

Muslim woman beaten up for voting for BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sehore/ Bhopal, Dec 9: A 30-year-old Muslim woman has claimed that she was beaten up by her brother-in-law for voting in favour of BJP in Madhya Pradesh assembly polls and celebrating the party victory, an incident prompting chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to reach out to the victim.

Chouhan Saturday invited the woman to his residence in Bhopal and comforted her. Earlier in the day, police arrested the accused Javeed, the younger brother of complainant Samina Bi's husband, a day after she and her father visited the office of the Sehore collector seeking

stern action. Notably, Sehore is the home district of Chouhan. According to police, Javeed allegedly thrashed Samina on Monday when she was celebrating the victory of the BJP in the recently-held assembly elections, counting for which was done on December 3.

A case was registered under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) against Javeed on a complaint lodged by the woman, police said. The woman had told reporters that she had voted for the BJP as she is a beneficiary of all the schemes of the government including the Ladli Behna Yojana.

As per the government, 1.31 crore women in the state are

getting financial help of Rs 1,250 per month under this scheme. "With 'mamaji' Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Sehore BJP MLA Sudesh Rai on my mind, I voted for the BJP," Samina had said.

On Saturday, Samina visited Chouhan with her children in Bhopal after he invited her, as per the Chief Minister's Office. "By casting your vote, you have exercised your right. Everyone has the right to vote as per the Constitution. People vote for those who do well for them. That is not at all wrong. Thus I wanted to meet you. Do not worry. We will take care of you and take care of your worries," Chouhan told the woman.

Queried about the incident,

Madhya Pradesh BJP president V D Sharma said the woman should not worry given that ensuring the safety of people is the guarantee of PM Modi. "I was reading in a newspaper this morning about a Muslim sister voting for our party and her relative troubling her. I want to tell her that she shouldn't worry. Ensuring the safety of the people in the country is Modi's guarantee," he added.

Sharma said due to Modi's "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, and Sabka Vishwas" mantra, the minority community blessed the BJP in the November 17 elections by voting for the party. "This shows the vote bank of Congress is drifting," he added.

40 mn women face long-term health problems after childbirth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: Every year, at least 40 million women are likely to experience a long-term health problem caused by childbirth, a new study published in The Lancet Global Health journal has found.

Researchers found that the symptom of experiencing pain during sexual intercourse, or dyspareunia, affected more than a third of such postpartum women (35 per cent), while 32 per cent of these women experienced low back pain.

Other symptoms affecting postnatal women included involuntary urination (8-31 per cent), anxiety (9-24 per cent), depression (11-17 per cent) and perineal pain (11 per cent), which refers to pain in the general re-

gion between the anus and the genital organs, the international team of researchers including those from the World Health Organization (WHO) said in their study.

Their study showed that a high burden of postnatal conditions persisted in the months or even years after giving birth. However, many of these occur beyond the point where women typically have access to postnatal services.

The authors thus called for a greater recognition within the healthcare system of these common problems. Effective care throughout pregnancy and childbirth is also a critical preventive factor to detect risks and avert complications that can lead to lasting health issues after birth, they said.



The situation can be worse in many low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs), particularly those with a persist-

ently high burden of maternal mortality, than in high-income countries (HICs), the researchers said in their study.

During a literature review spanning the last 12 years, the authors identified no recent high-quality guidelines to support effective treatment for 40 per cent of the 32 priority conditions analysed in their study, and found not a single high-quality guideline from a low- or middle-income country. Even in countries where resources are channelled to meet the global targets for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda, these long-term conditions are often overlooked, they said. Further, they added that data gaps were significant, as there were no nationally representative or global studies for any of the conditions identified through the research.

"Many postpartum conditions cause considerable suffering in women's daily life long after

birth, both emotionally and physically, and yet they are largely underappreciated, underrecognized, and underreported," said Dr Pascale Allotey, Director of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research at WHO.

"Throughout their lives, and beyond motherhood, women need access to a range of services from health-care providers who listen to their concerns and meet their needs - so they not only survive childbirth but can enjoy good health and quality of life," said Allotey. The study is one of the four forming The Lancet Series titled "Maternal health in the perinatal period and beyond", which calls for greater attention to the long-term health of women and girls - after and also before pregnancy.

international



Electrification in India is one of the biggest opportunities that we have. The faster that India can do this, the more it cuts greenhouse gas emissions and it cuts pollution, it increases India's security
JOHN KERRY | SPECIAL ENVOY ON CLIMATE CHANGE, US

GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION
Protests aimed at pressuring nations to move decisively to stop climate change were expected to be their most intense yet Saturday, a "Global Day of Action" with events at United Nations-led talks in Dubai and around the world



of the day quote

Trump just talks the talk. We walk the walk. He likes to say America is a failing nation. Frankly, he doesn't know what the hell he's talking about. I see people hard at work rebuilding America together
JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

No one but us will step into this battle for the hearts and the minds of our fellow citizens. So we need to do it and win
ALEXEI NAVALNY | OPPOSITION LEADER, RUSSIA

Many people in Europe put China and India in the same basket and sometimes even with the Gulf states which is completely unacceptable. India has very low per capita emissions compared to these countries
PETER LIESE | MEMBER, EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

SHORT TAKES

HK to cull 900 pigs
Hong Kong: Hong Kong authorities have ordered the culling of more than 900 pigs after detecting the presence of the deadly African swine fever (ASF) in animals at a licensed farm in the New Territories district. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said 19 of 30 pigs tested had swine fever and that transportation of pigs from the farm had been immediately suspended. The culling will start early next week, it said. "AFCD staff has arranged to inspect the other eight pig farms within three kilometres (two miles) of the index farm and will collect samples for ASF testing," it said in a statement.

Gang, villagers clash
Mexico City: Eleven people were killed in a clash Friday between gunmen from a criminal gang and residents of a small farming community in central Mexico, authorities said. Dramatic video of the fight posted on social media showed villagers in cowboy hats with sickles and hunting rifles chasing down suspected gang members amid bursts of automatic gunfire. Police in the State of Mexico, which abuts Mexico City, said the clash occurred in the hamlet of Texcaltitlan, about 130 kilometers southwest of the capital. State police said eight of the dead were members of the criminal gang, while three were village residents.

Blackout in Lanka
Colombo: Sri Lanka is experiencing a countrywide power outage due to a system failure, a government official said. Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), the country's power monopoly, is working to restore power, CEB spokesperson Noel Priyantha said as per news agency Reuters. In 2022, Sri Lankans faced 10-hour power cuts amid a deepening economic crisis that roiled markets. Then, the electricity regulator urged more than a million government employees to work from home to save fuel as Sri Lanka was unable to pay for fuel shipments because of a foreign exchange shortage. "We made a request to the government to allow the public sector, which is about 1.3 million employees, to work from home for the next two days so we can manage the fuel and power shortages better," Janaka Ratnayake, Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka, had then said.

NAWAZ UNEARTH'S SECRETS FROM KARGIL CLOSET

PAK'S FORMER PM NAWAZ SHARIF SAYS HE WAS OUSTED IN 1999 FOR OPPOSING KARGIL

AGENCIES

Lahore, Dec 9: Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif Saturday said he was ousted from the government in 1999 by (late) Gen Pervez Musharraf for opposing the Kargil misadventure, as he underlined the importance of having good relations with India and other neighbours. The three-time prime minister questioned why he was ousted from the office of the prime minister prematurely.



"I should be told why I was ousted in 1993 and 1999. When I opposed the Kargil plan saying it should not happen... I was ousted (by Gen Pervez Musharraf). And later what I said proved right," Sharif said here while talking to the aspirants of his party tickets for upcoming polls. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme leader

said that on all three occasions being the premier he was delivering but he was sent packing and that he did not know why. "I want to know why I was ousted every time," he asked. Sharif also talked about the visit of two Indian prime ministers to Pakistan only when he was the prime minister of Pakistan. "We have delivered on every front. During my tenure as PM, two Indian prime ministers visited Pakistan. Modi sahab and Vajpayee sahab had come to Lahore," the former prime minister said, stressing improved relations with India and other neighbouring countries. "We will have to improve our relations with India, Afghanistan, and Iran. We need to make more stronger relations with China,"

US vetoes Gaza peace

INTENSIFIED FIGHTING ACROSS GAZA AS US VEToes CEASEFIRE

REUTERS

Gaza, Dec 9: Israel pounded the Gaza Strip from north to south Saturday in an expanded phase of its two-month-old war against Hamas, after the United States wielded its UN Security Council veto to shield its ally from a global demand for a ceasefire.

Thirteen of the Security Council's 15 members voted for the resolution calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire that was blocked by Washington. Britain abstained. Since a truce collapsed last week, Israel has expanded its ground campaign into the southern half of the Gaza Strip by launching the storming of the main southern city Khan Younis. Simultaneously, both sides have reported a major surge in fighting in the north. The vast majority of Gaza's 2.3 million residents have already been forced from their homes, many fleeing multiple times. With fighting raging across the length of the territory, residents and UN agencies say there is now effectively nowhere safe to go, though Israel disputes this.

Ezzat El-Reshiq, a member of Hamas' political bureau, condemned the US veto as "inhuman." Israel's UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan said in a statement: "A ceasefire will be possible only with the return of all the hostages and the destruction of Hamas." Israel has blocked Gazans from fleeing along the main north-south route down the spine of the narrow strip, and is shunting them instead towards the Mediterranean coast. There were no new figures Saturday for dead and wounded from other parts of Gaza, including the entire northern half, where hospitals have ceased functioning and ambulances often can no longer reach



We do not support this resolution's call for an unsustainable ceasefire that will only plant the seeds for the next war
ROBERT WOOD | DEPUTY US AMBASSADOR, UN

The United Nations Security Council demand for ceasefire is rejected only by US veto. Is this justice? The UN Security Council needs to be reformed
TAYYIP ERDOGAN | PRESIDENT, TURKEY

The vote in the 15-member council was 13-1 with the United Kingdom abstaining

the dead. "We believe the number of martyrs under the rubble might be greater than those received at hospitals," health ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qidra told Reuters. Fighting in the north has been its most intense in parts of Gaza City and settlements on its northern edge, where huge explosions could be seen from across the fence in Israel. Northern Gaza families were posting messages on the internet pleading with emergency crews to venture into Gaza City to rescue loved ones still trapped there.

Israel launched its campaign to annihilate Gaza's Hamas rulers after the Iran-backed Islamist group's fighters burst across the Gaza border fence October 7, killing 1,200 people and capturing 240 hostages in a rampage through Israeli towns. The White House Friday said more could be done by Israel to reduce civilian casualties and the US shared international concerns about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. "We certainly all recognize more can be done to try to reduce civilian casualties," White House national security council spokesman John Kirby told reporters.

Iran warned of the threat of an "uncontrollable explosion" of the situation in the Middle East, after the United States vetoed a UN Security Council resolution. "As long as America supports the crimes of the Zionist regime (Israel) and the continuation of the war... there is a possibility of an uncontrollable explosion in the situation of the region," Amir-Abdollahian told UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in a phone call, according to a foreign ministry statement.

Pak admits link between some political dissidents, terrorists

REUTERS

Pakistan has acknowledged that some of the political dissidents, who have sought asylum in the United Kingdom and other countries, had links with terrorist entities inside the country. Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zehra Baloch made the statement during her weekly media briefing here Thursday while responding to a question on the alleged acid attack on jailed prime minister Imran Khan's aide. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader and former special assistant to the prime minister, Mirza Shahzad Akbar, last week claimed that he was attacked at his home in the UK, adding that "acidic liquid" was thrown at him. When asked about the incident, the Foreign Office spokesperson rejected any insinuations of Pakistan's involvement and that of Pakistani agencies in the attack, saying it is not "our policy to target our own nationals abroad." She, however, said that many political dissidents have sought political asylum and have been living in the UK and other countries around the world for several decades. "Many of them have had links with terrorist entities inside Pakistan," she said. She asserted that Pakistan has not engaged in any extra-territorial attacks against such individuals.

Philippines condemns China's actions in SCS

REUTERS

Manila, Dec 9: The Philippines condemned China's "illegal and aggressive actions" in the South China Sea Saturday, saying its coast guard had fired water cannon at a Philippine fisheries bureau vessel conducting a regular resupply mission. The Philippine task force for the South China Sea, an inter-agency government body, called for China to stop its "aggressive activities" in the Scarborough Shoal, which is claimed by both countries. US Ambassador to the Philippines Mary Kay Carlson said in a post on the social media platform X that China's behaviour "violates international law and endangers lives and livelihoods." She said the US stood by the Philippines in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific. China said earlier that it took "control measures" against three Philippine fishing vessels that had intruded into waters near Scarborough Shoal, state media reported.



The incident comes ahead of December 10, when the Philippines plans to deploy a Christmas convoy of around 40 Philippine vessels to distribute gifts and other provisions to residents in Thitu island, the Philippines' largest occupied island in the South China Sea, and to troops garrisoned on an ageing warship in the Second Thomas shoal. The Philippines task force said three fisheries bureau vessels were on a supply mission Saturday to provide oil and groceries to more than 30 Filipino fishing vessels near the Scarborough shoal when they came under fire from Chinese water cannons at least eight times.

WATER CANNON DAMAGES PHILIPPINE FISHERIES BUREAU VESSEL
CHINA TOOK 'CONTROL MEASURES' ON INTRUDING SHIPS: MEDIA

Canada cost of living crisis fuels reverse immigration

FOR A NATION BUILT ON IMMIGRANTS, A RISING TREND OF PEOPLE LEAVING CANADA RISKS UNDERMINING ONE OF PM TRUDEAU GOV'T'S SIGNATURE POLICIES, WHICH GRANTED PERMANENT RESIDENCY TO A RECORD 2.5MN PEOPLE IN JUST EIGHT YEARS

REUTERS

Toronto, Dec 9: The dream of making it big in Canada is turning into a battle for survival for many immigrants due to the high cost of living and rental shortages, as rising emigration numbers hints to newcomers being forced to turn their back on a country that they chose to make their adopted home. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has made immigration his main weapon to blunt Canada's big challenge of an aging and slowing population, and it has also helped fuel economic growth. That drove

Canada's population up at its fastest clip in more than six decades this year, Statistics Canada said. But now a reversal of that trend is gradually taking hold. In the first six months of 2023 some 42,000 individuals departed Canada, adding to 93,818 people who left in 2022 and 85,927 exits in 2021, official data show. The rate of immigrants leaving Canada hit a two-decade high in 2019, according to a recent report from the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC), an immigration advocacy group. While the numbers went down during pandemic lockdowns,



Statistics Canada data shows it is once again rising. While that is a fraction of the 263,000 who came to the country over the same period, a steady rise in emigration is making some observers wary. Reuters spoke with a half a dozen people who have either left the country or are preparing to do so, because of the high cost of living. Cara, 25, who came to Canada in 2022 as a refugee from Hong Kong, now pays C\$650 (\$474) in monthly rent for a single-room

basement apartment in Scarborough, north of Toronto, which is about 30% of her monthly take-home salary. "I never realized that living in a Western country, you can only afford renting a room in the basement," she said. She declined to give her real name because she fled Hong Kong after participating in the 2019 protests triggered by a now-abandoned extradition bill. Cara works three part-time jobs, making Ontario's minimum wage of C\$16.55 per

Rapid immigration is exacerbating the housing shortage. It's not surprising then that people who have options... either go to another country or go back home having had a taste of the situation in Canada
PHIL TRIADAFILOPOULOS | A POLITICAL SCIENCE PROFESSOR SPECIALIZING IN IMMIGRATION, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

hour, and goes to an adult learning school to earn university credits. "I almost use every single penny," she said, while in Hong Kong she was able to save about a third of her monthly salary. To be sure, emigration as a percentage of Canada's overall population touched a high of 0.2% in the mid 1990s, and currently stands at about 0.09%, according to official government data. While the numbers are small now, lawyers and immigration consultants warn that a pick-

UKRAINE CONDEMNS RUSSIAN POLL PLANS FOR OCCUPIED AREA

REUTERS

Kyiv, Dec 9: Ukraine Saturday strongly condemned Russian plans to hold presidential elections next spring on occupied territory, declaring them "null and void" and pledging to prosecute any observers sent to monitor them.



Russia's upper house set the country's presidential election this week for next March, and chairwoman Valentina Matviyenko said residents in four occupied Ukrainian regions would be able to vote for the first time. Russia claims to have annexed the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhya and Kherson regions in the east and south of Ukraine during referenda last year dismissed by Kyiv and the West as a sham, but does not fully control any of them. It also seized the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. "We call on the international community to resolutely condemn Russia's intention to hold presidential elections in the occupied Ukrainian territories, and to impose sanctions on those involved in their organization and conduct," Ukraine's foreign ministry said in a statement. It also warned countries against sending observers to the "pseudo-elections", saying offenders would "face criminal responsibility".

"Any election in Russia has nothing to do with democracy. They serve only as a tool to keep the Russian regime in power," the ministry said. Russian President Vladimir Putin said Friday he would run for president again, a move expected to keep him in power until at least 2030.

COP28 clashes over fossil fuel phase-out

Climate-vulnerable nations said rejection of a fossil fuel mention at COP28 would threaten entire world

REUTERS

Dubai, Dec 9: Some countries are resisting a proposed pledge to phase-out fossil fuels in a COP28 climate deal, jeopardising attempts for UN climate talks to deliver a hard commitment for the first time in 30 years on ending the use of oil and gas. Observers in the negotiations said Saudi Arabia and Russia were among countries insisting that the summit in Dubai focus



only on reducing climate pollution - with no mention of the fossil fuels causing it. Earlier this week, the oil producer group OPEC sent a letter urging its members and allies to reject any mention of fossil fuels in the final summit deal. The letter warned that "undue and disproportionate pressure

against fossil fuels may reach a tipping point" in the talks. In a statement to Reuters, OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al Ghais declined to comment on the letter, but said OPEC wanted to keep the summit's focus on reducing climate-warming emissions, and away from their main sources like oil and gas.

"The world requires major investments in all energies, including hydrocarbons," he said. "Energy transitions must be just, fair and inclusive." It was the first time OPEC's Secretariat has intervened in the UN climate talks with such a letter. "It indicates a whiff of panic," said Alden Meyer of think-tank E3G.

of the day quote

The government is taking steps to promote exports such as entering into free trade agreements and promoting brand India.

PIYUSH GOYAL
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

There is a need to generate demand for electric vehicles and establish a holistic ecosystem, including charging network, for accelerated growth for the sector

SULAJA FIRODIA MOTWANI
KINETIC GREEN FOUNDER & CEO

The tremendous growth story in Indian aviation is synonymous with the vision, inspiration, and strength embodied by women in this field. Women are incredible force multipliers, shaping the ever-expanding horizons of our aviation landscape.

VK SINGH
MINISTER OF STATE FOR CIVIL AVIATION

SHORT TAKES

Office space demand may fall

New Delhi: Demand for office space across six major cities is likely to decline 18-22 per cent this year on higher base effect and delays in decision making by corporates related to their expansion plans, according to CREDAI and CRE-Matrix. In their joint report, real estate developers' apex body CREDAI and data analytic firm CRE Matrix have estimated that the fresh leasing of Grade A premium office space stood at 55-57 million square feet in the 2023 calendar year. The data excludes renewals. The absorption of office space was 70 million square feet during 2022. During January-September period of this year, the leasing activities have already touched 41.8 million square feet across six major cities - Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Bengaluru, Pune, Chennai and Hyderabad.

NCLAT stays CCI penalty on NTPC

New Delhi: The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has stayed a CCI order that imposed a penalty on state-owned power producer NTPC for not disclosing the acquisition of 35.47 per cent equity share capital in Ratnagiri Gas & Power Private Ltd. The Competition Commission of India on August 22, 2023, imposed a penalty of ₹40 lakh on NTPC for non-disclosure of its acquisition of 35.47 per cent of the equity share capital in Ratnagiri Gas & Power Private Ltd (RGPP). This was challenged by NTPC before the NCLAT, which is an appellate authority over the orders passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI). A two-member bench directed to list the matter on February 27, 2024, for the next hearing on NTPC's appeal and stayed the operation of order passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

4-day investment meet from Dec 11

New Delhi: Scores of government policymakers, representatives from different international organisations, academia, private sector, and startups will gather here at Yashobhoomi from December 11 to discuss ways to increase collaboration in trade, and investments. The four-day world investment conference will also help participating countries promote cooperation in the areas of investments, trade, research and development, the commerce and industry ministry said Saturday.



For economic growth we need to have investment spending ... India economic growth can become faster and accelerate if the much awaited private capital formation kicks into higher gear,"

V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN
CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR

FPIs TURN BUYERS IN LEADING BANKS

FPIs have made a major comeback to India in December. Even though FPIs made an investment of ₹9,000 crore in India in November, they were sellers for ₹368 crore in the cash market. This has changed in December with big time buying in the cash market.



Europe agrees landmark AI regulation deal

EU moves toward becoming the first major world power to enact laws governing AI

REUTERS

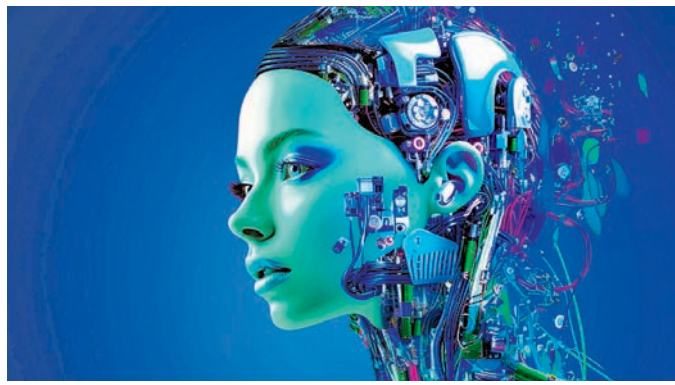
Brussels/London/Stockholm Dec 9: Europe Friday reached a provisional deal on landmark European Union rules governing the use of artificial intelligence including governments' use of AI in biometric surveillance and how to regulate AI systems such as ChatGPT.

With the political agreement, the EU moves toward becoming the first major world power to enact laws governing AI. Friday's deal between EU countries and European Parliament members came after nearly 15 hours of negotiations that followed an almost 24-hour debate the previous day.

The two sides are set to hash out details in the coming days, which could change the shape of the final legislation.

"Europe has positioned itself as a pioneer, understanding the importance of its role as a global standard setter. This is yes, I believe, a historical day," European Commissioner Thierry Breton told a press conference.

The accord requires foundation models such as ChatGPT and general purpose AI systems (GPAI) to comply with transparency obligations before they are put on the market. These include drawing up technical documentation, complying with EU copyright law and disseminating detailed summaries about the



content used for training. High-impact foundation models with systemic risk will have to conduct model evaluations, assess and mitigate systemic risks, conduct adversarial testing, report to the European Commission on serious incidents, ensure cybersecurity and report on their energy efficiency.

GPAIs with systemic risk may rely on codes of practice to comply with the new regulation.

Governments can only use real-time biometric surveillance in public spaces in cases of victims of certain crimes, prevention of genuine, present, or foreseeable threats, such as terrorist attacks, and searches for people suspected of the most serious crimes.

The agreement bans cognitive behavioural manipulation, the untargeted scrapping of facial images from the internet

or CCTV footage, social scoring and biometric categorisation systems to infer political, religious, philosophical beliefs, sexual orientation and race.

Consumers would have the right to launch complaints and receive meaningful explanations while fines for violations would range from 7.5 million euros (\$8.1 million) or 1.5% of turnover to 35 million euros or 7% of global turnover.

Business group DigitalEurope criticised the rules as yet another burden for companies, on top of other recent legislation.

"We have a deal, but at what cost? We fully supported a risk-based approach based on the uses of AI, not the technology itself, but the last-minute attempt to regulate foundation models has turned this on its head," its Director General Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl said.

Privacy rights group European Digital Rights was equally critical.

"It's hard to be excited about a law which has, for the first time in the EU, taken steps to legalise live public facial recognition across the bloc," its senior policy advisor Ella Jakubowska said.

"Whilst the Parliament fought hard to limit the damage, the overall package on biometric surveillance and profiling is at best lukewarm."

The legislation is expected to enter into force early next year once both sides formally ratify it and should apply two years after that.

Governments around the world are seeking to balance the advantages of the technology, which can engage in human-like conversations, answer questions and write computer code, against the need to put guardrails in place.

Europe's ambitious AI rules come as companies like OpenAI, in which Microsoft is an investor, continue to discover new uses for their technology, triggering both plaudits and concerns. Google owner Alphabet Thursday launched a new AI model, Gemini, to rival OpenAI.

The EU law could become the blueprint for other governments and an alternative to the United States' light-touch approach and China's interim rules.

GIFT City to become sustainable finance hub

GIFT-IFSC is a tax-neutral financial centre that aims to compete with hubs like Singapore as it provides fiscal incentives and a looser regulatory environment

AGENCIES

Ahmedabad, Dec 9: India wants to make its financial hub in the western state of Gujarat a centre for global sustainable finance to help fund the \$10 trillion investment needed to achieve its 2070 net zero emissions goal. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Saturday. "GIFT IFSC is an efficient channel to make India a low-carbon economy and get the required green capital flow. Issuance of financial instruments such as green bonds, sustainable bonds, sustainability-linked bonds will help the world," Modi said in a speech.

He said India wants to expand the role of GIFT City to make it a new age financial services and technology nerve centre.

Addressing the 'Infinity Forum 2.0' conference at the Gujarat International Finance Tec (GIFT) City via video link, PM Modi said, "I am confident, GIFT City's products and services will help solve the challenges facing the world. And all you stakeholders have a big role in this."



"One of the biggest challenges facing the world today is climate change. India, being one of the largest economies in the world, does not underestimate these concerns, we are conscious of that. Even at the COP Summit a few days ago, India has made new commitments to the world. To achieve the global targets of India and the world, we will have to ensure adequate availability of cost-effective finance," the Prime Minister said.

He pointed out that many initiatives have been started based on the suggestions that were made in the first edition of Infinity Forum in April 2022 with the IFSCA notifying a comprehensive framework to govern fund management activities. "Today there are 80 fund management entities registered with IFSCA, which have setup funds worth more than USD 24 billion. These two leading international universities have received approval to start their courses in GIFT International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) from 2024. The framework for aircraft leasing was released by IFSCA in May 2022, today 26 units have started operations with IFSCA," the PM said.

Sebi for sachetising SIPs by making ₹250 bets viable

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 9: Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch has said that the capital markets regulator wishes to sachetise mutual fund investments going forward.

Speaking at an event here, Buch said the mutual fund industry feels investments of ₹500 per month in a systematic investment plan are viable, but ₹250 are not and the focus will be to try to look at ways of making such investments rewarding.

"We are working with them (MF industry) to see where is the cost, what can Sebi do to facilitate making it possible to bring that viability down to ₹250 a month, because then it is the equivalent of what Hindustan Lever did with shampoo sachets. You just explode the market," Buch said.

The comments come on a day the MF industry reported its highest-ever monthly investments through SIPs at over ₹17,000 crore for November. It also comes amid expectations of an aggressive entry by the Reliance Group entity Jio Financial Services into the MF space.

Buch said such sachetisation will help the financial inclusion agenda, and also help the Indian capital markets.

Citing the experience of over the last one year, Buch said hard-



ening of rates in the developed markets made foreign investors sell Indian equities, but India was not impacted as much as other emerging markets because the domestic investors held fort and also forced the foreign investors to come back because of the yields the market was offering.

"In effect, the benefit of our domestic flows and the retail flows had a double impact. The impact of them coming in and the impact of the foreign money returning because they couldn't afford to miss the Indian story," she added.

Buch said she will focus on this aspect in the last year of her three-year term, and added that the attempt will also be to institutionalise the reforms and initiatives done over the last few years so that it lasts as long as possible. She reiterated that rather than ticking boxes by appointing women on boards, it is necessary for companies to employ women across the hierarchy, starting from the key management personnel on top to down below, and added that it is because of this view that Sebi focuses on making the top-1,000

Same-day trade settlement before fiscal year end: SEBI

Mumbai: India is moving to set up same-day market settlement before the end of fiscal year ending March 2024 and subsequently to instantaneous settlement a year later, the chairperson of country's markets regulator said. Currently trades in India are settled in 'T+1' or one day after the trades are initiated. T+0 would mean settlements in the same day and instant settlement would ensure trades are settled immediately. "We are now moving to optionally T+0," Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch told an industry event in New Delhi. "It will happen before the end of this financial year and one year from there (it will be) instantaneous." Earlier it was reported in September that India's markets regulator would implement settlement within one hour of the trade, with instant settlement coming some months later. India is the second country after China to operate on a short settlement cycle of one day. Settlement in most other major economies trades is completed within two days.

listed companies disclose the share of payments to women in the overall wage bills.

Buch said she is very passionate about technology and data, and uses both in her work.

FTA will be game changer for domestic industry: AEPC



Negotiations for the trade agreement with the UK are in the last stage and talks with the EU are moving at a faster pace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: The proposed free trade agreement with the UK and the European Union will be a game changer for the domestic industry and will offer a huge advantage for apparel exporters, AEPC said Saturday. Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) Chairman Naren Goenka said that trade pacts with the UAE, Australia and Japan are providing market access for the sector.

"The FTA with the UK will be a game changer for the industry, and the EU will offer a big advantage if we sign an FTA deal," he said.

The negotiations for the trade agreement with the UK are in the last stage and talks with the EU

are moving at a faster pace.

He also said that one of the major issues regarding the poor export competitiveness of Indian apparel is poor economies of scale.

The apparel industry comprises 80 per cent of exporters with around ₹10 crore turnover and the average number of machines in Indian apparel manufacturing units is 250-400, whereas competing countries have an average of 800-1000 machines.

"Also, there are hardly any vertically integrated units unlike in Vietnam and other competing countries. Both these factors limit the capacity for the industry to invest in productivity enhancement technologies," he said. He was speaking at the AEPC exports awards to exporters December 8 here.

The awards recognise contributions made by Indian apparel exporters in building modern export enterprises and helping to further develop a unique export culture.

Hospitality industry expects hiring to accelerate

The sector witnessed a robust growth this year with domestic travels leading the way

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: The Indian hospitality and tourism sector is expected to see accelerated hiring going forward after witnessing a robust growth this year with domestic travels leading the way, according to industry players.

With a report by the Hotel Association of India (HAI) projecting the hotel industry's direct contribution to India's GDP to reach USD 1 trillion by 2047, experts believe there will be a minimum of 25 per cent rise in the

need for workforce, with the adjacent industries like travel, aviation, ticket booking, travel guides, and consultants to be increasingly in demand.

"The hotel industry's direct contribution to India's GDP reaching USD 1 trillion by 2047 is a significant milestone. This substantial growth will undoubtedly bolster job creation within the sector, providing employment to millions of individuals across diverse skill sets," HAI Vice President KB Kachru told PTI.

Kachru, who is also Chairman Emeritus & Principal Advisor, South Asia Radisson Hotel Group, further said following the pandemic, the hospitality sector has undergone a huge transformation, entirely re-



shaping the employment landscape.

"We have witnessed a paradigm shift in how we operate, with more emphasis being put on adaptability, digital innovation, and a heightened focus on

guest safety and well-being," he added.

Expressing similar views, Chalet Hotels Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) Urvi Aradhya said, "Post-pandemic employment landscape in the

hospitality sector reflects a blend of technological integration, an increased emphasis on health and safety, a focus on local tourism, and a shift towards more flexible work arrangements." In terms of the expected hiring trend, recruitment agency Gi Group Vice President Sudeep Sen said, "With the world of work specific to the hospitality industry, along with allied ones, looking extremely bright, we are going to witness a minimum influx of 25 per cent increase in the need of workforce."

He further said adjacent industries like travel, aviation, ticket booking, travel guides/consultants will be increasingly in demand and it is estimated that the increase will also be in the range of 15-18 per cent, depending

on the seasonality of the travel destinations.

"There will be increasing demand for digital content creators, social media managers, sustainability consultants for hotels and resorts, vegan — food & beverage specialists, spa & healthcare specialists," Sen added. Royal Orchid Hotels Chairman and Managing Director Chander K Baljee said there is a significant surge in domestic travel across India, leading to an increase in the availability of accommodations across various categories, including 3-, 4-, and 5-star establishments.

"With this expansion, there is also a corresponding addition to the workforce... We have proactively undertaken recruitment of fresh staff," he said.

Young India aim for answers

SOUTH AFRICA T20 SERIES IS THE LAST BIG INTERNATIONAL FIXTURE BEFORE THE WORLD CUP IN JUNE



The World Cup defeat was a disappointment, and it is tough to move on from it. But the series win against Australia was a big boost even though it came in a different format

SURYAKUMAR YADAV | INDIAN SKIPPER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Durban, Dec 9: A young Indian outfit will be asked tough questions, answers to which might not be readily available, when it faces a sturdy South African side in a three-match T20 International starting here Sunday.

With injured skipper Hardik Pandya out till the start of IPL, lead pacer Jasprit Bumrah taking a break and not much clarity over Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma's T20 future ahead of the World Cup in June, one wouldn't be able to read much into either success or failure of the team in South Africa.

A clearer picture about India's core for the T20 showpiece would only emerge after a month of cash-rich IPL, with form and fitness at that point being the cri-

teria for selection.

If Rohit and Virat are picked in the playing XI, the core will suddenly become very different from the team that is now touring 'Rainbow Nation'.

Suryakumar Yadav led side beat Australia 4-1 on fabulous batting tracks at home but even the most partisan Indian fan would agree that there was so much less at stake in a series that was held within 72 hours of the World Cup.

Australia's core bowling attack was rested and some of the seniors were so tired that they left for home after the third game, having spent almost nine weeks in India.

Even with their pace bowling mainstays, Kagiso Rabada (rested) and Anrich Nortje and Lungi Ngidi injured, the Proteas at home will be more than a

handful.

Batting Combination conundrum India are carrying 17 players for the T20 series and only three of them - Shreyas Iyer, Mukesh Kumar and Ishan Kishan are also part of the 50-over format.

There will be multiple bone of contention, the openers and No 3, who will have to shed their archaic safety first approach that had been in India's bane in previous T20 World Cups.

Yashasvi Jaiswal has already shown that he belongs to this level and Shubman Gill is now one of the first picks across formats while Rituraj Gaikwad after his 52-ball-100 will be that much difficult to ignore.

And herein lies the problem as Ishan Kishan isn't a great option beyond No 4 if the trio of Jaiswal, Gill and Gaikwad bat. And at No 4 is India's No 1 T20

batter and skipper Suryakumar Yadav, who is the only automatic choice as far as T20 World Cup is concerned.

Then there is the wicket-keeper's slot where Kishan, who will have stiff fight from Jitesh Sharma, who is evolving nicely as a finisher at No 6.

There is a No 5 slot where Shreyas, who is not exactly a slam-bang from word "go" but an IPL skipper, is expected to be challenged with short-pitched stuff by the likes of Marco Jansen, Gerald Coetzee and Andile Phehlukwayo.

But if one plays Iyer, then there would be no place for Rinku Singh, another designated finisher, who himself said on BCLITV, that he will be batting at No 5.

In case Kishan doesn't find a place in top four, then Jitesh is

SQUADS

INDIA: Suryakumar Yadav (C), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Rituraj Gaikwad, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Shreyas Iyer, Ishan Kishan (wk), Jitesh Sharma (wk), Ravindra Jadeja (VC), Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Mohd. Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Deepak Chahar.

SOUTH AFRICA: Aiden Markram (c), Ottniel Baartman, Matthew Breetzke, Nandre Burger, Gerald Coetzee, Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Andile Phehlukwayo, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, and Lizaad Williams.

Match Starts: 7:30 pm IST

the option at No 6.

For the likes of Rituraj, Jaiswal, Rinku and Jitesh, the extra bounce on offer at Kingsmead will pose a different sort of challenge as those with superior back-foot play will be paramount.

Bowling picks are easier

The Indian bowling attack was put to sword by Australia in most games but in South Africa, the length would be doubly important as the younger crop might find it enticing to dig it in due to the extra bounce.

While there won't be Quinton de Kock in the mix anymore but Heinrich Klaasen, David Miller, skipper Aiden Markram, hard-hitting Tristan Stubbs and new batting sensation Matthew Breetzke could make life difficult for Indian bowlers.

While Ravindra Jadeja is the vice-captain in this series and is expected to bat at No 7, Axar Patel, who hasn't been picked for the series, will certainly be around when squad for the marquee event is selected.

The second spinner will certainly be googly specialist Ravi Bishnoi, who is now world's No 1 ranked T20 spinner.

Deepak Chahar, Arshdeep Singh and Mukesh Kumar are expected to be the three straight-forward pace bowling choices.

MEN'S JUNIOR HOCKEY WORLD CUP

India rout Canada to reach quarters

The win propelled India to the second position in Pool C, enough to earn them a last eight berth



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, Dec 9: India produced a blistering game to trounce Canada 10-1 to enter the quarterfinals of the Men's Junior World Cup hockey at the National Hockey Stadium here Saturday.

For India, Aditya Arjun Lalage (8th, 43rd), Rohit (12th, 55th), Amandeep Lakra (23rd, 52nd), Vishnukant (42nd), Rajinder (42nd), Kushwaha Sourabh Anand (51st) and Uttam Singh (58th) found the target.

Jude Nicholson (20th) scored the consolation goal for Canada.

India made an aggressive start in the opening quarter, putting pressure on the Canadian defence. India took the initial lead through Lalage (8th), who scored an excellent field goal.

The Indian strikers worked cleverly, forcing the Canadian defenders to make errors. The plan worked faultlessly, with India earning a penalty corner, which was successfully converted by Rohit (12th) to double the lead.

In the second quarter, Canada pulled a goal back, courtesy

Nicholson.

However, it hardly made a difference. The Indian colts extended their lead soon, with Lakra (23rd) successfully converting a penalty corner, and they led 3-1 at half-time.

The Indians put constant pressure on the Canadian defenders and extended their lead in the third quarter through Vishnukant (42nd) who found the back of the net through a field goal.

India made it 5-1 through Rajinder (42nd) and in the quarter's final minutes Lalage (43rd) netted his second goal to swell his side lead to 6-1.

With 15 minutes remaining, Indians mounted further pressure on Canada with constant raids.

Anand (51st), Lakra (52nd) and Rohit (55th) quickly added three more goals, making it 9-1 for their side.

Skipper Uttam fired in the tenth goal a couple of minutes before the final hooter.

India will face Pool D winner, the Netherlands, in the quarterfinals Tuesday.

SHORT TAKES

BFC part ways with head coach



Bangalore: Amid a modest ISL 2023-24 season, Bengaluru FC Saturday decided to part ways with head coach Simon Grayson and assistant coach Neil McDonald. Former India player Renedy Singh will be in-charge of the team till the appointment of a new head coach. The club and the coaching staff decided to go apart after a heavy 0-4 home defeat against Mumbai FC in their last match Friday. Under Grayson, who took charge ahead of the 2022-23 season, BFC had finished runners-up in last season's ISL and the Super Cup, besides winning the Durand Cup. However, BFC are currently placed in ninth slot in the ISL table with a solitary win, four losses and as many draws from nine matches.

Kyrgios confirms he won't compete



Melbourne: Nick Kyrgios has confirmed he won't compete at the Australian Open next month because of injuries. The 28-year-old Australian said on social media he'll miss the Grand Slam for a second straight year because he needs "a little more time" to recover. Kyrgios, whose name was absent from the entry list for the tournament, pulled out of last season's Australian Open because he needed knee surgery. He later dealt with a wrist problem. Kyrgios was the runner-up to Novak Djokovic at Wimbledon in 2022 but played in just one official singles match in 2023. Kyrgios teamed with Thanasi Kokkinakis to win the 2022 Australian Open men's doubles championship. AGENCIES

Wrestling Federation polls to be held Dec 21

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 9: The much-delayed Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) elections will be held December 21 and the results will be announced the same day, said returning officer for the polls Saturday.

A statement issued by the office of the returning officer, Justice (ret'd) MM Kumar said polling, counting of votes and declaration of results will be done on the same day and the result of the elections shall be subject to the outcome of the writ petition pending before the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The elections, to be held during the Special General Body Meeting, will be staged as per the electoral list made August 7, quelling apprehensions that the entire process might start all over again.

"All steps up to the stage of preparation and display of the final list of contesting candidates were completed (on Aug 7) and various activities like polling, counting of votes and declaration of result alone were left," said a statement issued by the returning officer for the polls.

"The elections of the WFI were stayed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court on 11.08.2023 just a day before the poll and

therefore, polling could not be held on 12.08.2023... The Supreme Court has vacated the stay orders and therefore the remaining steps like polling etc. Will now recommence on 21.12.2023 as per the following revised schedule," said the statement.

"Result of the above elections shall, however, be subject to the outcome of the Writ Petition pending before the Punjab and Haryana High Court," added the statement.

After several postponements, the WFI elections have been made possible after the Supreme Court recently set aside the stay imposed by the Punjab and Haryana HC.

An IOA-constituted ad-hoc panel, led by Wushu Association of India chief Bhupender Singh Bajwa, is currently managing the day-to-day activities of the WFI after the sports ministry suspended the federation headed by Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh over allegations of sexual harassment levelled against him by top Indian grapplers.

Several wrestlers, including Olympic medallists Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik, sat in protest at the Jantar Mantar here for more than two months to protest against the alleged sexual harassment of female grapplers by Brij Bhushan.

Eng thrash India to seal series

WOMEN IN BLUE SUFFER STUNNING BATTING COLLAPSE IN 2ND T20I

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 9: Indian batting looked clueless and out of depth to be dismissed for their third lowest total as England notched up a four-wicket win in the second women's T20I to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series here Saturday.

On a day uncapped Indian cricketers won fat pay-cheques in the Women's Premier League (WPL) auction, Shafali Verma (0), Smriti Mandhana (10), skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (9), Deepti Sharma (0) cut a sorry figure as India were shot out for 80 in 16.2 overs.

In reply, England cantered home in 11.2 overs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. The final T20I is slated Sunday. In defence of their paltry 80, India had a horror start with a wayward Renuka Singh leaking eight runs in four wide deliveries.

Sophia Dunkley then took the attack on inexperienced Bengal seamer Titas Sidhu with two boundaries as England raced to 17 runs in first two overs.

Renuka returned to take two wickets - Sophia (9) and Danni Wyatt (0) - but with no score-board pressure Alice Capsey (25; 21b) and Nat Sciver-Brunt (16; 13b) seized the momentum with their



counter-attacking display to take them past 50-run mark inside seven overs. But the duo failed to take the team home as India managed to take two wickets with seven runs needed.

Deepti Sharma took two in as many deliveries - Amy Jones and Freya Kemp - but it didn't matter as Sophie Ecclestone (9) clinched the series with a four. Their match aggregate of 162 runs was also the lowest involving the two teams.

For India, Jemimah Rodrigues was the lone bright spot with a 33-ball 30, and one of the two batters to get into double digit scores, in a bizarre display by the Indian batters.

That all their top-four batters got out LBW showed their lack of application on a batting-friendly wicket at the Wankhede stadium.

This was India's third lowest total in women's T20I behind 62 (vs Australia, 2011) and 70 (vs South Africa, 2019).

It was a clinical display by England as all their six bowlers returned with at least one wicket. Charlie Dean (4-0-16-2), Lauren Bell (3-0-18-2), Sophie Ecclestone (3-2-0-13-2) and Sarah Glenn (3-1-13-2) bagged two wickets each.

One-up in the three-match series, England need a win to seal the series. India lost by 38 runs in the first T20I.

Uncapped Indians break bank at WPL auction

Kashvee Gautam fetches ₹2 crore while Vrinda Dinesh bags ₹1.3 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 9: Punjab pacer Kashvee Gautam fetched a winning bid of ₹2 crore from Gujarat Giants at the WPL auction here Saturday.

The 20-year-old's base price was ₹10 lakh. Both Gujarat Giants and UP Warriorz bid for Kashvee before the former managed to secure her services for the second edition of WPL.

In another big payday for an

uncapped Indian cricketer, UP Warriorz bid ₹1.3 crore for 22-year-old Karnataka batter Vrinda Dinesh.

Both Vrinda and Kashvee had recently featured for India A in their three-match series against England A.

In the early stages, Australian cricketers attracted the highest bids with all-rounder Annabel Sutherland being sold to Delhi Capitals for ₹2 crore and batter Phoebe Litchfield to Gujarat Giants for ₹1 crore.

The 22-year-old Sutherland was released by Gujarat Giants after the inaugural edition of WPL held in March this year.



She attracted bids from defending champions Mumbai



Indians but they pulled out, with the player eventually going to

the Capitals.

Gujarat Giants went for the left-handed 20-year-old Litchfield who has made her debut across formats for Australia.

South Africa fast bowler Shabnim Ismail was added to Mumbai Indians squad for ₹1.20 crore, three times her base price.

Royal Challengers Bangalore went for Australia's Georgia Wareham in the earlier stages of the auction, paying ₹40 lakh for the deal.

RCB also bought England's Kate Cross for ₹30 lakh and the 37-year-old Indian spinner Ekta Bisht for ₹60 lakh, two times her base price.

Kiwis level series against B'desh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mirpur, Dec 9: Glenn Phillips and Mitchell Santner held their nerve to help New Zealand chase down 137 runs on a difficult wicket for a series-levelling four-wicket win over Bangladesh in the rain-hit second Test Saturday.

Phillips and Santer shared a 70-run partnership for the seventh wicket as New Zealand recovered from 69 for 6 to reach 139 for six on Day 4 to give the team its first victory on Bangladesh soil since 2008.

The home side, which won the first test by 150 runs, is chasing a first-ever Test series victory against the Black Caps.

Phillips, who struck a 72-ball 87 in the first innings, hit off-spinner Mehidy Hasan for a boundary through cover to confirm the victory as he was not out on 40 off 48 after smashing four fours and a six. Santer hit three fours and a six for his 39-ball 35 not out.



Phillips was key in helping the side take an eight-run lead when New Zealand was bowled out for 180 in the first innings, in reply to Bangladesh's 172.

Left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel then claimed 6-57 as Bangladesh was dismissed for 172 in its second innings, chasing a 137-run target for New Zealand to win the match.

Mehidy Hasan had figures three for 52 and left-arm spinner Taijul Islam grabbed two for 58, as Bangladesh kept the hopes alive on an increasingly deteriorating pitch.

Pacer Shofirul Islam (1-9) broke through as he had Devon Conway (2) leg-before with a length delivery that kept pretty low.

Earlier, the entire second day and the first session of the third day were washed out due to rain and wet outfield.