



SAMANTHA'S 2ND INNINGS

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu, to debut as a producer, launches production house Tralala Moving Pictures

LEISURE P2



CRISIS DEEPENS

Heavy fighting rages overnight and runs into Sunday across Gaza, including in the devastated north

INTERNATIONAL P10



PAK COLTS BEAT INDIA

A superb century by Azim Awais helps Pakistan beat India in a match of the U-19 Asia Cup in Dubai

SPORTS P12

SHORT TAKES

SC verdict today on Art 370 repeal

New Delhi: Was the decision taken by the Centre August 5, 2019 to abrogate the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution, which bestowed a special status on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, constitutionally valid? The Supreme Court is scheduled to pronounce its verdict Monday on a batch of petitions challenging the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370. According to the cause list for December 11, uploaded on the apex court's website, a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud would deliver the verdict. The other members of the bench are Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai and Surya Kant.

Akash declared Mayawati's heir

Lucknow: BSP chief Mayawati Sunday declared her nephew Akash Anand as her uttaradikari (heir), a party office-bearer said. Akash has been declared the 'uttaradikari (heir)' by Mayawati's Udayveer Singh, the BSP's Shahjahanpur district unit chief, told reporters. He has been given the responsibility to strengthen the party organisation all over the country except Uttar Pradesh, Singh added. The party's official statement, however, did not mention any such decision. Singh said Mayawati announced the decision during a meeting in the district that was attended by party leaders from across the country. P9

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



₹300 crore cash!! What is this guy doing in the opposition? He should have been in our party

WEATHER	
BHUB	CTK
MAX 28.9°C	27.8°C
MIN 18.2°C	17.0°C
Humidity 84%	70%
Rainfall Nil	Nil
Forecast Dry weather very likel	

Two minors die of electrocution

Sonepur, Dec 10: Two boys died of electrocution and another was injured in Subarnapur district after they accidentally touched an electrical wire laid for poaching wild boars, police said. The two minor boys have been identified as Jeet Ddungdung and Ramesh Ddungdung of Hatlimunda village. The condition of Jeet's father Naveen Ddungdung, who was accompanying them, is now stated to be stable, the police said. The tragic incident took place in a forest near Singhapali village in the western Odisha district when they went to the forest in search of their goat Saturday night. They were rushed to the Ullunda community health centre, where doctors declared the two boys dead while Naveen is undergoing treatment. The police have started an investigation.



VENTING IRE: BJP workers protest against Congress MP Dhiraj Prasad Sahu after Income-Tax department raids his residence, in Lucknow, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

₹351 CRORE TOTAL SEIZURE Highest-ever haul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The total cash seizure in the Income-Tax department's searches against an Odisha-based distillery company, owned by a Congress MP's family, has been calculated at ₹351 crore after five days of counting and is the highest-ever haul in a single action by any probe agency in the country, official sources said Sunday. The premises of the Congress Rajya Sabha MP from Jharkhand, Dhiraj Prasad Sahu, in Ranchi and other places, were also covered during the searches by the department. The company and the MP did not respond to PTI's queries regarding the action being carried out against them. The marathon raids against Boudh Distillery Private Limited, its promoters and others entered the fifth day Sunday. The raids were launched December 6 by the taxman on charges of tax evasion and off-the-book transactions. The sources told PTI that ₹351 crore cash has been counted and the process has ended.



The counting involved nine teams of about 80 people from the I-T department and various banks, working in shifts in a 24x7 cycle. Another team of 200 officials, including security personnel, drivers and other staff, joined in after the taxman found 10 almirahs stuffed with cash apart from some other locations. As many as 200 bags and trunks were used to transport the cash for depositing it in various bank branches in Odisha, the sources said. The department believes that the entire cache of currency is unaccounted money earned from cash sales of country liquor by the business group, distributors and others. It is the highest-ever cash seizure made by an agency in

the country as part of an action against a single group and entities linked to it, the sources had 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. The department is also recording the statements of the executives and other staff members who were present at the searched locations and will soon issue summonses to the main promoters of the company for recording their statements. It was not clear what amount of cash and other documents were seized from Sahu's house. The maximum cache of currency, largely in ₹500 denomination, was recovered from the premises of the company in Bolangir district, the sources said. The BJP Sunday stepped up its attack on the Congress and other

opposition parties, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah saying it is now clear that their propaganda about probe agencies being misused was driven by the fear that their corruption will be exposed. In a statement, the senior BJP leader questioned the silence of INDIA bloc leaders, saying he can understand why the Congress is keeping mum but wondered why parties like the TMC, DMK, JD(U) and the RJD were doing the same. While the Congress has distanced itself from the MP, claiming that the party has nothing to do with his business, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah accused the Centre of targeting only the Congress and asked why no searches were carried out against BJP leaders. Jharkhand Congress in-charge Avinash Pandey said, "Since he is Congress MP, he should make an official statement about how such a big amount of money came to him." Union Tourism Minister and BJP leader G Kishan Reddy asked why Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was silent on the issue.

Sai all set to be first tribal CM of Ch'garh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Raipur, Dec 10: The BJP Sunday picked Vishnu Deo Sai, a prominent tribal leader, as the next chief minister of Chhattisgarh, ending the suspense over who will helm the state which the saffron party wrested from Congress in recent polls. Sai (59) was elected as the BJP's legislative party leader during a meeting of 54 newly-elected MLAs held at the party's state headquarters here Sunday afternoon, a party functionary said. After the meeting, a delegation of BJP MLAs led by Sai met Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan to stake a claim to form the next government. "We have handed over a letter to the Governor stating that Sai ji has been elected as the legislative party leader," senior BJP MLA Brijmohan Agrawal told reporters. He said the date of the swearing-in ceremony would be informed later. As a chief minister, Sai said he would try to fulfil PM Modi's "guarantees" and sanction 18 lakh houses to the beneficiaries of the PM Awas Yojna, who were



deprived of the benefits under the erstwhile Congress government, will be the top priority. At the meeting, the proposal to elect Sai as the legislative party leader was moved by former chief minister Raman Singh, which was seconded by state BJP president Arun Sao and senior leader Brijmohan Agrawal. Sai has become the fourth chief minister of the state. His predecessors included Ajit Jogi (Congress), Raman Singh (BJP) who helmed the state for three consecutive terms starting from 2003 to 2018, and Bhupesh Baghel (Congress) who held the top post from 2018 to December 2023.

With a 'Swift' \$1bn, Taylor's Eras tour makes history

It's the latest in a year filled with records for Swift, who earned the Person of the Year accolade from Time Magazine

AGENCIES

Los Angeles, Dec 10: Taylor Swift's Eras Tour is the first tour to cross the billion-dollar mark, according to Pollstar's 2023 year-end charts. Not only was Swift's landmark Eras Tour the No 1 tour both worldwide and in North America, but she also brought in a whopping USD 1.04 billion with 4.35 million tickets sold across 60 tour dates, the concert trade publication found. Pollstar data is pulled from box office reports, venue ca-

capacity estimates, historical Pollstar venue ticket sales data, and other undefined research, collected from November 17, 2022 to November 15, 2023. Representatives for the publication did not immediately clarify if they adjusted past tour data to match 2023 inflation in naming Swift the first to break the billion-dollar threshold. Pollstar also found that Swift brought in approximately USD 200 million in merch sales and her blockbuster film adaptation of the tour, "Taylor Swift The Eras Tour", has reportedly earned approximately USD 250 million in sales, making it the highest-grossing concert film of all time. Interestingly, Taylor Swift's concerts in the US city of Seattle even generated seismic activity equivalent to a 2.3 magnitude

2023's most streamed artist Swift's Eras tour crashed ticketing sites, sold out hotels, boosted local economies, and even generated earthquake-like seismic activity



earthquake, according to seismologists. The data was recorded at Swift's sell-out Eras tour performances at Lumen Field July 22 and 23. According to their estimates, Pollstar predicts a big 2024 for Swift as well. The magazine projects the Eras Tour will once again reach USD 1 billion within their eligibility window, meaning Swift is likely to bring in over USD 2 billion over the span of the tour. Worldwide, Swift's tour was followed by Beyonce in second, Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band in third, Coldplay in fourth, Harry Styles in fifth, and Morgan Wallen, Ed Sheeran, P!nk, The Weeknd and Drake. In North America, there was a similar top 10 -- Swift, followed by Beyonce, Morgan Wallen, Drake, P!nk, Bruce

Springsteen & The E Street Band, Ed Sheeran, George Strait, Karol G, and RBD. Beyond the Swift of it all, 2023 was a landmark year for concert sales worldwide, the top 100 tours of the year saw a 46 per cent jump from last year, bringing in USD 9.17 billion compared to 2022's USD 6.28 billion. In North America, that number jumped from USD 4.77 billion last year to USD 6.63 billion. Earlier this week, Swift was named Time Magazine's Person of the Year. Last month, Apple Music named her its artist of the year; Spotify revealed she was 2023's most-streamed artist globally, raking in more than 26.1 billion streams since January 1 and beating Bad Bunny's three-year record. Consider 2023 a year of incredible pop music dominance -- (Taylor's Version).

leisure



SELENA CONFESSES TO COSMETIC PROCEDURE

Actress-singer Selena Gomez who was defending her new relationship with Benny Blanco confessed to having a cosmetic procedure. After a fan wrote in an Instagram comment: "Remove your cheek fillers/implants. It's messing with your brain." Selena replied: "Hahaha I've had Botox bb girl."

DREW BARRYMORE HATES MEN WHO NAP A LOT

Actress Drew Barrymore said that she was left sick to her stomach when she dated a man who napped excessively. The actress revealed on her show, "I just had a relationship with a guy who just napped all the time. It made me sick to my stomach. He was so tired all the time and had to nap all the time."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
If you are related in any way with the media, Ganesha predicts that you will taste success today. Since all the focus is on you, it is a great time to exhibit your skills. Your talents will get recognition and your short-term goals will come to fruition.

TAURUS
This day there could be a lot of surprises in store for you. Be prepared for sudden and unexpected twist and turns in the flow of events. This is not a day for taking up meaningful activities. Ganesha advises you to postpone all major programmes and decisions for tomorrow. You are likely to encounter stiff challenges where compromising your principles may seem to be the only way to face them.

GEMINI
Today, luck is on your side. In the afternoon, you will remain reserved and subdued. But as the day progresses, you will be a different person altogether. You will transform into an enterprising and outgoing person. At work, you will impress your bosses with your brilliance, predicts Ganesha.

CANCER
Your day will revolve around your spouse and matters related to him/her. Thanks to the love and warmth that he/she will shower on you, you may not want to go to work, and you would expect the same from him/her. Don't push it, unless both of you can take a break from work without any harm done to your day's tasks. A good day to plan a mini-vacation.

LEO
Everything comes with a price tag, and the price of success is hard work. So sweat it out, says Ganesha; it is in your stars today. You may feel as if you are being made to work extremely hard in order to meet your targets, and the dividends you get may not seem to justify the efforts.

VIRGO
You are most likely to hit the mark and accomplish what you set out to do today. Work pressures will have no bearing whatsoever on you. The secret, says Ganesha, is in being patient.

LIBRA
'Wait and watch' is always a good policy. You have been doing the same, and today, there is every possibility that the talents you have displayed for so long finally get the deserved recognition at work. For the businessman, Ganesha once again advises patience if one wants better future prospects.

SCORPIO
You will gain new admiration as a manager of human resources. In business, long overdue financial arrears may return. At the end of the day, you shall be satisfied with the way you balanced work and home, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Actions speaking louder than words could never have been truer for you than it is today. Let the force of your actions do the talking. You may find yourself working on personality development and self-improvement later in the day. While some of your actions will be channelled to renovating your abode, still others may initiate constructing your dream home.

CAPRICORN
It is time again for that once-in-blue-moon mood swing. You will be easily irked by everyday activities and may let small, less important things bother you too much, foresees Ganesha. But the darkest hour is just before dawn. Things should start looking up later in the day. You enjoy doing things others won't dare, and for all you know, you may have already won millions of hearts with your impressive personality.

AQUARIUS
If you're a boss — at work or at home — you may not feel like one today. Your workload will be back-breaking. However, Ganesha says it will pay off very soon. Your competency will inspire subordinates, and your reputation will be augmented by your committed approach.

PISCES
It is a good day for you, since all the projects you take up today will reach a satisfactory conclusion. However, this does not mean that you will not be strung out, a fact you would do well to keep hidden, lest your competitors try to take advantage of it, says Ganesha.

Alia went for audition in school uniform

Mumbai: Actress Alia Bhatt who had made her debut via film *Student of the Year* recently shared that she went into Karan Johar's office wearing her school uniform to audition.

"I got called in to meet Karan Johar for SOTY while I was still in school. I was in the 11th grade, literally going from school, so I was in my uniform. I was much 'healthier' and I thought, 'I look great... there's nothing wrong.' So, I walked into his office, and he said I was charming in person and asked me to do an audition. I didn't know what an audition was, but I went in, gave the audition and the rest is history," she said during the

Red Sea Film Festival in Jeddah. When asked if she fell in love with the profession instantaneously, she responded, "Absolutely!"

"I remember the first day of the shoot was when we were filming for the song 'Radha Teri Chunr' and it took seven days to shoot that song, and in the middle, I sprained my leg and hurt my back. It was daunting and scary, as from day one of the shoot, we were very nervous, given the presence of so many stalwarts in the room. But I think from that moment on, I realized that I am my most present self in front of the camera," she ends.

AGENCIES



WALKING BOOKFAIRS TRAVEL WRITING FESTIVAL IN TWIN CITY

'Dialects of Cuttack are greatly inspired by Muslims, Marathas'

Cuttack/Bhubaneswar: Sunday was a day of celebration for avid readers and travellers as Walking BookFairs, the famous travelling book store, organised a 9-hour Travel Writing Festival in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar.

"This was a first-of-its-kind independent literature festival in India celebrating travel writing and the spirit of exploration and adventure," said Akshaya Bahibala, co-founder of Walking BookFairs.

The festival was inaugurated by Nikhil Pavan Kalyan, Vice Chairman of Cuttack Development Authority at Netaji Bus Terminal, Cuttack. Appreciating the initiative, Kalyan said it should be held frequently in Odisha.

During the first session titled 'Cuttack Days and Nights', eminent lyricist and academician Devdas Chhotray shared about his life's experience in Cuttack.

Talking about the dialects of Odia language spoken in Cuttack, he said, "The Katak language is greatly influenced by the Persians and Marathas due to colonisation by Muslims and Marathas."

He spoke about how making 'paan' was a tradition and culture in every household in Cuttack.

The next session was on 'How to Write a Travel Book'. Travel writers Rajat Ubhaykar, Jubanashwa Mishra, and Chandras



WALKING BOOK FAIRS TRAVEL WRITING FESTIVAL: Eminent author Devdas Chhotray, CMC Commissioner Nikhil Pavan Kalyan with other dignitaries and audience

Choudhury participated in the session.

"The main objective of a travel writer is to offer an image and experience to those who have no travel experience," said Rajat.

The venue of the event shifted to Walking BookFairs Bhubaneswar in the evening.

The session here, titled 'Travellers of the World', was attended by Carlota Giral (Spain), Mariana Martin (Spain), Rodolphe Spooenberg (France), Eduardo Cardoso (Portugal), and Sofia Toraldo (Italy).

Carlota, a traveller, said, "Bhubaneswar and Cuttack are friendly destinations, and

I enjoyed my travel a lot in these cities."

Speaking about the event, student-writer Subransu Dash told **Orissa POST** that such a festival is a great place for young authors, and this should be organised frequently across the state.

Walking Bookfairs' other founder, Satabdi Mishra, said, "Walking Bookfairs has made its mark as India's first of its kind independent travel bookstore, which has toured more than 35,000 km across India to promote reading habits among people."

New Delhi: Actress Kritika Kamra, who played the role of a journalist in Anubhav Sinha directorial *Bheed*, in an interview revealed that it wasn't the kind of film which would create historical box office numbers.

In an interview, Kritika was asked if the failure of the film at the box office upset her, to which she said, "No, because I think the purpose,

Kritika: Cinema is not just to entertain

the intention behind the film was different. I don't think that even Anubhav sir made it thinking he would make Rs 300-400 crores. It's not that kind of a film. It's an important film and may be, I don't know it's just a guess, it was too soon for people to



revisit that traumatic time. It talks about realities of our society, and the differences in our society and that's what connected with me."

The *Bambai Meri*

Jaan actress explained why she chose to be a part of the hard-hitting drama. "I think any opportunity that I get as an artist to say something through my art, I will do it. I will be a part of it because it's larger than box office numbers. I didn't do the film expecting that or anything else."

She concluded by saying, "All cinemas are not just to entertain and make numbers. I know that it's a business but

films are also meant to be engaging and to make you think and it did that."

AGENCIES

Mumbai: Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu Sunday announced that she's now venturing in production and announced her production house, Tralala Moving Pictures, in collaboration with Hyderabad-based entertainment company Mandoa Media Works.

She expressed her vision for Tralala, stating, "Our aim is to provide a platform for filmmakers to tell stories that are meaningful, authentic, and universal. Tralala's main focus is to produce content representative of new age, expression, and thought. It's a nurturing space that invites and encourages stories reflecting the strength and complexity of our social fabric," she added.

Tralala Moving Pictures, born out of the creative synergy between Samantha and Mandoa Media Works, envisions itself as a platform that goes beyond conventional storytelling.

On the work front, Samantha is gearing up for the release of her show, *Citadel* opposite Varun Dhawan.

IAN S

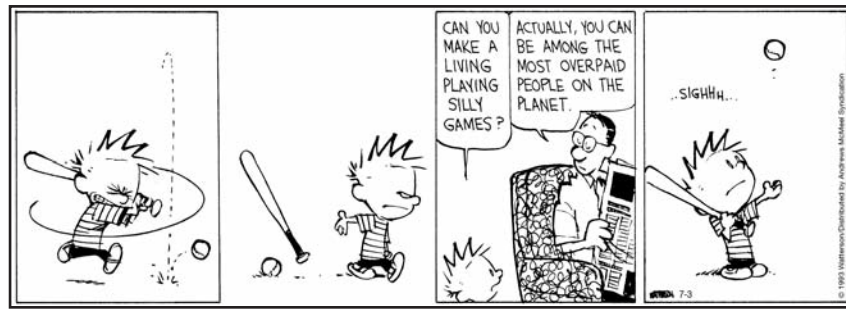


Samantha turns producer

PEANUTS



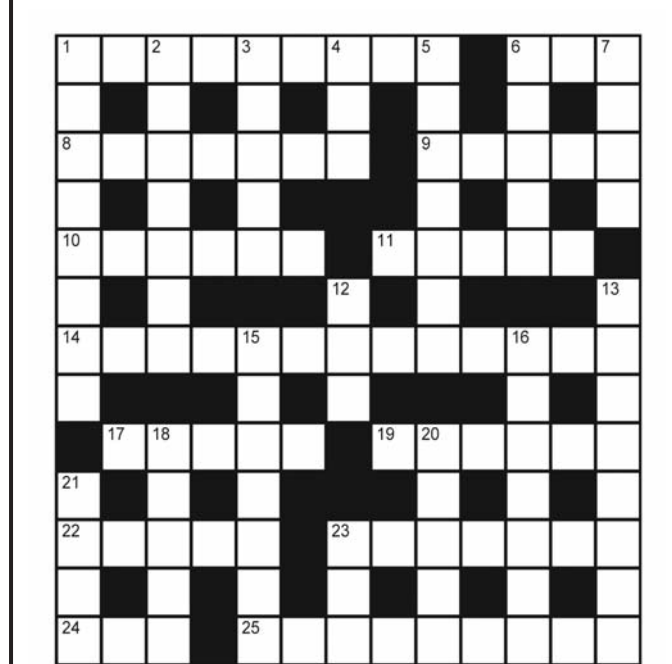
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



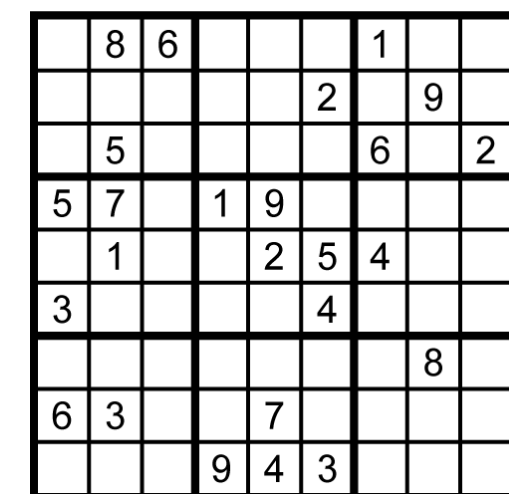
FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Flagrant
 - 6 Menagerie
 - 8 Type of drum
 - 9 Speck in the ocean
 - 10 Saws
 - 11 Secret store
 - 14 Food made from curds of soured skim milk (7,6)
 - 17 Small hill
 - 19 International agreement
 - 22 Fragrant oil
 - 23 Book character
 - 24 Future fish
 - 25 Pleasure
 - Down**
 - 1 Beguile
 - 2 Fabric leftover, usually
 - 3 Fairy tale figure
 - 4 Sculler's need
 - 5 Leafy vegetable
 - 6 Zero
 - 7 Word of honour
 - 12 Casbah
 - 13 Racetrack result, possibly (4,4)
 - 15 Loose, like a criminal (2,5)
 - 16 Hard rubber
 - 18 Saltpetre
 - 20 Platitudinous
 - 21 It'll grow on you
 - 23 "The ___" (Uris novel)

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.

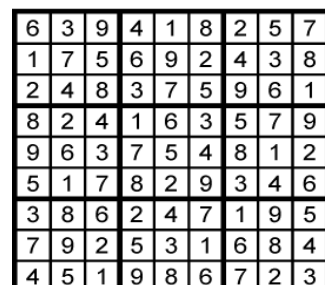


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

CREATIVE STROKES

Schoolchildren participating in a state-level drawing competition organised by Odisha State Council for Child Welfare at Unit 3 OAS Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Sunday



TTS stench reaches City outskirts



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The foul smell emanating from the Temporary Transit Station (TTS) near Sainik School under Gadakana mouza is no more confined to the neighbouring areas. It has now reached the outskirts of the Capital city as residents and commuters in Hanspal and Baliaanta areas are complaining of the overpowering reek.

The stink is palpable once you cross Satya Vihar Square and reach Kuakhai river bridge. The strong smell fills the wind coming from TTS side. Manjulata Sethy, a resident of Hanspal area, said, "I had earlier read in newspapers that Sainik School TTS is emitting foul smell due to lack of measures by the Bhubaneswar

Municipal Corporation (BMC). However, now, the stench has reached here too. It is more prominent during night."

Echoing similar concern, a passerby said the stink is felt more on Kuakhai river bridge and Hanspal Square. He also said that the civic body should address the issue as soon as possible to ensure that the image of the Smart City remains unharmed. Sources said the situation has come to this stage as tonnes of garbage are being dumped at the TTS for years together. The garbage hill has caused insurmountable problems for hundreds of locals in the nearby areas who have complained of skin diseases and nausea.

KULANGE REJECTS STINK ALLEGATION

Bhubaneswar: BMC Commissioner Vijay Amruta Kulange dismissed the foul smell emanating from Sainik School TTS and said that the civic body has stopped dumping waste at the facility since last month. He further stated that the bio-mining project undertaken since November 1 at the site has been working efficiently.

Citizens, rights activists and lawyers have expressed their resentment over the nagging problem that has caused health hazard. They also blamed the 'gross negligence and ineptitude' of the BMC which have deprived the citizens of their rights to clean and ambient air. Human rights activist Manoj Jena said, "Life is impossible without clean air. Since right to clean air is a natural and human right, it is the responsibility of every government to protect the right. The failure of the BMC

to ensure clean air to its citizens is a violation of human right. The Human Rights Commission can take strong action against the civic body if it fails to ensure the basic right of the citizens."

Stating that depriving people of their right to clean air is a criminal offence, lawyer Chadrnath Dani said, "Waste management has become a Herculean task for every state and the situation in Odisha is no different. However, it is the responsibility of the BMC to ensure proper garbage management so that people don't face difficulties. What is happening in the Capital city now is a clear violation of human rights. Air pollution due to mismanagement at TTS is spreading diseases in nearby localities. It is an offence to deprive citizens of clean and ambient air."

Similarly, Ranjit Behera of Gadakana area, said, "The citizens are facing pollution woes because of the negligence of the BMC authorities. Normally, an empty space on outskirts of the city is chosen for dumping garbage. However, we see a garbage mountain in the midst of a residential area. Although there has been continuous demand for shifting the dumping yard to elsewhere, no step has been taken in this direction."

Likewise, social activist Sushant Kumar Sahu said that the government should work for the welfare of its citizens, but here BMC helps in spreading diseases. "The civic body is acting as per its whims and fancies by trampling citizens' rights. This is an offence and an intense protest is needed against the apathy of the civic body."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



State gears up to protect Olive Ridley turtles

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The state government has claimed that it is taking steps to protect the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles and their eggs ahead of the nesting season of the reptiles.

Presiding over a high-powered committee (HPC) meeting on protection and conservation of Olive Ridley turtles, Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena said, "Like previous year, this year too, the state government is providing the necessary support in this regard."

Since November 2023, seasonal operations for the protection and conservation of Olive Ridley Turtles have started and the Central Monitoring Unit is functioning at the State Wildlife Headquarters. Like last year, this year also 66 patrolling camps (61 onshore and 5 offshore) will work with mobile phones and other facilities. Joint patrolling of the sea will be conducted with the help of Forest department, Indian Coast Guard, Fisheries department and Marine Police.

Funds have been allocated to the respective Coastal Forestry Divisions for the protection and conservation of Olive Ridley turtles.

High-speed boats have been deployed for protection and conservation of Olive Ridley sea turtles in Rajnagar Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhadrak Wildlife Sanctuary and Berhampur (T) Division. Babu Bali, Agarnasi, Nua Devi Nasi Island and Lugabandh among others will be the hotspots for sea traffic patrolling. District Magistrates and SPs of coastal districts have been directed to extend necessary co-operation to the divisional forest officers (DFOs) concerned as in previous years for the protec-



NESTING SEASON AHEAD

Seasonal operations for the protection and conservation of Olive Ridley Turtles have started and the Central Monitoring Unit is functioning at the State Wildlife Headquarters

Like last year, this year also 66 patrolling camps will work with mobile phones and other facilities. Joint patrolling of the sea will be conducted with the help of Forest department, Indian Coast Guard, Fisheries department and Marine Police

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Berhampur Divisions). Marine Police stationed at Talchua and Dhamara will provide sea-going vessels during the joint sea patrolling with Forest department.

Fisheries and Animal Resources (F&ARD) department informed about recent enhancement of compensation amount. The Director of Fisheries will ensure wide publicity of the enhanced compensation. Further, the department will take steps for early amendment of Odisha Marine Fishing Regulation (OMFR) Act for enhancement of fine as well.

Temporary berthing facilities for the Indian Coast Guard, Forest department and Fisheries Department for the seized vessels are to be provided by the three port authorities, free of charge.

Commissioner, Commerce and Transport department, will take steps for providing berthing facilities for the seized vessels.

Meanwhile, Defense Research Development Organisation (DRDO) authorities will ensure that there is no missile testing during the mass nesting period, which could affect the breeding and mass nesting of Olive Ridley turtles in Odisha.

Temperature to fall, dry weather prevails

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Minimum temperature in the state is likely to fall by 2-3° celsius over many parts of the state in the next two days, predicted the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here Sunday.

As throughout the day, dry weather prevailed across the state, dense to very dense fog occurred at one or two places over Sundargarh and Koraput, the weather agency informed.

The minimum temperatures observed a 'marked fall' at one or two places over districts of north Odisha, an 'appreciable fall' in one or two places over districts of interior Odisha and north coastal Odisha. However, there was no large change in temperature seen elsewhere in the state. For the Capital region, the weather agency predicted fog/mist in the morning and a mainly clear sky later, with a maximum and minimum temperature projection of around 28°C and 18°C respectively.



CURTAIN FALLS ON BOOK FAIR: Governor Raghubar Das lighting the inaugural lamp for the concluding ceremony of 5th Odisha State Book Fair - Akshyara- at Exhibition Ground in Bhubaneswar, Sunday, as Sujata Rout Karthikeyan, Secretary of Odia Language, Literature and Culture department (additional charge) among others look on

BJP women's wing plans stir over 'rising crimes'

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Sunday said the Mahila Morcha of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will launch a statewide agitation against the rising incidents of crimes against women in Odisha in coming days.

Inaugurating the extended Executive Committee meeting of BJP women's wing here Sunday, Pradhan alleged that as per the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report, crimes against women in Odisha is the highest in the country.

He said it has brought a bad name to Odisha and tarnished the image of the state. Pradhan said a 'corrupt and inefficient' government is in power in Odisha. He alleged that there are allegations of corruption, crimes, and scandals against several ministers, MLAs and leaders of the ruling party. Women leaders of the ruling



Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan alleged that as per the NCRB report, crimes against women in Odisha is the highest in the country

party have made the allegations against their party leadership.

Pradhan said Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the last nine years has taken several steps to empower women socially and politically.

He appealed to the women leaders of the party to strengthen the women's organisation in the state and take the lead to fulfill the vision of the Prime Minister for Vikasita Odisha and country.

The Union minister asked the Mahila Morcha leaders to appreciate people about various social welfare programmes launched by the Union government for

the benefit of the people. He said the women leaders will bring political change in the state.

Commenting on Pradhan's statement, BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said the Union minister is insulting the state by telling half truth to strengthen the willpower of his discouraged party workers.

He said, "As per the NCRB report, Uttar Pradesh, a BJP-ruled state, has the highest number of crimes against women, followed by Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal."

Startup funding: India slips to 4th spot

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 10: Making a dent in India's startup growth story, the country slipped to fourth position in the global ranking among the highest-funded geographies in 2023, as it recorded lowest funding in five years.

After grabbing the third spot globally in 2021 as well as in 2022, India ranked fourth behind the US, the UK and China this year, receiving only \$7 billion in total funding (till December 5), according to data compiled by global market intelligence platform Tracxn.

In the third quarter (Q3) this year, India even slipped to fifth position among the highest-funded countries - behind the US, the UK, China and France.

The third quarter of 2023 raised a total of \$1.5 billion, which is 30 per cent drop from Q2 2023 and a 54 per cent drop as compared to Q3 2022.

The last quarter (Q4) this year recorded the lowest funding of \$957 million to date, marking it the lowest-funded quarter since Q3 2016.



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The last quarter (Q4) this year recorded the lowest funding of \$957 million to date, marking it the lowest-funded quarter since Q3 2016

"India continues to experience the effects of the funding winter. Following an increase in funding in Q4 2022, India Tech is seeing a decline in funding every quarter, with a third consecutive drop in funding in Q3

2023 making it the least funded quarter in 2023 and also the least funded quarter in the last five years," the report showed.

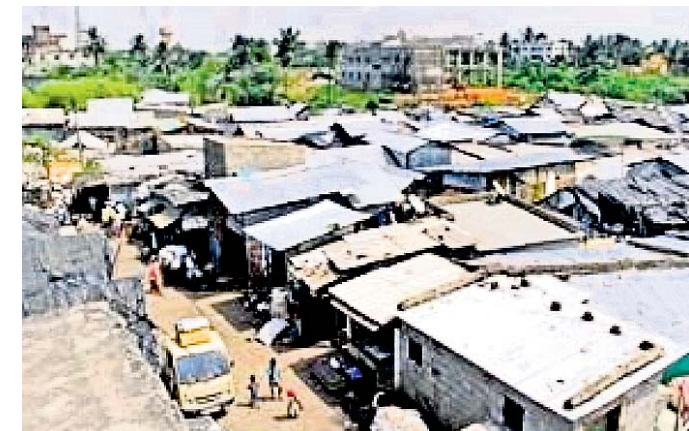
Despite the declining funding inflow, India has maintained its position in top 5 geographies in

terms of total funding this year. For 2023, the funding declined across all stages, with late-stage funding dropping over 73 per cent, followed by early-stage funding (70 per cent) and seed-stage funding (60 per cent).

The decline is primarily due to the biggest drop in late-stage funding, by over 73 per cent to \$4.2 billion in 2023 from \$15.6 billion in 2022. The number of \$100 million+ rounds recorded were only 17, dropping by 69 per cent compared to last year, said the report.

Land rights elude 35K families of Salia Sahi

FOREST RIGHTS ACT POSES HURDLE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF JAGA MISSION SCHEME IN CITY'S BIGGEST SLUM



that last year BMC undertook a road construction project that proposed to cut across through the slum demolishing around 365 houses. The administration however gave up to the stiff opposition of locals, claiming that such interference violates our rights under the Forest Rights Act, he added.

Official sources informed that, BMC prepared a list of those 365 families and promised them to rehabilitate in govt. quarters under state-announced schemes. However, in exchange it demanded lakh of rupees from the slum dwellers, it added.

It may be noted that the project concerned with linking Utkal Hospital road with Ekamra Kanan Botanical Garden, which also undertook the contentious 200 meter road that passed through Salia Sahi.

Notably, the matter was petitioned before the High Court by the slum committee, which then took an exception and came down heavily on the administration. It noted that rehabilitation must be the prior concern of the parties before eviction of the houses.

Echoing the concerns, Salia Sahi's Bablu Murmu said Adivasis are the sole owners of Salia Sahi land mass. Despite realising this, the government's failure to accord us with permanent land rights exposes their concerns for us, he added.

2006, he said the slum dwellers, mainly belonging to Scheduled Tribes, are accorded with special status for protection of the land.

The Act empowers the forest dwellers to access and use the forest resources in the manner that they were traditionally accustomed, to protect, conserve and manage forests and protect forest dwellers from unlawful evictions, he said.

Termining it as "double-standard", Salia Sahi Local Committee Secretary Jayadev Naik alleged that the civic body, to serve its self interest, can unlawfully evict houses for road construction. However, when it comes to granting permanent land rights under the scheme, they choose to evade responsibility, he added.

Deliberating further, he stated

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Around 35,000 odd families of City's Salia Sahi slum cluster are yet to get permanent land rights as per state government's Jaga Mission, which aims to transform the existing slums into liveable habitat by providing tenure security to households living in the urban areas.

Though the scheme has been implemented in the majority of slums across the City, Salia Sahi remains an exception.

Acknowledging the fact, BMC Deputy Commissioner Ramesh Jena said, "The case of Salia Sahi is an exception for the implementation of Jaga scheme as it comes under the purview of Forest Rights Act."

Invoking the Forest Right Act



TAKING PLEDGE: Students form a human chain on the occasion of World Human Rights Day organised by IHRE, Bharat Scout and Guide, Vaan Muhil and CSFHR at Unit III area of Bhubaneswar, Sunday

Odisha Startup Carnival kicks off in City

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: To provide startup founders mentoring and an opportunity for networking, second edition of the Odisha Startup Carnival was inaugurated at Kalabhoomi here, Sunday. The 14-day event offers a platform to stakeholders in the state's startup ecosystem to learn from each other's ways of achieving growth and scalability.

With support from Atal Innovation Mission of NITI Aayog, the AIC-Nalanda Institute of Technology Foundation organised the inaugural ceremony in collaboration with Fluid



Ventures, a SEBI-registered early-stage venture capital fund, and the Utkal Chamber of Commerce and Industry Limited (UCCIL).

The carnival was inaugurated by Brahma Mishra, president of Utkal Chamber of Commerce Limited, and Jayashree Mohanty, district governor and president of Luminous Infoways.

In his address, Mishra affirmed the industry's support for startups, recognizing them as the pivotal growth component in entrepreneurship-based economy. Mohanty emphasized the state's commitment to reaching new heights of excellence, taking adequate measures to support entrepreneurs from all sections of society.

Founder of Fluid Ventures Amit Singal said, "Odisha is evolving as one of the choicest destinations for startup investment by angels and VCs across India." Echoing similar notions, Durga Prasad Gouda, chief executive officer of AIC-Nalanda

said that Odisha Startup Carnival is poised to be a significant programme for all stakeholders in the startup ecosystem, facilitating startups to create successful and scalable ventures.

This edition of the Odisha Startup Carnival is expected to attract a substantial footfall, including industry experts, academia, startups, innovators, incubators, mentors, investors, and corporations from diverse fields and sectors across the nation.

As per information, interested startups can access relevant information and register for the programme at <https://osc.aicniti.in/>.



FUN AND FITNESS: Participants take part in 3rd edition of Puri Beach Marathon organised by Bhubaneswar Cycling and Adventure Club (BCAC) at Shamuka Beach in the pilgrim town, Sunday

Ruckus at man's second marriage

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: High drama unfolded at Dulla Devi Temple in Balakati area on the outskirts of Capital as a man's second marriage was underway, during which his first wife reached the venue.

According to reports, Jogesh Hati of Patapur village under Jankia police limits had married Ahalya Hati of Ganeshwarpur village under Erasama in 2010. The couple has a 12-year-old daughter and a three-year-old daughter.

Jogesh later developed relationship with another woman. While he was marrying the woman at the temple Sunday without the knowledge of his family members, his first wife Ahalya reached the venue along with their two daughters.

Ahalya created ruckus at the spot and thrashed her husband. On being informed, police reached the place and detained Jogesh at Balakati police outpost for questioning.

Probe demanded into corruption allegations

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 10: The recently concluded Baliyatra is now embroiled in a controversy and Barabati-Cuttack MLA Mohammed Moquim Sunday demanded an impartial probe into the corruption allegations.

While addressing a press conference, the lawmaker of Barabati-

Cuttack alleged that the Cuttack Municipality Corporation (CMC) organised musical programmes and laser shows by spending taxpayers' money.

"Two gates were put up and a provision of Rs 32 lakh was made in the tender. When I checked it with the person who constructed the gates, he told me that he had been paid Rs 6 lakh. The pay-

ment was made in cash. Another contractor, without participating in the tender received money from the CMC," he alleged.

"Our questions are meant for the CMC Mayor and the CMC Commissioner. You shortlisted the names through tender. The tender was awarded to the same person, who got the tender last year," he pointed out.

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Dreamscape-2023, annual function of Buxi Jagabandhu English Medium School (BJEM) will be held December 16, 17 and 18 in City, informed officials of the school which is celebrating its 50th year at a press meet here Sunday.

The school, which was the brain child of some committed local educationists and social activists, is now being managed by the Buxi Jagabandhu Education Society.

To commemorate the 50th year, celebrations have been taking place throughout the year in the school premises. SSEPD Minister Ashok Chandra Panda, who is also the chief patron of BJEM School Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee, had unveiled the year-long events calendar in April. The celebrations commenced with unveiling of the Golden Jubilee Logo and inauguration of a neon light school sign board.

In the press meet, Sandhya



Jena, principal of BJEM school, informed that for the annual function December 16, a flambeau will be brought from Barunei hills as a symbol of the bravery and tribute to the Paika community of Odisha and a lamp will be lighted during the inauguration of the statue of the brave soul of Odisha Buxi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Bhramarbar Ray Mohapatra on the opening day.

"The newly installed brass statue of the combatant will be

unveiled by the guests of the day. There is also a programme to felicitate the toppers of CBSE board examination from the school during the last 50 years whose achievements have added colourful feathers to our glory," said Jena.

Founding members of the school Khirod Kumar Nayak and family members of late Radha Mohan Mohanty will be felicitated to acknowledge their vision and yeoman's work in promoting the cause of education.

HIV DRUG MAY HELP PREVENT COVID-19 VARIANTS

Researchers have said that an HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) drug could stop many coronavirus diseases, including the SARS-CoV-2 variants when given to infected cells at the right concentration.

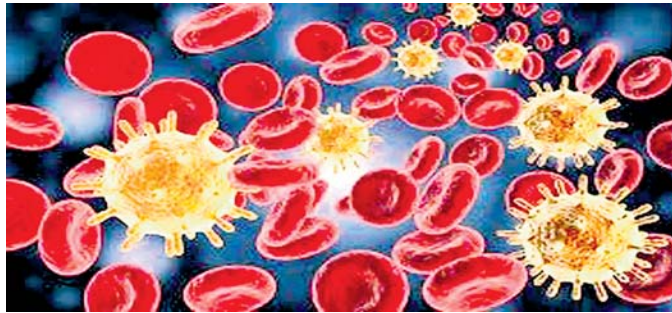
The researchers have previously shown that a booster drug called "cobicistat", which is normally used to reinforce the effect of anti-HIV drugs, could have antiviral properties against a SARS-CoV-2 variant circulating in Europe in early 2020.

In the study, published in the

journal Antiviral Research, the researchers investigated whether the anti-SARS-CoV-2 properties of cobicistat were maintained against the key variants of concern (VOCs) of SARS-CoV-2 and other coronaviruses, including Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV).

With a death rate of over 30 per cent, MERS-CoV circulates throughout the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia without a vaccine or specific treatment.

The researchers also compared cobicistat's effects to



those of ritonavir, a structurally similar molecule that is also one of the components of

Paxlovid, the current gold standard for antiviral treatment of SARS-CoV-2.

Using automated image analysis for screening and parallel comparison of the anti-coronavirus effects of cobicistat and ritonavir, the researchers discovered that cobicistat and ritonavir both act against all eight VOCs of SARS-CoV-2 tested as well as other human coronaviruses, including MERS-CoV.

"Our study shows that the CYP3A inhibitors ritonavir and, to a higher extent, cobicistat can be repurposed as broadly effective anti-coronavirus agents at concentrations potentially achiev-

able in vivo by adjusting currently approved dosing regimens," the researchers said.

The findings suggested that cobicistat is more effective than ritonavir. Both drugs demonstrated anti-coronavirus activity in vitro at well-tolerated doses that were higher than those currently used for anti-HIV drug booster activity and in Paxlovid.

Cobicistat and ritonavir both inhibited coronavirus replication when used at these higher doses, both alone and in combination with other drugs.

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Woman dies by suicide

POST NEWS NETWORK
Rupsa, Dec 10: A woman died by suicide after allegedly hanging herself inside her residence at Baharda village under Basta police limits in Balasore district Sunday. The deceased was identified as Sukanti Sethi, 52, wife of Kalicharan Sethi a resident of the same village. Sources said that family dispute for quite some time now led to the woman taking the extreme step. Family members rushed her to the Basta community health centre (CHC), but the doctors declared her dead on arrival. After being informed, police reached the hospital and seized the body. Police launched a probe after registering a case (No-59/23) of unnatural death. The post-mortem of the body was also conducted at Basta community health centre following which it was handed over to the family members.

BIKER KILLED IN HONEYBEE ATTACK

POST NEWS NETWORK
Dabugaon, Dec 10: A biker was killed Sunday after being attacked by a swarm of honeybees at Barimunda Square in Chatiguda village under this police limits in Nabarangpur district. The deceased was identified as Ratan Kalar, 55, of Bakdabeda village in the area. The incident occurred when Ratan was on his way to this town for some work. A tractor, laden with cement poles was



Ratan tried to speed away on his bike but the insects chased him and stung him. He got down from his bike at Barimunda Square and collapsed

coming from Dhodra and it dashed a beehive. The swarm of honeybees then attacked Ratan stinging him repeatedly. Ratan tried to speed away on his bike but the insects chased him and stung him. He got down from his bike at Barimunda Square and collapsed. Locals called an ambulance and rushed him to the Umerkote community health centre where doctors pronounced him dead on arrival.



CULTURE FEST: Artistes perform a traditional dance during a procession for 'Mondei' the district level cultural festival of Nabarangpur district which began, Sunday
OP PHOTO

Keonjhar farmers resort to distress sale

Paddy being sold at throwaway prices as mandis fail to open

POST NEWS NETWORK
Champua, Dec 10: Paddy cultivated under this block in Keonjhar district is being sold off to Jharkhand traders due to delay in opening of mandis. Farmers are resorting to distress sale to repay their loans and to prevent the paddy from rotting, sources said here Sunday. The farmers, who have worked round the clock to protect the paddy from elephants and pest attacks, have no option left. The delay in opening of mandis under the Large Areas Multipurpose Societies (LAMPS) scheme in this block has shattered their plans. Taking advantage of the situation, the paddy buyers in Jharkhand are exploiting the farmers and acquiring the product at throwaway prices. It means that the farmers are suffering huge losses. In spite of the deficit, farmers are selling the paddy as they have nowhere to go. Sources said that the Champua LAMPS had opened mandis at Rajia, Jamudalak, Karanjia, Rimuli and Kandra



Paddy being transported in vans to Jharkhand
OP PHOTO

LAST YEAR MSP OF PADDY WAS FIXED AT ₹2,183 PER QUINTAL BY THE ODISHA GOVERNMENT	FARMERS ARE SELLING PADDY TO BUYERS IN JHARKHAND AT ₹1,650 TO ₹1,700 PER QUINTAL
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FARMERS HAD HOPED THAT MANDIS WILL PROCURE 50,000 TO 60,000 QUINTALS OF PADDY, BUT IT HAS NOT HAPPENED

Jharkhand at ₹1,650 to ₹1,700 per quintal. Even though, the price is not according to their expectations, the farmers are getting rid of the produce. When contacted, Bibhuti Pradhan, MD of Champua LAMPS said the farmers who have registered their names can sell paddy after the mandis open in their respective areas. The mandis were expected to open in the first week of December but got delayed due to inclement weather and will open within December 15 to December 17. The farmers will soon be getting their tokens to sell their paddy and will not suffer any further losses, he added.

under the block last year. As a result, farmers could sell around 48,000 quintals of paddy as per the minimum support price (MSP) fixed by the Odisha government. This year, over 1,400 farmers have registered their names to sell paddy. They were hoping that the mandis will procure 50,000 to 60,000 quintals. However, it has not happened. As a result farmers now find themselves at crossroads and are unable to clear their loans or meet the expenses.

Moreover, many farmers whose only means of livelihood is paddy cultivation are finding it difficult to meet their family expenses. They are also constantly being harried by the money lenders. Clueless, the farmers have been forced to resort to distress sale of their harvest. The Odisha government has fixed the MSP of FAQ variety of paddy at ₹2,183 per quintal. However, the farmers are selling paddy to buyers from

CONGRESS TRYING TO TIE LOOSE ENDS IN SUNDARGARH

POST NEWS NETWORK
Rourkela, Dec 10: With the elections approaching and a new district Congress committee (DCC) being formed, the party is appearing active these days. New DCC chief Rashmi Ranjan Padhi, by his own admission, is trying to repair the house. There is also speculation that George Tirkey, a former Congressman, may make a comeback to the party. George had contested the last election on a Congress ticket but had lost. Currently, he is busy in his backyard, the Biramitrapur constituency and at times is making forays to this town to regain the voters' confidence. In fact, in the 2019 Assembly elections, both George and his son Rajesh had lost. It prompted George to leave the Congress. Then he almost stayed dormant for three years. However, sources in Congress and others indicated that George, in all likelihood, will rejoin the party if everything goes according to plan. Former IAS officer Bijaya Patnaik has made a couple of trips here to hold discussions with 'George Dada'.



When the new DCC was asked on this issue, Padhi said, "I am too small a fry to talk about this important development, but yes, I have also heard about it." George tried hard to get back to the BJD, but despite many assurances, doors to the party remained closed for him. A couple of months back, George had informed Orissa POST, "I am ready to join the BJD at any moment but I am yet to get the green signal from them." Meanwhile, Padhi is trying his best to bring back old-timers and also strengthen the party at all levels including the block. After his coronation, the suspension on Umesh Saran has been withdrawn. It should be stated here that Saran an MLA

ticket aspirant and former Ranji Trophy player Sabir Hussein were involved in an ugly fight in the Congress office here. For this Saran had been suspended. "Saran bhai is back in the Congress as the suspension has been lifted by PCC chief. Now I am trying to reorganise the block-level party structure. I am also in touch with old Congress persons who are staying away from politics," Padhi said. Padhi informed his next agenda would be to form the party's district committee. Early in 2024, the party will conduct a huge demonstration in front of the Rourkela Municipality Corporation. "We want to show the people that Congress is back with a bang," Padhi said.

Close shave for workers as pillar for bridge caves in

POST NEWS NETWORK
Nilagiri, Dec 10: A major casualty was averted when one of the pillars of an under-construction bridge belonging to the Anandapur barrage project caved in Sunday. Locals alleged that use of sub-standard materials had led to the collapse late Saturday night near Astia village in Shyamsundarpur panchayat of this block. They pointed out that if the pillar had caved in after the bridge had been opened, it could have resulted in serious tragedy. Reports said that a total of six pillars are being constructed for the bridge over a canal near Astia village. Several workers working at the site had a close shave as the pillar caved in. Notably, the bridge is being built at an expense of ₹1,200 crore. The incident occurred when the work-



ers were engaged in the construction of pillar number six. The Anandapur barrage project in Nilagiri sub-division of Balasore district aims at providing irrigation facilities to the farmers and helping in water conservation. After reports surfaced, Nilagiri MLA Sukant Kumar Nayak and local sarpanch Purusottam Sethy rushed to the spot and took stock of the situation, Sunday morning. The MLA alleged that the pillar collapsed as the company entrusted with construction is using inferior quality materials. He added that the company is

also not following the standard operating procedure. Nayak demanded that the Odisha government should order for an immediate probe and then take action against the wrongdoers. He also said steps should be taken to avoid recurrence of such incidents in the future. Sethy meanwhile alleged that construction is not being carried out as per the estimate and requirements. He pointed out that construction is not being done in the day and work only happens at night. He pointed out that the concrete used for the construction of the pillar is being prepared somewhere else and added that neither the engineer nor any technician remains present at the site. Efforts to contact the departmental officials for their response failed to yield any result as they did not respond to repeated calls.



FINANCIAL LITERACY: Students perform a skit at an outreach programme on financial literacy organised by the School of Economics under Gangadhar Meher University in Sambalpur, Sunday
OP PHOTO

Villagers warn of poll boycott over irrigation

POST NEWS NETWORK
Keonjhar, Dec 10: Villagers from three panchayats under Harichandanpur block in Keonjhar district have warned to boycott the upcoming general elections demanding implementation of Badakanijhari minor irrigation project. Recently, they staged a protest outside the district Collectorate here. The protesters, mostly comprising tribals of 12 villages under Hunda, Junga and Tentalapasi panchayats of Harichandanpur block, warned to boycott the upcoming polls if their demands are not met. Holding placards, they staged the protest demanding early start of the proposed Badakanijhari minor irrigation project on river Khediadiha nullah. They also submitted a memorandum to the district Collector Ashish Thakare address to the Chief Minister. According to the villagers, over 99 per cent of villagers in the locality are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. However, due to lack of irrigation facilities they had to depend on rain water for cultivation. In case of irregularity in rainfall they often face drought-like situations in their areas which results in crop loss. They have been demanding for an irrigation project in their areas since a long time. They are eager to start double crop on their farmlands to earn more. However, their plans have been hit due to lack of any irrigation facilities in their areas. The irrigation department conducted a survey and basing on their requirement had proposed to build a minor irrigation project (MIP) on Khediadiha nullah in the year 1997 at a plan outlay of ₹1.6 crore. The local irrigation department had submitted the proposal to the Chief Engineer at Bhubaneswar in a letter number 39/36, dated-5-8-1997. Additional District Magistrate Keonjhar Jadumani Mahala said that the irrigation department will be urged to resolve their demands.

Conservationists for declaring Mahendragiri as biosphere reserve

PNN & AGENCIES
Paralakhemundi, Dec 10: Conservationists have urged the Odisha government to declare Mahendragiri in Gajapati district as a biosphere reserve following the sighting of a Royal Bengal Tiger near the Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border, recently. The male tiger from Maharashtra's Bramhapuri division in Tadoba reached the border area of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh after travelling around 2,000 km covering four states. The tiger travelled through Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha - in search of a territory and mate. Forest department officials had earlier said. The tiger is now roaming around the border area of Gajapati and Rayagada districts,

said S Anand, divisional forest officer (DFO), Paralakhemundi. "The tiger may have explored new territory in the forest areas of Gajapati district. Now is the right time, for the government to declare the Mahendragiri forest area as a biosphere reserve to improve the habitat for tigers and to provide protection to big cats," said SN Patra, president of Odisha Environment Society (OES). Lala AK Singh, a tiger researcher, said the declaration of biosphere reserve was a good way to involve the people in the protection of animals and their habitat. "The recent sighting of a Royal Bengal Tiger is an additional qualifier as regards possible attraction for large carnivores," informed Singh. "It's a good sign that a tiger from Maharashtra is exploring



territory near Mahendragiri. Once Mahendragiri is declared as a biosphere reserve, more big cats might be attracted to the area," Singh added. Patra, a former professor, said the Odisha government in 2011 had constituted a committee to study its feasibility to make Mahendragiri a biosphere reserve. The committee had found that it had all the criteria to be named a biosphere reserve, he said. Mahendragiri, one of the critical mountain ecosystems in southern Odisha was declared as the bio-diversity heritage site by the state government in

The hill ecosystem includes 388 species of animals, 27 types of mammals, 165 varieties of birds, 23 species of snakes, 15 types of amphibians, three species of turtles, 19 species of lizards and 100 types of butterflies

November last year. The state bio-diversity board has identified about 1,348 species of plants including two of gymnosperms and 1,042 of angiosperms, 60 species of bryophytes, 53 of lichens and 72 of macro fungi in the hill. The hill ecosystem includes 388 species of animals, 27 species of mammals, 165 species of birds, 23 species of snakes, 15 species of amphibians, three species of turtles, 19 species of lizards, 100 species of butterflies and 36 species of moths. It also represents 40 per cent of reported higher plant species in the state, sources said. DFO, Paralakhemundi said they have already submitted a report to the government so that steps are taken to mark Mahendragiri as a biosphere reserve.

FOCUS GEOLOGY

A HIMALAYAN CHALLENGE



A number of disasters could have been avoided if local geology was understood or warnings from experts had been heeded

Silkyara Bend-Barkot tunnel collapsed trapping 41 construction workers inside. As everybody now knows, after a rescue operation that lasted 17 days and drew global attention, all 41 workers were safely rescued.

The tunnel cave-in has raised multiple questions about the reasons for the collapse. There have been many media reports on the collapse and often a recapitulation of earlier events. But most of them have made vague and generalised statements about the Himalayas being a 'young' and 'fragile' mountain chain and the terrain being 'unsuitable' for large infrastructure projects. Many media reports have also blamed 'tectonic faults' for the collapse. However, these are generalisations and such reports do not provide a good understanding of the geological setup which is extremely important in comprehending the reasons for such mishaps. An understanding of geology would offer an insight into what went wrong and help prevent such occurrences in future. So, in cases like the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel, a better approach is to look at the local geological picture rather than making general remarks about the fragility of the Himalayan-mountain chain, which doesn't really convey anything significant.

The tunnel passes through the Garhwal Himalaya, west of Uttarkashi. This region is characterised by multiple superimposed thrust faults. The most important among them is North Almora Thrust, which is known

for neo-tectonic activity and earthquakes. The North Almora Thrust itself is displaced by two steeply inclined, near vertical tear faults known as Koteswar and Barkot Faults which are close to Barkot. The broad lithology (general type of rocks) of this area consists mainly of metamorphic rocks such as phyllites and metavolcanic rocks. These rocks are known as the Chandpur Group in stratigraphy which is the branch of geology concerned with the order and relative position of strata and their relationship to the geological timescale. According to geologists, these metamorphic rocks are tightly folded, cut by faults at places, foliated and the foliation has a steep dip (38 to 550). It is not known for sure, whether the tunnel cuts across a major fault, but it probably passes through the tightly folded and deformed metamorphic rocks.

A geological report before the commencement of the Silkyara tunnel project has shown that the proposed tunnel could encounter weak rocks and adequate support structure would be needed to prop up the weak rocks. According to the report, the "rock type to be encountered along the diversion tunnels would be 20% good (Class 2), 50% fair (Class 3), 15% poor (Class 4) and 15% very poor (Class 4)." The report has also highlighted possibility of wedge failure or rotational failure in the tunnel. When rotational failure occurs, the failed surface will begin to move outwards and downwards. It occurs when

rotation by a slip surface causes the slope surface to curve.

This draws attention to the need and extreme importance of detailed geological investigations in such situations. A detailed geological mapping followed by several exploratory drill holes and detailed core-logs help in deciphering the lithology and structure of the location and safety/precautionary measures, if any, can be put in place. This is followed by RMR (Rock Mass Rating) classification of the rock types which assigns ratings to the rock mass based on properties such as the number of discontinuities (such as fractures) in the rock, spacing between discontinuities, nature of the fractures, groundwater, and rock quality designation (RQD) index. RMR classifications help in understanding the possible behaviour of the rock and then engineers can decide the kind of construction and precautionary measures that need to be put in place.

Speaking about the tunnel project, in an interview to a newspaper, Prof. Navin Juyal, a prominent and respected geologist, has said "First of all if the 4.5 km road tunnel project in the sensitive Himalayas region was taken up based on this geological report, it is insufficient. One cannot know the type of rocks by just three exploratory drillings. Further, the report clearly says there was no very good quality rock in the area where the tunnel was being built. Only 20% of rock is of good quality, the rest is fair and poor and very poor. The report admits that the area was not geologically stable."

This statement clearly points out and highlights the need for a meticulous geological survey, besides geological investigations, before undertaking any construction project in a terrain like the Himalayan-mountain chain. A number of such disasters could have been avoided if local geology was understood or warnings from experts had been heeded.

The writer is a noted geologist.

THE BILLION PRESS



Ashwin Pundalik

THE HIMALAYAS ARE YOUNG AND STILL UNDER THE MOUNTAIN FORMING PROCESS OR OROGENY, RESULTING IN STABILITY ISSUES AND COMPLEX GEOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Frequent landslides, the Kedarnath tragedy, a sinking Joshimath and the most recent Silkyara tunnel collapse are among the disasters that have kept the spotlight on the Himalayan region and the debate about the dangers of construction in this fragile mountain terrain. The Himalayas are young and still under the mountain forming process or orogeny, resulting in stability issues and complex geological conditions. A situation which in this case is also aggravated by earthquake occurrences as it is an active seismic zone. These have led to the question repeatedly being asked, "how safe is it" to construct here.

It is a situation and a question that India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan, countries located around these mountains, are constantly confronting. However, balanced with the need for roadways, tunnels, hydropower projects to harness the continuous water supply from perennial snow-fed rivers, there is no let-up in construction here.

Drawing attention to the hazards involved is the latest event, Silkyara. The Silkyara Bend-Barkot tunnel was being constructed as part of the Char Dham project, which is intended to connect the Char Dham pilgrimage sites with two-lane, all-weather paved roads. The tunnel located on the Yamunotri end of NH-134, connects Dharasu with Yamunotri. "The construction of this tunnel will provide all weather connectivity to Yamunotri, one of the dhams on the Chardham Yatra, encouraging regional socio-economic development, trade and tourism within the country," said a Press Information Bureau release announcing clearance of the Silkyara Bend-Barkot tunnel by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the PM in February 2018. The tunnel was approved as part of the Chardham Mahamarg Paryojana, the PIB release said. The little over 4.5km long tunnel shortens the route by about 20 km and travel time by about an hour. On November 12 while work was in progress a section of the

Hidden nature is secret God.

SRI AUROBINDO



Putin Again

Surrounded by decorated soldiers and mothers of fallen soldiers, Russia's Vladimir Putin announced that he will run for President again in March 2024 but it came as no surprise to anyone. "I will not hide that I have had different thoughts at different times but it is now time to make a decision. I will run for the post of president," Putin told the gathering of soldiers who wanted him to contest for a record fifth term.

According to the independent pollster Levada Center, Putin has about 80 per cent approval rating among Russians. Whether this support comes from the heart or reflects submission to a despot known for his ruthless crackdown on the slightest opposition, remains unanswered. Whatever the case, Putin is unlikely to face any opposition during the vote.

All of us recollect the short-lived rebellion he faced from the mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin. Though it led to widespread speculation that Putin could be losing his grip, he came out unscathed. Prigozhin's death in a mysterious plane crash two months later reinforced the view that Putin is absolutely at the helm.

Putin has twice used his influence to amend the constitution to ensure he could stay in power until he's in his mid-80s. He is already the longest-serving Kremlin leader since the Soviet dictator Josef Stalin. In 2008, he withdrew from presidency to become prime minister due to the term limits but continued to call the shots while his close aide Dmitry Medvedev served as a rubberstamp president. Presidential terms were then extended to six years from four. Another bundle of amendments pushed by Putin during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 stipulated that the count for two consecutive presidential terms will begin in 2024.

As regards the challenges Putin faces, after close to two years of war, Russia's forces control a mere sixth of Ukrainian territory, while the conflict has turned into a war of attrition. Putin appears to believe that time will be on his side in case Donald Trump returns to the White House in next year's US presidential polls as the latter is expected to put a freeze on US funds and arms supply to Kyiv. Putin may likewise lead the war into a 'frozen conflict' in which Russia would attempt to keep Ukraine in a stranglehold by possessing the south and east of the country endlessly. Putin's decision to invade Ukraine badly affected his ties with the West. The White House mocked his announcement that he would run for re-election in 2024, suggesting that the result was anybody's guess. "Well, that's going to be one humdinger of a horse race, isn't it?" National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters when asked about Putin's attempt to extend his decades-long hold on power. In the meanwhile, Putin has moved closer to China and India as part of a drive to dismantle the 'unipolar world' order dominated by the US and build what he calls a 'multipolar world.' Besides, he is also cultivating relations with the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.

On the economic front, Putin faces a Herculean task of bringing his country out of the turmoil he has put Russia into. In the wake of Western sanctions and European Union restrictions on technology, Russia's economic output fell by 2.1 per cent last year, and is officially forecast to expand by 2.8 per cent this year. However, the growth is mostly due to heavy government spending on war-related sectors. The freefall of the ruble, which has lost a third of its value this year, has led to spiralling inflation, forcing the Russian Central Bank to raise key interest rate to a whopping 15 per cent.

No matter what the economic conditions of the masses, authoritarian leaders always whip up nationalist sentiments to garner popular support. That's exactly what Sergei Markov, a former Kremlin adviser, means when he says: "Putin is going to the polls as a military leader of a country at war."

By agreeing with soldiers, Putin managed to establish that he will be indispensable as Russia engages the West in its biggest confrontation since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

Down Or Out

The world is caught too inextricably in the stranglehold of petrol-fossil fuel – and dollar – American monetary influence – to get out of it so easily anytime soon. That is why all talks and conferences about controlling carbon emission or saving the planet from greenhouse gas effects have already put the fate of the earth hanging in the balance. The two week-long ongoing Conference of Parties (COP28) in Dubai is now grappling with the question of how far the international community can go to rein in producers of fossil fuel wreaking havoc on the climate. Time is running out and there is hardly any scope for resorting to verbal jugglery or taking ambivalent stand on limiting carbon emission to reach the 1.5 C increase ceiling. The UN climate chief Simon Stiell struck the right note when he warned that countries at COP28 climate talks need to stop posturing, aim high and agree on a way to end the fossil fuel era as we know it. Tension over the future of coal, oil and gas has come to the fore in the conference so far.

To begin with, the conference during the first week of its deliberations has already made a flurry of announcements. The UN climate chief categorically said all governments must give their negotiators clear marching orders. The world now needs the highest ambition, not point-scoring or lowest common denominator politics, he said. Examples of high-sounding rhetoric or clever wordplay are to be found in good measure. COP28's host country, the United Arab Emirate (UAE) said more than \$83 billion had been mobilised during the first five days of the event. US climate envoy John Kerry told the conference it had been "a pretty damn good week" so far, but that the pace of emissions cutting had to be accelerated. He signed off with such platitude as the US is going to make "the best effort to get the best agreement" so as to move as fast as possible.

The drift of the conference so far makes it clear that the fossil fuel industry has no intention to shut down their refinery or coal mines quietly. It is significant that its lobbyists are in the UAE in far greater numbers than those who attended UN climate talks earlier. One analysis counted 2,456 of them – nearly four times the number registered last year in Egypt. This shows how determined the proponents of fossil fuel are to protect their profits and dodge efforts by advocates of limiting carbon emission to phase out fossil fuel. Sultan Al Jaber, who holds the COP28 presidency and leads UAE's state oil company, recently tried to advance his theory that "no science" indicates that a phase-out of fossil fuel is what is going to achieve the 1.5 degree C target. Pressed to explain his indefensible position, he, however, later said the "phase-down and phase-out" of fossil fuel is inevitable. But it is for the nations at COP28 to decide.

The real battle that will be waged in the next few days is on what is to be stated on the progress towards the Paris goals, known as the global stocktake. The fossil fuel lobby in corporate and national sectors is reportedly trying hard to jettison the term "phasing out" that would signal the end of their business model and enormous profits. Surely, they would be the last to allow an energy transition that spells doom for them. Instead, as Sultan Al Jaber has already indicated, they would prefer the word "phasing down". The difference is between reducing carbon energy sources and getting rid of them entirely.

At the moment not a single G20 country has policies in place that are geared to achieving the target of keeping the temperature increase within the 1.5 degree C target. Climate change is affecting poor nations' development gains and without cash to adapt, such gains will be further eroded. But, finance flows to developing countries, according to the UN, are roughly a tenth of the \$340bn needed by 2030.

Climate scientists point out the emissions-cutting process advocated by COP is failing. Though the rate of increase has gone down, overall emissions are still going up with the current year feared to set a new record. Everyone hopes both industry and governments will get their act together and put the survival of the planet above their selfish profit motive.

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Digital payments key to climate resilience

Over the past 60 years, temperatures in Asia and the Pacific have increased faster than the global average. The region is home to six of the ten countries most affected by climate-related disasters, with rising temperatures disrupting food systems, damaging economies, and destabilising societies. My country, the Philippines, is a prime example. The increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events in the region underscore the urgent need to bolster our collective resilience. This fundamental task requires governments to allocate sufficient funding from their national budgets while mobilising private-sector contributions and development financing.

Forging multi-stakeholder partnerships and securing commitments for future action are at the top of the agenda at the COP28 in Dubai. The Philippine government, together with other emerging-market governments, has taken a leading role in the efforts to bolster climate finance by urging the international community to embrace the transformative potential of respon-

sible digital payments. This initiative aims to strengthen our collective ability to adapt to climate-induced shocks.

As an active member of the V20 Group – which represents the world's most climate-vulnerable countries – the Philippines has sounded the alarm about the threat climate change poses to payment systems, emphasising the urgent need for financial and technical support to adapt to the effects of climate change while pursuing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Since 2000, This fundamental task requires governments to allocate sufficient funding from their national budgets while mobilising private-sector contributions and development financing.

Innovation is critical to boosting resilience. Digital-payment systems offer governments an essential tool for addressing climate change, especially for aiding women who are disproportionately affected by it. During the COVID-19 pandemic, as millions of people were confined to

their homes and businesses were forced to shutter, digital payments emerged as a financial lifeline. These systems provided scalability, remote access, accountability, and rapid response capabilities, demonstrating the agility necessary to tackle a global health emergency.

In the Philippines, government initiatives like the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program and the Social Amelioration Program ensured that financial aid reached those who needed it most. The effectiveness of digital payments during the pandemic provides a useful model for building climate resilience, particularly in vulnerable communities. These technologies could be harnessed to create similar mechanisms for providing anticipatory funding and responding to climate-related crises. By investing in robust digital infrastructure, championing financial inclusion, and nurturing robust public-private partnerships, governments can lay the groundwork for resilient and adaptive social-protection systems. Such systems have been instrumental in managing crises

like COVID-19 and tackling the myriad economic and social challenges arising from climate change.

Digital financial services – including savings, loans, insurance, and payment products – are critical to helping vulnerable communities address climate-related challenges and thrive. The significance of digital payments in bolstering resilience and protecting vulnerable communities in the face of an escalating climate crisis cannot be overstated. But acknowledging this is merely the first step. COP28 provides an opportunity for governments, international organisations, and private companies to foster global cooperation.

Investing in digital-payment infrastructure and extending essential digital services to regions most affected by climate change could help mitigate the effects of extreme weather and transform despair into hope. The potential return – a more equitable and resilient future – is invaluable.

The writer is Secretary of Finance of the Philippines.

PROJECT SYNDICATE



Benjamin E. Diokno

SINCE 2000, EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS HAVE COST V20 COUNTRIES \$525 BILLION

Deepfake challenge

Sir, Technological advancements have brought many good changes in the world and helped humans to achieve many great feats. However, technology has always been a double-edged sword as it also opens up numerous opportunities for crimes and wrongdoings. Deepfake is a technological phenomenon that can be digitally manipulated to replace one person's likeness convincingly with that of another. Deepfakes are the manipulation of facial appearance through deep generative methods. Recently Deepfake gained a lot of attention as the world saw its potential -- this technology can help a lot of people commit different kinds of cybercrimes, intruding on personal space, faking identity, and many more. Many experts in this field have warned the world about the risks it has. The world now has a challenge. Global leaders and stakeholders need to frame international laws and guidelines for Deepfake to check future crimes. In India, specific criminal laws should be enforced to restrict online harassment and cybercrimes.

Deba Prasad Nayak, DHENKANAL

Keep promises

Sir, It has become a trend nowadays for newly elected parties coming to power to put their promises to reality as soon as the swearing in ceremony is over. Advertisements, bulletins and hoardings follow declaring that two or three of the parties' guarantees have been fulfilled within two days of assuming office. Some files also get cleared within a couple of days. Unfortunately, in most cases the ripples are felt for a few months and then we find most of the promises like monetary aid to women, LPG at a low price, free bus travel for women and children, support for farmers, government jobs for youth, medical insurances and so on remain unfulfilled. The public again starts queuing up with grievances and the scenario is back to square one. Meticulous planning on how to fulfil the promises made during election times, avoiding in-house party politics and a fair approach to mitigate the problems of the commoners can win the trust of the public which in a way helps the government to rule good and make the life of people better.

M Pradyu, KANNUR

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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Nitish to launch UP campaign with rally in Varanasi

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 10: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar will hold a public meeting in Rohaniya assembly segment which is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's parliamentary constituency Varanasi December 24 in the run-up to next year's Lok Sabha elections.

Bihar minister and Janata Dal (United) secretary (organisation) has Shrawan Kumar confirmed the programme.

Shrawan Kumar, along with some local leaders, visited Rohaniya on Saturday to finalise the venue for Nitish Kumar's rally. Party leaders and workers from the Purvanchal region will be present at the Rohaniya public meeting, which will be Nitish Kumar's first rally for the Lok Sabha elections.

In addition to Varanasi, the focus will be on Azamgarh, Pratapgarh, Prayagraj, Phulpur, Ambedkar Nagar and Mirzapur, Shrawan Kumar said.

Targeting the Congress, he said that some leaders of the (INDIA bloc) made mistakes due to which formulation of a strategy for the Lok Sabha election got a little delayed.

"Now we are making efforts to ensure that no further mistakes happen. We are going to prepare a concrete strategy for the Lok Sabha elections," he said.

Rohaniya is a Patel majority assembly constituency in



Varanasi. The community has played a decisive role in Rohaniya in every assembly election since 2012. That year, Anupriya Patel, currently a Union minister of state, won the Rohaniya assembly seat as a candidate of the united Apna Dal.

Rohaniya assembly election, Mahendra Singh Patel of the Samajwadi Party won the seat. In the 2017 assembly election, Surendra Narain Singh of the BJP was elected. In 2022, BJP ally Apna Dal (S) candidate Sunil Patel won the seat. The JD(U) leader said that after the recent assembly polls, no one party should now have any illusions about it being the only one wanting to defeat the BJP as others are also capable. Given the backdrop, Kumar's UP rallies would thus be interpreted as pre-poll posturing, both to keep the buzz about him contesting from the state alive as also to rattle the BJP, which looks fairly confident of another good performance in the state with 80 Lok Sabha seats.

Taking a dig at the ruling BJP, the Bihar Chief Minister alleged that caste and religion are on their agenda while "our agenda is brotherhood and love"

Docs turn mgmt students to improve health system

ABOUT 30 MID-LEVEL DOCTORS FROM UP PARTICIPATED IN THE THREE-PHASE TRAINING, AFTER WHICH THEY CAME UP WITH FEASIBLE SOLUTIONS THAT CAN FURTHER IMPROVE THE STATE'S HEALTH SYSTEM

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 10: Next time you visit a government hospital in Uttar Pradesh, there are chances of you spending less time in consulting your doctor. You will be guided towards the right OPD with footmarks and nominal boards that will be put up to guide you.

This was one of the key process innovations suggested by mid-level medical officers, including chief medical officers and chief medical superintendents during a unique management development programme initiated by the Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow, and Johns Hopkins University, the US, in collaboration with the State Institute of Health and Family Welfare.

About 30 mid-level doctors from UP participated in the three-phase training, after which they came up with feasible solutions that can further improve the state's health system.

The first cohort of doctors spent six days in person refresher training at IIML, where they learnt some didactic and practical lessons on systems thinking, problem-solving, managing quality, conflict management,

management functions, and effective communications by the management gurus. "The training catered to issues such as reducing maternity deaths and others. Participants were supposed to come up with the solutions using the training imparted to them in the first six days," said chairperson, management development programme (MDP), IIML Prof Nishant Uppal.

Principal secretary medical, health & family welfare, Partha Sarthi Sen Sharma said: "CMO and CMS require a different competencies like leadership, management and process change. This hybrid programme is helping us meet this need."



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PMAY-G benefits given to deceased persons: Audit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Dec 10: Providing of benefits under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) to deceased persons, payment of instalments to those ineligible to the scheme and full assistance paid against non-existing houses have been found during an audit exercise in 10 districts of Bihar, an official said Saturday.

Unrealistic geo-tagging of house locations and payment of instalments in wrong accounts are also among the discrepancies observed by teams of the accountant general (AG-Bihar) during the audit of the rural housing scheme in the state.

Based on the 'performance audit' report, state Rural Development Department Secretary N Saravana Kumar has recently asked all deputy development commissioners (DDCs) and officers concerned to ensure strict adherence to the guidelines of the Centre for implementing the programme. "Officers concerned must ensure



rum, full assistance paid against non-existing PMAY-G houses," said the letter, a copy of which is available with PTI. Commenting on the irregularities observed by the auditors, Bihar Rural Development Minister Sharvan Kumar said all these were old cases.

"The department has been taking strict action against all those who are involved in such practices. I have given strict instruction to the officials concerned to ensure strict adherence to the guidelines issued for the implementation of PMAY-G in the state," the minister told PTI.

He also claimed that the 'Mahagathbandhan' government under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has a "zero tolerance against corruption".

The minister accused the Centre of ignoring Bihar's request on the PMAY-G scheme. Sharvan Kumar claimed that Bihar, along with several other states, has not received any fresh targets from the Centre for 2018-19, 2022-23 and 2023-24.

FREE BUS RIDES FOR UP WOMEN DEMANDED



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra, Dec 10: After the claimed success of the Karnataka initiative, women in Uttar Pradesh are now urging the state government the facility of free bus rides in roadways buses.

In a memorandum addressed to the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, women activists said real empowerment and social safety would come once women moved out of their comfort zones and protected environment, for work or for sightseeing.

Padmini Iyer, of the 'River Connect Campaign', said: "In Karnataka, this experiment had proved a hit. Hordes of women were seen visiting religious shrines and tourist places. A big chunk of working-class women in the unorganised sector felt empowered as travelling expenses had come down substantially. More women out also meant better and safer security for all."

This bold initiative would send a powerful message about the government's commitment to gender equality, Iyer added.

Nidhi Pathak, a prominent BJP leader in the Taj city, said: "Women travelling by government buses in groups would feel secure and less vulnerable to harassment or violence. This step would help create a safer and more secure public transport system for all."

This will also significantly reduce the financial burden on families, as women have to spend a lot to commute to work, run errands, or visit family and friends. Free bus

Women's groups in Agra and Mathura have demanded free travel in Uttar Pradesh state roadways buses across the state

travel would increase productivity and allow women to participate in the "Vikas Yatra" of the party, Pathak added. Vatsala Prabhakar of the 'Mahila Shanti Sena' said: "Free bus travel across the state would economically benefit working class women and open more job opportunities. It was indeed the need of the hour."

Women activists said public transport should generally be free for all to reduce dependence on private vehicles. But to begin with, the Yogi government could allow free passage for students and women.

This will empower them and help reduce their monthly expenses.

Though it could add to the financial burden on the ex-chequer, the long-term benefits of this initiative would far outweigh the initial costs, as it would help improve the daily lives of women and contribute towards building a more equitable and inclusive society, social activists said. Jyoti, director of the 'Nriitya Jyoti Kathak Kendra' said: "A large number of women of the lower strata could not travel because the ticket rates were very high. Women from rural areas were particularly hit and felt constrained."

Lalu Yadav may play peacemaker for Cong

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, Dec 10: RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav may play the role of ambassador to smooth the ruffled feathers of Congress allies within the INDIA bloc following the Grand Old Party's losses in the three states that went to the polls last month.

The parties have been unhappy with the attitude of the Congress in the recently held five state Assembly elections. Leaders like Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, West Bengal CM Mamata Benerjee and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal have been miffed. Even Shiv Sena Uddhav Thackeray group is also not pleased with the approach of Congress as it went against the alliance norms and preferred solo fight.



A potter makes earthen stoves, to be used by devotees during their 'Kalpvas', ahead of the upcoming 'Magh Mela', in Prayagraj

Egos getting bigger than issues

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 10: Egos are getting bigger than issues and unity is torn apart by one-upmanship between the Samajwadi Party and the Congress, the two main constituents of the INDIA bloc in Uttar Pradesh.

SP spokesperson Fakhrul Hasan Chaand went on to say that given the political landscape in UP, the Congress only deserved two Lok Sabha seats - possibly Rae Bareilly and Amethi.

He mentioned that the Congress suffered defeat in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh due to its misguided decisions, weakening the unity of the INDIA bloc.

Hasan pointed out that this is the reason why the BJP is now eager to hold elections ahead of schedule.

Fakhrul Hasan explained that granting more seats would inadvertently assist the BJP and in order to defeat the BJP, the Congress should align itself with



the SP. Senior SP leader IP Singh took to social media platform X on Monday to accuse Priyanka Gandhi of having struck "a deal" with the BJP at the Centre and went on to explain in detail how her choices in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh have led to the BJP's victory and the Congress party's defeat.

A senior party functionary, known for his proximity to Akhilesh Yadav disclosed that SP would leave a maximum of five seats for the Congress.

However, he said that SP would remain a part of the Opposition bloc and would even attend the next meeting of the alliance.

Sonepur's famous animal fair losing its charm

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hajipur, Dec 10: The Asia-famous Sonepur animal fair held on the confluence of the Ganges and Gandak rivers is losing its sheen.

However, local people are demanding a national fair tag for this historic and mythological fair. The month-long fair, starting from Kartik Purnima, was inaugurated this year by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav November 25.

Major attractions for this month-long fair this year are underwater fish tunnels and modern swings. However, this year elephants are not there.

Earlier, the fair's attractions were horse racing and elephant bathing, but this year it has not been organised till now, much to the disappointment of people. Ajit Singh, resident of Hajipur and Danapur JNL College Professor, told IANS that earlier elephants and horses were the



main attractions of the tourists in Sonepur Fair, which is famous as an animal fair.

Due to various restrictions, entry of animals from other states was banned, he said. Earlier, precious Arabian horses from Kabul, Multan of Afghanistan were sold in the fair here. All breeds of horses used to be available in 'Ghoda Mandi' (horse market), and horse lovers used to come to

Sonepur to buy them. People interested in buying horses used to come from Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

If we dig into history, we will find that Mughal Emperor Akbar's chief commander Maharaja Man Singh had come to the Sonepur fair and purchased elephants and weapons for the royal army.

Maurya dynasty founder Chandragupta Maurya, Akbar

The fair is also known as 'Hari-Har Kshetra Mela', where the Hindu devotees come to take a dip at the confluence and offer prayers at Harihar Nath, the only temple in the world where Lord Shiva (Har) and Lord Vishnu (Hari), both the gods are seated together

Sonepur Fair in Bihar's Saran district, where until past few years one could had got everything ranging from needle to elephants, is now just being held to continue with the tradition

and Veer Kunwar Singh, the hero of the Gadar of 1857, had also purchased elephants from here. State Cooperative Minister Surendra Yadav said on an open forum that "due to the thinking of some people, the Sonepur fair is losing its sheen. A minister on condition of anonymity said that there is no dearth of people coming to set up their businesses and stalls at his event but those organising 'Maut Ka kuan' (well of death) and the- atres are given license after a long time."



People dressed as Santa Claus run during the St. Nicholas Run in Michendorf, Germany



Folk artists take part in a procession during the inauguration of the 'Namma Jatre' programme at Vidhana Soudha in Bangalore



Anti-Terrorist Squad commandos outside Bihar CM Secretariat on the day of the 26th meeting of Eastern Zonal Council in Patna



Indian Navy and Kenyan military personnel upon INS Sumedha's arrival at Port Lamu, Kenya. The visit marks the maiden port call by any Indian Naval Ship at the recently developed Port in Kenya



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during her visit to Allipurduar in West Bengal



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann during the launch of doorstep delivery of services scheme in Ludhiana



Ali Mohammad Dar, an award-winning artisan, wraps wicker around a Kashmiri traditional pot to make 'Kangri' which is filled with hot embers to keep warm in the cold, at Charari Sharief in Budgam district, Jammu and Kashmir



Tibetan people celebrate the 37th anniversary of Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize win in Ahmedabad

national

of the day quote

Let us pledge not to sell our land to any suspected foreigner anymore. The government will bring in a law prohibiting the sale of land to outsiders in places such as Majuli, Barpeta and Batadrawa, centres of Vaishnavite culture in the state

Telangana, Protem Speaker Akbaruddin Owaisi -- 8 BJP MLAs boycott oath. Such public expression of hate makes me wonder where my country is heading! Is this the Mother of Democracy we publicly proclaim to be!

The next budget would have new provisions on natural farming with assured purchase by the state government to boost farmers' income

SHORT TAKES

Student ends life

Thane: A 19-year-old student of a private medical college allegedly committed suicide, claiming that he was harassed and ragged by three roommates at a hostel in Karjat city of Maharashtra's Raigad district, police said Sunday. Based on a complaint lodged by the deceased boy's father, the police have registered an offence under section 306 (abetment to suicide) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code against the three students, an official from Karjat police station said. The police are probing the incident and no arrests have been made so far, he said.

One dead, 7 hurt

Mumbai: A 40-year-old man was killed and seven other passengers injured after a private bus hit a trailer truck on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway in Maharashtra's Raigad district in the wee hours of Sunday, a police official said. Traffic movement on the expressway was affected for sometime after the accident, which took place at 1.40 am at Khopoli in Raigad when the bus was on way to Pune from Mumbai. The bus driver, Shirish Dhekale (43), lost control over the wheels following which the vehicle dashed against a trailer truck moving in front of it, the Raigad police official said. The second driver of the bus, identified as Raju Gawde, who was sitting next to Dhekale, died on the spot. The deceased hailed from Sangli.

Leopard killed

Surat: A leopard was run over by a goods train on the outskirts of Surat city in Gujarat on Sunday, an official said. The forest department was alerted about the incident around 6 am, and the carcass has been recovered and sent for post-mortem, in-charge divisional forest officer (DFO) Anand Kumar said. Leopard sightings are rare in the Amroli area of Surat city, where the incident occurred, but the big cats find their way into the locality from the forests of south Gujarat, he said. "We have decided to set up trap cameras to find out about their presence in the area," the officer said.

Man kills puppy

Bhopal: A man allegedly killed a puppy brutally in Madhya Pradesh's Guna district following which Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan termed it as an "act of barbarism" and assured strict action against the culprit. Chouhan's assurance came after Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia urged the CM to look into the matter.



The SP is of the view that whether we lose or win we want the faith in democracy to increase. These machines and results have created a feeling of distrust in the minds of the people. Maybe the technology could be right, but there is a feeling of distrust among people. So, we are of the view that voting should be held through ballot papers

AKHILESH YADAV | SP CHIEF

PM LAUDS TIES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday lauded the ties between India and South Korea as a journey of mutual respect, shared values and growing partnerships as diplomatic ties between the two countries marked the 50-year milestone



Gupkar parties hope for favourable verdict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 10: With the Supreme Court to pronounce its verdict Monday on the constitutional validity of the Centre's decision to abrogate controversial Article 370, several parties in Jammu and Kashmir expressed hope that the provision will be restored, while on the ground authorities have made "adequate" security arrangements.

The BJP said that there should not be any politics on the Supreme Court ruling and everyone should respect it. National Conference leader Omar Abdullah said his party will not disturb the peace in Jammu and Kashmir even in case of an adverse verdict from the Supreme Court on the petitions challenging the abrogation of Article 370 and will continue its fight in accordance with the law.

People's Democratic Party (PDP) president and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti said the court's verdict should be clear that the decision taken by the BJP-led central government was "illegal". The NC and PDP are part of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), also called the Gupkar Alliance, which was formed by parties in J-K to fight for the



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National Conference leader Omar Abdullah said his party will not disturb the peace in Jammu and Kashmir even in case of an adverse verdict from the Supreme Court on the petitions challenging the abrogation of Article 370 and will continue its fight in accordance with the law

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said the court's verdict should be clear that the decision taken by the BJP-led central government was "illegal"

restoration of Article 370.

Another former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad expressed hope that the Supreme Court will deliver a verdict in favour of the people. A slew of restrictions was placed in J-K and scores of leaders were detained or put under house arrest when Article 370 which gave special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was scrapped and J-K was bifurcated into Union territories

on August 5, 2019.

Despite apprehensions expressed by many parties about the aftermath, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had stressed that "not a drop of blood was shed" during the critical period. Scrapping Article 370 was among the core issues of BJP's agenda and had been consistently included in its election manifestos.

Omar Abdullah on Sunday said his party will continue its fight for the restoration of the

rights of people through peaceful means as laid down in the Constitution. "The Supreme Court has to give its verdict, let it. If we had to disturb the situation, we would have done it after 2019." However, we said it then and we reiterate it now that our fight will be peaceful and as per the Constitution, taking the help of the law to protect our rights and preserve our identity. What is wrong in it? Don't we have a right to say this in a democracy? Can't we raise objections in a democracy? If others can talk, why not us?" Omar said at a party convention at Rafiabad in Baramulla district.

Abdullah claimed that police had been summoning National Conference leaders to police stations since Saturday night and "intimidating" them. "The Supreme Court has not passed a verdict yet. How do you know what is the verdict? Maybe it is in our favour! Then what is the need to call my party colleagues to police stations... Allah willing, if the verdict goes against them (BJP), what will you do if they start writing against it on Facebook?" he asked. Abdullah said there was no justification to put curbs on National Conference leaders as they have always been votaries of peace.

INDIA bloc to meet in Delhi on December 19



The meeting is being held in the backdrop of the Congress' poor show in the just concluded Assembly elections, where it suffered humiliating defeats in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Evolving a "core positive agenda", seat sharing and a programme to hold joint rallies are among the main challenges before the opposition INDIA bloc that will be taken up at its next meeting in the national capital on December 19.

"The 4th meeting of the leaders of INDIA parties will be held on Tuesday December 19th, 2023 in New Delhi at 3 pm," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X Sunday. The parties intend to move forward with the unity theme - "Main Nahin, Hum" (We, Not Me) - as a counter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the meeting, a senior leader of the Congress said. The meeting is being held in the backdrop of the Congress' poor show in the just concluded assembly elections, where it suffered humiliating defeats in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, while the BJP asserted that people have affirmed their faith in "Modi's guarantees" and will re-elect his government in 2024.

The challenge before the opposition parties now is to come out with an alternative positive agenda to counter the BJP in

the next general elections, the leader said. Sources said during the meeting, the parties would chalk out plans on seat sharing, for holding joint election rallies and would evolve a common programme for them.

"The election results are not a rejection of issues that were raised in this poll campaign," the leader said on poll planks like caste census and restoration of Old Pension Scheme that have been raised by the opposition parties. He, however, admitted that the party would think out of the box to take on the BJP in 2024.

"Main Nahin, Hum" (We, Not Me) is the likely slogan that the opposition parties would work on to counter Modi. Sources add that the opposition alliance of the INDIA bloc is likely to take forward the issues of caste census, legal guarantee to MSP and social security for workers. "Evolving the core positive agenda for the INDIA bloc is the biggest challenge for the opposition parties that would help it take on the BJP," the leader said.

He added that the issues that dominated during the Bharat Jodo Yatra like "rising" economic inequality, social polarisation and political authoritarianism besides price rise and inflation are some issues that are likely to find resonance on the ground during the Lok Sabha polls.

These issues would become part of the common agenda of the opposition parties that will help the opposition alliance take on the BJP. The INDIA bloc would highlight 10 years under Manmohan Singh and whether the 10 years under PM Modi have brought any difference to the life of the common man, the leader said.

Karni Sena chief's killing: 3 arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Dec 10: The Jaipur police has arrested three men, including two shooters, for their alleged involvement in the Sukhdev Singh Gogamedi murder case after they were caught from Chandigarh in a joint operation conducted by the Rajasthan Police and the Delhi Police.

The accused, nabbed from outside a Chandigarh hotel on Saturday night, were brought to Jaipur amid tight security and taken to the Sodala police station. Jaipur Police Commissioner Biju George Joseph told a press conference here that the shooters -- Nitin Fauji and Rohit Rathore -- along with their accomplice Udhm Singh were held from sector 22 in Chandigarh.

Fauji, hailing from Haryana's Mahendragarh, is a lance naik in the Army. The Crime Branch of the Delhi Police and a special investigation team (SIT) of the Rajasthan Police, which was formed by the DGP, conducted the joint operation.

Fauji, along with Rathore and Naveen Shekhawat, went to the house of Gogamedi, the chief of the Shri Rashtriya Rajput Karni Sena, in Jaipur's Shyam Nagar area on December 5. After talking to him for a few minutes, the shooters opened fire at Gogamedi in his living room, leaving him dead. They also shot Shekhawat dead.

Gogamedi's private security guard sustained bullet injuries in the incident. The accused had gone to Gogamedi's house in a sports utility vehicle (SUV) that was driven by Shekhawat. While fleeing, they shot at a scooter driver and snatched the two-wheeler. Joseph said after the killings, the shooters went to Deedwana in a Rajasthan Roadways bus and took a taxi for Sujangarh, from where they went to Dharuhera in Haryana.



Tamil Nadu minister Udhayanidhi Stalin distributes relief material to the flood-affected people after heavy rainfall in the aftermath of cyclone Michaung, at Porur near Chennai

Akash declared Mayawati's heir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Dec 10: BSP chief Mayawati Sunday declared her nephew Akash Anand as her political successor, a party office-bearer said.

During an all-India meeting of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) here, she also asked party leaders and workers to strengthen the organisation ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, according to an official statement. It, however, did not have any mention of Anand being declared her successor.

"Akash has been declared the 'uttaradhikari' by Mayawati," Udayveer Singh, the BSP's Shahjahanpur district unit chief, told reporters. "He has been given the responsibility to strengthen the party organisation where it is weak all over the country, except in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand," Singh said.



Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati with her nephew Akash Anand arrives for a meeting of party's office bearers ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, at the party office in Lucknow, Sunday

He said Mayawati announced the decision during the all-India meeting of the BSP in Lucknow, which was attended by party leaders from across the country. "She said he (Anand) will be her political heir after her," Singh said. Confirming the development

AC mandatory in truck cabs from Oct 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: All new trucks manufactured on or after October 1, 2025, must be equipped with AC cabins for drivers, as the Road Transport and Highways Ministry has issued a notification for mandating air-conditioned truck cabs.

In a gazette notification, the ministry has said, "...The vehicles manufactured on or after October 1, 2025, shall be fitted with an air-conditioning system for the cabin of vehicles of N2 and N3 category".

The testing of the cabin fitted with an air-conditioning system shall be as per IS14618:2022, it added. In July, Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari said the draft notification to mandate the installation of air-conditioning systems in the cabins of trucks has been approved.

8 charred to death in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bareilly (UP), Dec 10: Eight people, including a child, were charred to death in their SUV after it was hit by an oncoming truck and caught fire in this Uttar Pradesh district, police said Sunday.

The driver of the SUV lost control of the vehicle after it suffered a tyre puncture. It jumped the barrier onto the other side of the road and was hit by the truck coming from the opposite direction, they said.

The accident occurred late on Saturday near the Dubhaura village in Bhojipura area on the Bareilly-Nainital Road, they added. By the time the police reached the spot, the SUV was engulfed by the flames, the police said. Superintendent of Police Sushil Chandrabhan confirmed the deaths of the eight people, including the child.



The rise and rise of Yogi

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's rising graph as the party's star campaigner has ruffled many feathers in the BJP. In the recently concluded assembly polls in five states, he drew unprecedented crowds at his public meetings. After Prime Minister Modi, Yogi was in huge demand as every candidate wanted him to address at least one public

meeting in the constituency. Those who travelled extensively in Rajasthan vouch that people throng in large numbers on their own to listen to him as he is seen as a saviour of the Hindus. In Rajasthan, he asked the crowd, "What would have happened to the killers of Kanhaiya had he been in UP?" The crowd roared, "Bulldozer and Goli". The "Bulldozer Baba" as Yogi is popularly known, has a winning record of almost 85% wherever he went to campaign.

Nitish's baffling saga continues

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar continues to behave in a manner which causes anxiety not only amongst his party colleagues but also in the INDIA partners. As stated in last week's column, his

statement in the State Assembly about women's education and population control made last month, brought out his wayward behaviour in public. But there are more stories of Nitish's forgetful behaviour. Once touted as the Opposition's joint Prime Ministerial candidate, Nitish Kumar seems to be losing the plot. He has become forgetful in his day-to-day interactions with colleagues and even at public foras.

Kejriwal in silent mode

Capital is agog with reports that the Enforcement Directorate may knock at the doors of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal anytime in January next year. He may be spared during the on-going Parliament's winter session. A cast-iron case has been weaved by the ED as one of the key accused in the liquor scam case,

Amit Katyal, has started singing and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh is also on the verge of cooperating with the agencies. The AAP has suffered a massive setback in the recently concluded Assembly polls where Kejriwal faced humiliating defeat in state after state. In Chhattisgarh, the AAP put up 77 candidates ending up getting merely 0.93%. In Madhya Pradesh also, Kejriwal along with his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Singh Mann campaigned extensively and ended up getting merely 0.54% votes.

2005 rule dug out to tame MPs

After the Mahua Moitra case surfaced, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar was quick to invoke the UPA era's 2005 Code of Conduct for Rajya Sabha MPs. The

Chairman of the Rajya Sabha invoked the Code of Conduct prohibiting MPs to take hospitality abroad from private persons/companies/foreign governments without bringing it to the notice/permission of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Rajya Sabha secretariat. The Code of Conduct rules were issued in 2005 but the same were never implemented due to the fragile nature of the coalition government of Dr Manmohan Singh. The rules asked MPs to inform both the MEA and the Union Home Ministry before accepting any invitation from foreign source and traveling abroad even on a personal trip. While the Rajya Sabha MPs are shocked over tightening of rules and procedures for foreign visits, the Lok Sabha secretariat is under pressure to implement similar rules for its 545 MPs. Surprisingly, the Lok Sabha has no such Code of Conduct for its MPs so far.

international

of the day quote

We pay tribute to and express our solidarity with Afghan human rights defenders, many of whom are paying a heavy price for seeking to uphold the fundamental tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: peace, justice and freedom

FIONA FRAZER | REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER

Our stand is very clear. Those who are involved in acts of sabotage or arson attacks, those who attacked police and killed them, are being dealt with on specific charges. We clearly reject the claim that there has been any crackdown against the opposition party

MOHAMMAD A ARAFAT | MEMBER OF THE PARL. OF B'DESH

Since October 7, the world has seen a sharp and worrying increase in hate, hate speech and hate crimes. I am reaching out to you, near or far, with a single, clear message: Hate has no place in our world

DENNIS FRANCIS | PRESIDENT, UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SHORT TAKES

Huge fire erupts at mini-refinery

Tehran: A huge fire broke out Sunday morning at an oil refinery in Iran's South Khorasan province, leading to the simultaneous explosion of several gas condensate reservoirs, the media reported. According to semi-official Tasnim news agency, the fire broke out at one of the reservoirs of the mini-refinery at 8:45 a.m. local time (0515 GMT). Xinhua news agency reported. When firefighters were trying to contain the blaze at the refinery belonging to the Azaran Sanaat Barsava company, it spread to other nearby reservoirs, causing them to explode simultaneously.

Three killed in shooting

Atlanta: A shooting in Atlanta killed three people and left one victim wounded Saturday evening, police said. The Atlanta Police Department said officers responded to an address on Peachtree Road NE in the city's Buckhead district Saturday. Police said three victims in their 20s were pronounced dead at the scene and the fourth was transported to a hospital. The shooting victim who survived was "alert, conscious and breathing", police said.

Quake rocks Indonesia

Jakarta: A 5.3 magnitude quake jolted West Papua, Indonesia Sunday, the GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences said. The quake that struck at 0449 GMT, was epicentred at 4.37 degrees south latitude and 140.58 degrees east longitude, Xinhua news agency reported.

Tornadoes leave 6 dead

Nashville (US): Severe storms that tore through central Tennessee killed six people Saturday and sent about two dozen to the hospital as homes and businesses were damaged in multiple cities. Three people, including a child, were killed after an apparent tornado struck Montgomery County north of Nashville near the Kentucky state line, county officials said in a news release. And the Nashville Emergency Operation Centre said in a post on a social media account that three people were killed by severe storms there.



A country cannot expect to be taken seriously on a global stage if neighbouring countries are upset with it

NAWAZ SHARIF | FORMER PAKISTAN PM

HK HOLDS FIRST COUNCIL POLLS

Residents went to the polls Sunday in Hong Kong's first district council elections since an electoral overhaul was implemented under Beijing's guidance of "patriots" administering the city, effectively shutting out all pro-democracy candidates



COP28 Sticking points remain on fossil fuels

A new draft agreement on global adaptation goals — which will determine how poor countries will brace themselves for climate change-fueled weather extremes like drought, heat and storms — was released

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, Dec 10: Negotiators have been urged to narrow down their options so they can agree on how to save Earth from disastrous levels of warming and help vulnerable societies adapt to weather extremes as the clock runs down on United Nations climate talks.

COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber told journalists Sunday that negotiators were "making good progress," just not fast enough. So he was borrowing from Arab culture and convening a majlis Sunday afternoon, a new format for talks where he was bringing ministers from all countries to sit together in a circle, more as a conversation. He begged them to leave their objections and talking points behind. Unlike most of the big group sessions, this one is not broadcast and closed to the public and media.

Wopke Hoekstra, the EU climate commissioner, repeated calls for a fossil fuel phase-out at the majlis. There were some signs negotiators were moving forward Sunday: A new draft agreement on global adaptation goals — which will determine how poor countries will brace themselves for climate change-fueled weather extremes like drought, heat and storms — was released. The new draft "presents the skeleton of what could be a reasonable framework" on how to adapt to climate change, said Ana Mulio Alvarez of cli-



Sticking points for the Global Stocktake — the part of the negotiations that assesses where the world is at with curbing warming and how countries can stick to climate goals — are along familiar lines

Some countries wanting to see strong language on phasing out the use of fossil fuels while others are hesitant to have forceful language on the issue because they want to continue to develop their oil, gas or coal industries

mate think tank E3G, but to be effective, adapting to climate change "requires developed countries to provide support to developing countries" to actually enact plans, which wasn't in the draft. Democratic US Sen Ed Markey from Massachusetts, acknowledged the Ukraine war boosted domestic natural gas production because "the LNG industry in the United States saw an opportunity to dramatically expand its footprint."

He added: "We cannot preach temperance from a bar stool. We cannot tell the rest of the world you should move toward a renewable energy future if we ourselves are spreading this LNG poison around the world."

Meanwhile, an analysis by the Paris-based International Energy Agency on Sunday found that the several pledges made at COP28 to move to clean energy — over a hundred countries promised to triple renewables and double energy efficiency and several oil and gas companies pledged to slash their methane emissions — were nowhere near what's needed to cap warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit)

since preindustrial times.

If countries and companies kept their promises, it would result in around four gigatonnes fewer of carbon pollution globally by 2030, the report said. But that's only about 30% of the "emissions gap" — the difference between how much the world is currently emitting and how much it can emit if the world is to meet its climate goals.

And that's only if countries and companies actually stick to their promises.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Bangladesh's special envoy for climate change, expressed doubt that the pledges made would be met. Lisa Fischer, program lead at E3G, said the oil and gas initiatives already announced "are just tinkering around the edges" of the climate problem.

Fischer and others worried that while countries seem to be warming up to language for a phase-out of fossil fuels, there is likely to be loophole language — the world "unabated" before fossil fuels — that leaves options for burning of oil and gas but somehow capturing the pollution, something that is tricky and expensive.

Egyptians vote for President

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cairo, Dec 10: Egyptians began voting Sunday in a presidential election in which President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi faces no serious challenger and is certain to win another term, keeping him in power until 2030.

The election has been overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Almost all Egyptians' attention has been on the war on their country's eastern borders and the suffering of Palestinian civilians in the coastal enclave.

The three-day vote, beginning Sunday, is also taking place amid a staggering economic crisis in Egypt, a country of 105 million people in which nearly a third live in poverty, according to official figures. The crisis stems from mismanagement of the economy but also from the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine, which rattled the global economy.

El-Sissi faces three other candidates: Farid Zahrán, head of the opposition Social Democratic Party; Abdel-Samad Yamama, chairman of Wafd Party; and Hazem Omar, head of the Republican People's Party.

An ambitious young presidential hopeful, Ahmed Altantawy, dropped out of the race after he failed to secure the required signatures from residents to secure his candidacy. He blamed his failure on what he said was harassment by security agencies of his campaign staff and supporters.

The vote runs for three days, starting Sunday, with a runoff scheduled for January 8-10 if no candidate secures more than 50 per cent of the vote, according to the National Election Authority, a judicial-chaired body that runs the electoral process. Egyptian expatriates cast their ballots December 1-3.

Ahead of the vote, the interior ministry, which oversees police forces, deployed thousands of troops across the country to secure the election.

Heavy fighting across Gaza

Israel has faced rising international outrage and calls for a permanent cease-fire after the killing of thousands of Palestinian civilians



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rafah (Gaza Strip), Dec 10: Heavy fighting raged overnight and into Sunday across Gaza, including in the devastated north, as Israel pressed ahead with its offensive after the US blocked the latest international push for a cease-fire and rushed more munitions to its close ally.

Nearly 85 per cent of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced within the besieged territory, where UN agencies say there is no safe place to flee.

The United States has lent vital support to the offensive once again in recent days, by vetoing United Nations Security Council efforts to end the fighting that enjoyed wide international support, and by pushing through an emergency sale of over USD 100 million worth of tank ammunition to Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanked US President Joe Biden for the "important ammunition for the continuation of the war", and for supporting Israel at the Security Council.

The US has pledged unwavering support for Israel's goal of crushing Hamas' military and governing abilities, and returning all the hostages captured in the October 7 attack that triggered the war. Hamas and

other Palestinian militants stormed into southern Israel that day, killing some 1,200 people and capturing around 240, over 100 of whom were released during a weeklong cease-fire late last month.

Netanyahu's office said Sunday that Hamas still has 117 hostages, as well as the remains of 20 people killed in captivity or during the October 7 attack. The militants hope to exchange them for large numbers of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

In response to the attack, Israel launched an air and ground war that has killed thousands of Palestinians, mostly civilians, and forced some 1.9 million people to flee their homes.

With only a trickle of aid allowed in, and delivery rendered impossible in much of the territory, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who invoked a rarely-used power last week to call for a cease-fire, said "we are facing a severe risk of collapse of the humanitarian system".

Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, told Israel's Channel 12 TV late Saturday that the US has set no deadline for Israel to achieve its goals of dismantling Hamas and returning all the hostages.

Residents in north of Gaza report some of war's heaviest fighting so far. Jordan says Israel aims to drive Palestinians out of Gaza.

SCS COLLISION

Philippines, China trade accusations

REUTERS

Beijing/Manila, Dec 10: The Philippines and China traded accusations Sunday over a collision of their vessels near a disputed shoal in the South China Sea as tensions over claims in the vital waterway escalate.

The Philippine coast guard accused China of firing water cannons and ramming resupply vessels and a coast guard ship, causing "serious engine damage" to one, while China's coast guard said the Philippine vessel intentionally rammed its ship. China claims almost the entire South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion of annual ship-borne commerce, including parts claimed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. The

Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 said China's claims had no legal basis.

Beijing and Manila have been playing cat-and-mouse around the uninhabited Second Thomas Shoal in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone when the Philippines deploys resupply missions for Filipino soldiers living aboard an aging warship deliberately run aground in 1999 to protect Manila's maritime claims. The shoal is part of what are known internationally as the Spratly Islands.

On Saturday, the Philippines accused China of "illegal and aggressive actions" by China for firing water cannon at a civilian-operated government fishing vessel, a move Beijing called legitimate "control measures".



Centuries-old Prambanan temple, a large compound consisting of 240 Hindu temples, on the outskirts of Yogyakarta, in Indonesia. The 10th-century temple, located approximately 17 kilometres northeast of Yogyakarta city, is considered Indonesia's largest Hindu temple

Iranians will prevail against rulers: Nobel Peace Prize winner

AGENCIES

Oslo, Dec 10: The Iranian people will ultimately overcome authoritarianism imposed by a government that has lost legitimacy and public support, Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi said from prison in a speech read by her children Sunday.

The Norwegian Nobel committee in October awarded the prize to Mohammadi, 51, for her non-violent fight "against oppression of women in Iran" and the promotion of human rights for all, in a rebuke to Tehran's theocratic leaders.

Her 17-year-old twins Kiana and Ali Rahmani collected the

prize, a gold medal and diploma, at a ceremony in Oslo's City Hall attended by several hundred guests. The prize includes a cheque for 11 million Swedish crowns (about \$1 million).

In her speech, sent from Iran's notorious Evin prison, Mohammadi said continued resistance and non-violence were the best strategies to bring about change.

The women's rights advocate is serving multiple sentences on charges including spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic after her last arrest in November 2021.

Mohammadi was symbolically represented on stage in Oslo by her portrait and an



Ali and Kiana Rahmani, children of Narges Mohammadi, attend the Nobel Peace Prize 2023 award ceremony

empty chair, highlighting that she is among only a handful of laureates to be prevented from

attending the ceremony since the award's 1901 inception.

She was awarded the prize

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ADVOCATE NARGES MOHAMMADI IN PRISON IN IRAN

SAYS MANDATORY HEADSCARF IS SYMBOL OF OPPRESSION

CHILDREN OF NOBEL LAUREATE READ SPEECH SENT FROM JAIL

MOHAMMADI IMPRISONED ON CHARGES INCLUDING SPREADING PROPAGANDA

just over a year following 22-year-old Mahsa Amini's death in the custody of Iranian morality police after allegedly violating rules related to the hijab, an Islamic headscarf.

Iranian authorities banned members of the late Mahsa

Amini's family from travelling to receive the European Union's top human rights prize on her behalf, a civil rights monitor reported. Amini's death while in police custody in 2022 sparked nationwide protests that rocked the Islamic Republic.

Amini's death unleashed years of pent-up anger among Iranians over issues ranging from economic misery and discrimination against ethnic minorities to stricter social and political controls.

Women, including schoolgirls, took off and burned hijabs, revolting against laws obliging women to cover their hair and wear loose-fitting clothes during nationwide protests that were put down with deadly force.

of the day quote

FY24 is also looking very promising. We are looking forward to a growth of 15 to 20 per cent (by value) as an overall company and of course, needless to say, profitability is also going to be good

SUNIL NAYYAR | MD, SONY INDIA

Indian industrial and manufacturing production is also expected, while consensus expects expansion. However, the outcome of the awaited Fed policy meeting will be pivotal in shaping market sentiments

VINOD NAIR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEOJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

Carbon leakage is the phenomenon of companies moving production to countries with weaker environmental regulations to avoid paying carbon prices in the EU. This objective could have been achieved by merely taxing imports from the EU firms, which have shifted production to other countries. However, the EU chose to tax all world imports through CBAM

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | CO-FOUNDER, GTRI

SHORT TAKES

Top firms' mcap up

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of seven of the 10 most valued firms climbed ₹3,04,477.25 crore last week, with HDFC Bank and LIC emerging as the biggest gainers amid an overall optimistic trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark rallied 2,344.41 points or 3.47 per cent. On Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 303.91 points, or 0.44 per cent, to hit its new peak of 69,825.60. In the ranking of top-10 firms, Reliance Industries Ltd retained the title of the most valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever Ltd, Bharti Airtel, ITC, State Bank of India, and Life Insurance Corporation of India.

Tata to hike prices

New Delhi: Tata Motors Sunday said it will hike prices of its commercial vehicles by up to 3 per cent from January 1, 2024, to offset the residual impact of the past input costs. The increase will be applicable across the range of commercial vehicles, Tata Motors said in a statement. Passenger vehicle makers such as Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai Motor India, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, Honda and Audi have also announced plans to increase vehicle prices in January.

₹7L-cr capex in 10 yrs: Adani aims to lead India's infra

GAUTAM ADANI DETAILS GREEN ELEMENTS OF ₹7 LAKH CR INVESTMENT PLANNED ACROSS VERTICALS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Adani group will spend ₹7 lakh crore in capital expenditure over the next 10 years and its billionaire chairman Gautam Adani has shared some details of the plans which will further consolidate the conglomerate's position as infrastructure leader in India.

Adani in posts on X, formerly Twitter, has over the last few days detailed 'green' initiatives of the investment plan across some verticals of the apples-to-airport conglomerate.

"The portfolio recently announced its plan to invest over ₹7 lakh crore over the next 10 years to consolidate its preeminent position as the largest infrastructure player in India," Adani Energy Solutions said in

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

Sebi mulls tweaks in debt mkt

The market regulator mulls 'fast track' public issuance of debt securities to increase participation of non-institutional investors

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 10: To deepen the bond market, Sebi is looking to introduce the concept of 'fast track' public issuance for debt securities and further reduce the face value of debt securities, including non-convertible debentures, issued on a private placement basis to ₹10,000 from ₹1 lakh at present.

If implemented, the move would also promote ease of doing business.

"The main intention of a fast track public issuance of debt securities is to facilitate frequent issuers with a consistent track record, to make public issues of debt securities with reduced time, cost and effort," Sebi said in its consultation paper.

To further enhance the participation of the non-institutional investors in the corporate bond market, Sebi has "proposed to permit issuers to launch NCDs (non-convertible debentures) or NCRPS (non-convertible redeemable preference shares) with the face value of ₹10,000".

However, in such cases, the



Sebi may cut the face value of debt securities, including NCDs issued on a private placement basis to ₹10,000 from present ₹1 lakh

issuer should appoint a merchant banker who would carry out due diligence for issuance of such privately placed NCDs and NCRPS and disclosure requirements in the private placement memorandum, Sebi said.

Further, such debt securities should be plain vanilla with a simple structure and should not have any credit enhancements or structured obligations, it added.

This came after Sebi in October 2022 cut the face value to ₹1 lakh from ₹10 lakh earlier. The decision along with the mainstreaming of Online Bond Platforms (OBPs) has helped in enhancing the participation of non-institutional investors in the bond market.

During the period from July to September 2023, it was observed that non-institutional investors subscribed to 4 per cent of the total amount raised as compared with the general average of less than 1 per cent.

Besides, the total volume of trades undertaken on the OBPs aggregates to around ₹333 crore by 1974 users (investors), Sebi noted.

Further, the regulator has suggested the requirement of appointment of a merchant banker in case of issuance of Securitised Debt Instruments (SDIs) at a face value of ₹10,000. Sebi suggested that instead of inserting the audited financials for the last three financial years and Stub period financials in the offer document, the same should be allowed to be provided as a QR code scanning which opens the web link to the financials on the issuer's website.

Further, details of certain information required for the current year such as Related Party Transactions (RPTs), and remuneration of directors among others to be specified as required up to the latest quarter. Also, Sebi has suggested that record dates should be standardized 15

turned the situation in India's favour," Vijayakumar said.

Globally, the US Federal Reserve signalled potential rate cuts starting from the first quarter of next year, indicating a shift away from the high-interest rate environment. This change led to the weakening of the US dollar against other currencies, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Moreover, the decrease in US Treasury Bond yields has prompted foreign investors to re-evaluate investing in Indian equity markets, considering its improving risk-return profile, he added.

In terms of sector, FPIs have turned buyers into leading banks where they have been sellers. Large caps in segments like IT, telecom, automobiles and capital goods are also witnessing buying.

With regards to bonds, the debt market attracted ₹5,506 crore during the period under review. This came after receiving a six-year high inflow of ₹14,860 crore in November and ₹6,381 crore in October, data showed.

APPLE'S BIG INDIA AMBITIONS

Apple and its suppliers aim to build more than 50 million iPhones in India each year, within the next two-to-three years, with additional tens of millions of units planned thereafter, reports said



Power consumption rises 9% in April-Nov

POWER CONSUMPTION IN THE ENTIRE FISCAL 2022-23 WAS 1,504.26 BU, HIGHER THAN 1,374.02 BU WITNESSED IN 2021-22 FINANCIAL YEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Power consumption has increased by nearly nine per cent to 1,099.90 billion units (BU) in the country during April-November this fiscal compared to the same period a year ago, showing a surge in economic activities.

The power consumption in the country was 1,010.20 BU in April-November 2022-23, higher than 916.52 BU recorded in the same period of 2021-22.

Industry experts said that around nine per cent growth in power consumption in the first eight months of this fiscal year shows buoyancy in the economy

The power ministry had estimated the country's electricity demand to touch 229 GW during summer. The demand did not reach the projected level in April-July due to unseasonal rain.

The peak demand, however, touched a new high of 224.1 GW in June before dropping to 209.03 GW in July. Peak demand touched 238.82 GW in August. In September this year, it was at a record high of 243.27 GW. The



peak demand was 222.16 GW in October and 204.86 GW in November this year.

According to experts, power consumption was affected in March, April, May, and June this year due to widespread rainfall.

They said power consumption grew in August, September, and October, mainly due to humid weather conditions and also perk up in industrial activities due to the effect of festive rush.

Earlier this week, Union Power Minister R K Singh had told Lok Sabha in a written reply that the power demand has gone up by 50.8 per cent in energy terms from 2013-14 to 2022-23. The peak power demand has gone up from 136 GW in 2013-14 to 243 GW in September 2023, he informed the House.

"We have been able to meet the increase in demand because we added 194 GW of capacity between 2014 to 2023," he had explained.

COAL IMPORT PLUNGES 4% IN APR-OCT PERIOD



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: India's coal imports dropped 4.2 per cent to 148.13 Million Tonne (MT) in the April-October period of the ongoing financial year.

The country's coal imports were 154.72 MT in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

During the April-October period, non-coking coal imports were 94.53 MT, lower than 104.41 MT imported during the same period last year, according to the data of mjunction services ltd, a B2B e-commerce company.

Coking coal imports were at 33.74 MT during the first seven months of the ongoing financial year, slightly up against 32.74

MT in the year-ago period.

Imports in October stood at roughly 23.59 MT against 19.04 MT in October last fiscal, as per the data.

Of the total imports in October, inbound shipments of non-coking coal stood at 16.88 MT, against 11.69 MT imported in October last year.

Coking coal imports stood at 4.31 MT, against 4.69 MT imported in October last financial year.

"There was an increase in volumes as the buyers took fresh positions. Several utility tenders were issued, amid lower inventories at plants and the Centre's directive on imports for blends," mjunction MD & CEO Vinaya Varma said.

Affordability levels to acquire homes hit in last 2 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: The rise in housing prices and mortgage rates have impacted affordability levels to buy homes in the last two years across seven major cities but it may improve next year due to a likely reduction in repo rate, according to JLL India.

The improvement in affordability levels would further boost housing sales, which have risen despite increases in property prices and interest rates on home loans.

The consultant Sunday released its 'Home Purchase Affordability Index' (HPAI), which signifies whether a household earning an average annual income (at an overall city level) is eligible for a housing loan on a property in the city at the prevailing market price.



"The rising repo rate in 2022 as the RBI reacted to the global recessionary and inflationary trends, plus a strong demand recovery spurring price hikes, worsened affordability in 2022," the report said.

In 2023, the consultant said that affordability levels are likely to marginally worsen or remain the same when compared to 2022. A stronger price increase has been countered by stagnancy in repo rate movement, declining inflation and relatively higher growth in household incomes, the consultant explained.

"In 2024, we are likely to see a renaissance with affordability levels expected to be on an improving trajectory as macro-economic fundamentals support a repo rate reversal and thereby interest rate reduction that could provide another fillip to the residential sales market," the report said.



- APSEZ India's largest seaport operator
- Adani making world's largest green energy park
- To install 75,000 EV charging stations by 2030

largest seaport operator in the country, with ports on both east and west coasts.

"Our dedication to protecting the environment is also reflected in our expanding mangrove plantations, aiming for a remarkable 5000 hectares by FY25. This is yet another step towards a greener future and further testament of our commitment to climate stewardship," he said.

This is alongside the fast-expanding renewable energy

business.

Sharing pictures of the massive construction work in Kuch deserts in Gujarat, Adani said his group is building "the world's largest green energy park".

"This monumental project, covering 726 sq km in the challenging Rann desert, is visible even from space. We will generate 30GW to power over 20 million homes. Also, just 150 km away, in our Karmabhoomi Mundra, we are creating one of the globe's most extensive and in-

The group is committed to plant 100 million trees by 2030, one of the most ambitious pledges by an Indian corporate globally. Already at 29 million, we continue to give our best for enhancing biodiversity, climate resilience, and rural livelihoods. Our goal: 37 million mangroves on India's coasts and 63 million inland trees

egrated renewable energy manufacturing ecosystems for solar and wind," he said.

"This marks a significant milestone in India's journey towards sustainable energy, underlining our commitment to the Solar Alliance and the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative."

Continuing on the green business, he said Adani Total Gas Ltd - the group's city gas firm -

is on a "massive expansion" with "CNG and piped natural gas, compressed biogas, and e-mobility."

ATGL retails CNG to automobiles and piped natural gas to households for cooking and industries across several cities in the country. Alongside this, it is setting up electric vehicle (EV) charging stations as well as building plants that will turn agri waste into gas that can be used in city gas operations.

"We are on target for installing 75,000 EV charging stations by 2030. All of our own 50 sites are now powered by rooftop solar panels. Our operations vehicle fleet, covering 37 million km yearly, completely switched from diesel to CNG," Adani said.

Adani group has in recent years ventured into newer businesses including data centres, cement, telecom and media.

On the cement business, he said Ambuja and ACC are leading a sustainable revolution in the cement industry.

Mandhana banking on bowlers

RCB GO FOR EXPERIENCED BOWLERS TO CHANGE THEIR FORTUNES IN 2ND EDITION OF WPL

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Dec 10: Captain of the Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) women's cricket team, Smriti Mandhana is hoping that veteran England pacer Kate Cross could complement Renuka Singh and fortify her team's bowling, particularly in the power play, in the second edition of the Women's Premier League (WPL) in 2024. RCB acquired Cross in the players' auction Saturday for ₹30 lakh, and the 32-year-old brings with her a rich experience of playing franchise cricket for teams like Brisbane Heat and Manchester Originals.

"We have Kate Cross now, and I think she will complement (pacer) Renuka well in the power play with both swinging the other way," said Mandhana in a release issued Sunday by RCB.

Mandhana also said the planning for the auction began after the first season only and they were keen to focus more on experienced bowlers who have bowled in Indian conditions. In the process RCB not only bagged players who are good with the ball, but also those who are skilful with the bat as well.

RCB picked promising domestic all-rounder Shubha Sathesh (₹10 lakh) before adding 2016 Women's Asia Cup-winner S Meghana (₹30 lakh) into the squad. Australian spin all-



rounders Georgia Wareham (₹40 lakh) and Sophie Molineux (₹30 lakh) were the other two foreign acquisitions of the franchise to complete a strong 18-

member squad.

"Bowling is definitely very important in T20s and a good bowling side win you competitions. This year we were looking

Vrinda to gift parents a car

Mumbai: Saturday turned into a red-letter day for Vrinda Dinesh having hit the WPL pay-dirt with a whopping ₹1.30 crore deal. She became Saturday the second-highest paid uncapped Indian player at the WPL auction after Kashvee Gautam, went to Gujarat Giants for ₹2 crore. Vrinda has many goals on the cricket field, but her first aim is to buy a luxury car for her parents. "Without my parents, I wouldn't be here today," Vrinda, who has been picked up by UP Warriorz said. "They are very happy for me. I will give my parents the luxury car they have always dreamed of. That is my first goal right now," said the batter. "Yes, certainly I will try to give my very best for my franchise, but at this moment the most important thing is happiness for my parents," she added.

to strengthen our spin unit. With Molineux and Wareham, the bowling looks very experienced. Plus we have the likes of Shreyanka (Patil) and also (Sophie) Devine and (Ellyse) Perry," Mandhana pointed out.

RCB had a poor outing during the inaugural WPL, finishing fourth in the five-team league and they failed to enter the play-offs. Mandhana is hoping that this time around, the bowlers will lead the team to success.

Ashwini-Tanisha bags 2nd Super 100 doubles title

3RD TITLE OF THE YEAR FOR INDIAN DUO WHO HAVE JOINED HANDS FOR 1ST TIME IN 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Dec 10: The Indian women's doubles pair of Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa secured their second Super 100 title here Sunday with a straight-game win over Chinese Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun and Yu Chien Hui at the Guwahati Masters badminton tournament. The second-seeded Indian combination, who finished runners-up at the Syed Modi International Super 300 tournament last week in Lucknow, beat the World No. 81 combination 21-13, 21-19 in a 40-minute final.

This was the third title for the Indian pair, who had clinched the Abu Dhabi Masters Super 100 and Nantes International Challenge this year. The Indian duo didn't face much resistance in the opening game as it led 6-2 and kept moving ahead, taking an 11-7 advantage at the interval. After resumption, Ashwini and Tanisha kept dominating the rallies to leave their opponents far behind.

The World No. 28 Indian pair again had a 4-1 lead which swelled to 12-6 in a jiffy but the Taiwanese combination led a fightback with five straight points to make it 11-12. Shuo and Chien drew parity at 16-16 and 19-19 but the Indians quelled



DEADLY DUO: Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa during the match Sunday at Guwahati

the challenge, sealing the issue with the required two points. Ashwini, 34, and 20-year-old Tanisha started playing together only in January this year and were part of India's Asian Games squad which competed in Hangzhou, China in September-October.

"It is indeed satisfying to win the third doubles title of the year," Ashwini, one of India's finest doubles exponents said after the game. "Tanisha and myself are comparatively new as a pair, hopefully we will continue to deliver the goods in the years to come," the 34-year-old Ashwini added.

Ashwini has enjoyed a lot of success with Jwala Gutta, winning the 2011 World Championships bronze and the gold and silver medals at the 2010 and 2014 Commonwealth

Games respectively. Ashwini and Jwala had also participated in the 2012 and 2016 Olympics in London and Rio de Janeiro but couldn't cross the group stage on both occasions.

After the 2016 Games, the duo parted ways and Ashwini forged an alliance with N Sikki Reddy. The pair won the 2018 CWG bronze medal, while Ashwini was also instrumental in guiding India to their first-ever mixed team gold in Gold Coast.

Once Ashwini and Sikki parted ways last year, the former started partnering Tanisha, who was born in Dubai. In fact, Tanisha represented Bahrain and won her first major BWF title at the 2016 Bahrain International Challenge. She moved to India in 2018 and started playing in the domestic circuit, representing Goa.

KISS boys and girls shine in Sub-Jr rugby



Bhubaneswar: Bhubaneswar: KISS boys' and girls' teams edged out Jajpur and hosts Mayurbhanj to win the titles at the VIIIth All Odisha Sub-junior Inter-District U-14 Touch Rugby 7's Championships, which concluded Sunday at Bholagadia Mini Stadium in Mayurbhanj. The boys' final was a close affair with KISS winning 15-10. However, the girls' summit clash was a one-way traffic with the KISS players thrashing Mayurbhanj 20-0. Earlier in the day, KISS and Jajpur had defeated Ganjam and Mayurbhanj by 25-5 and 10-5 respectively in the semifinals. In the last four matches of the girls event, KISS and Mayurbhanj defeated Kandhamal and Keonjhar 15-0 and 5-0 respectively. Keonjhar finished third beating Kandhamal 10-5.

Malket wins 6-Red snooker nationals

Chennai: Malket Singh emerged Saturday night as the new National 6-Red snooker men's champion, beating his RSPB colleague E Pandurangaiah in the final at the ongoing National Billiards and Snooker Championships here. Malket defeated Pandurangaiah 7-5 in a keenly-contested best-of-13 frames summit clash. Earlier, Malket had come up with a morale-boosting come-from-behind 6-5 triumph over favourite and 26-time IBSF world champion Pankaj Advani (PSPB) in the semifinals. Pandurangaiah came into the title round high on confidence after getting past a fancied Aditya Mehta (PSPB) 6-4 in the other semifinal. Advani in the first semifinal was leading 5-3 against Malket. However, the latter won the next three frames 59-0, 43-1, 67-13 to register the greatest upset in the event.

Game abandoned

Durban: India's desire to start the process of finding an ideal combination for the T20 World Cup 2024 suffered a minor dent as their first match against South Africa was abandoned without a ball being bowled after persistent rain here Sunday. Now, the 'Men in Blue' are left with just five T20Is - two more against the Proteas and three games against Afghanistan at home in January - ahead of next year's showpiece in the West Indies and the USA. In that context, India would have liked to make a head start to their search for a perfect blend at Kingsmead but rain put paid to those hopes temporarily. With the IPL 2024 preceding the T20 World Cup, the Indian think-tank will certainly bank on the league to identify the ideal 15 for the marquee event.

Pak colts exact sweet revenge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Dec 10: Exactly 57 days after their senior team had lost to India in the ODI World Cup, Pakistan juniors exacted sweet revenge defeating the Boys in Blue by eight wickets in a match of the U-19 Asia Cup here Sunday. India managed a mediocre 259 for nine in 50 overs, largely due to late surge by Sachin Dhas (58, 42b, 2x4, 3x6). Pakistan then rode on an unbeaten century by Azan Awais (105 n o, 130b, 10x4) to romp home easily.

When India batted, opener Adarsh Singh (62, 81b, 4x4, 1x6) and skipper Uday Saharan (60, 98b, 5x4) got half centuries but they failed to provide the acceleration the team needed. The two put on 93 runs for the third wicket, but needed 20 overs to do so.

For the winners, right-arm medium pacer Mohammed Zeeshan (4/46) shone with the ball and took wickets at regular intervals to stall India.

Pakistan romped home in just 47 overs with southpaw Azan anchoring the chase. He first added 110 runs for the second wicket with opener Shazaib Khan



Azan Awais is all pumped up after his century against India, Sunday

(63, 88b, 4x4, 3x6) and then put on an unbeaten 125 runs in just 19.1 overs with Saad Baig (68, 51b, 8x4, 1x6). Saharan used as many as seven bowlers but they didn't measure with only off-spinner Murugan Abhishek picking up the two wickets.

India will be playing its final group league match Tuesday against Nepal and need to win it in order to qualify for the semi-final while Pakistan with two wins from two games would have

to lose by a huge margin to Afghanistan in order for the latter to qualify. It shouldn't be a problem for India colts as Nepal aren't the toughest team to beat, having already lost both their encounters.

Brief scores: India 259/9 in 50 overs (Uday Saharan 60, Adarsh Singh 62, Sachin Dhas 58, Mohd Zeeshan 4/46) lost to Pakistan 263/2 in 47 overs (Azan Awais 105 n o, Saab Baig 68 n o) by eight wickets.

Spinners script conolation win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 10: Spinners Saika Ishaque (3/22) and Shreyanka Patil (3/19) bowled brilliantly before another youngster Amanjot Kaur displayed lot of composure to earn India a respectable five-wicket consolation victory over England in the third and final WT20I here on Sunday. England, however took the big prize, winning the series 2-1.

Chasing a target of 127, which got trickier, Smriti Mandhana anchored Indian chase with a scrappy run-a-ball 48 but it was Amanjot's boundaries (13 off four balls), including a streaky winning reverse sweep under pressure that got hosts past target with an over to spare. The other woman who shone with the bat was Jimimah Rodrigues (29).

India's victory was their first in last five matches, having last beaten England in September 2022, by eight wickets, at Derby. To be fair, England did play a second string team, resting four of their star performers. It was also India's first win at home against England since March 2018.

MAN CITY END WINLESS STREAK

ASTON VILLA STUN TITLE CONTENDERS ARSENAL WITH SOLITARY GOAL TRIUMPH



MOMENT OF ECSTASY: John McGinn (right) is over the moon after scoring against Arsenal as others join the celebrations

AGENCIES

London, Dec 10: Jack Grealish ensured Manchester City ended their four-game winless run as the Premier League champions survived a scare from Luton in their 2-1 victory Sunday. With star striker Erling Haaland absent due to injury, Pep Guardiola's side trailed to Elijah Adebayo's goal late in the first half at Kenilworth Road. But, after squandering a host of chances, Manchester City finally clicked into gear with two goals in three minutes after the break. Bernardo Silva equalised and

MO SALAH JOINS ELITE GROUP

London: Mohamed Salah scored his 200th Liverpool goal as Jurgen Klopp's team came from behind to beat 10-man Crystal Palace 2-1 in the Premier League. But it was substitute Harvey Elliott who struck Liverpool's winner with a long-range shot in the 91st minute at Selhurst Park. Salah had evened the score with a deflected shot in the 76th. He became the fifth Liverpool player to reach 200 for the club. In the process Salah became the 11th player to have scored 150 or more goals in the Premier League.

Grealish bagged the winner to give City a much-needed first victory in five league matches.

Aston Villa closed to within two points of the top of the Premier League as John

McGinn's goal helped them beat Saturday evening title rivals Arsenal 1-0. Unai Emery's men have now won 15 consecutive Premier Leagues at Villa Park and back-to-back victories over

Sports Odisha go down to East Bengal



A Sports Odisha player (in red) and an East Bengal footballer vie for the ball during the game played Sunday

POST NEWS NETWORK.

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Sports Odisha lost their first game of the Indian Women's League 2023-24 played here Sunday as they went down 0-2 to East Bengal FC at the Capitol Arena here. Goals from

Sribani Devi (second) and M Devi Kshetrimayui (58th) ensured an easy win for the visitors. Sports Odisha created a number of chances, but the inability to hit the target cost them dearly.

The East Bengal eves started the game in whirlwind fashion and took the lead early on with striker Sribani the back of the net with precision. Even though they started shakily, the Odisha team came into their own midway into the first. They made a

series of promising moves down the left flank, but could not convert. Captain Munica Minz had two shots at goal for Sports Odisha, but missed the target on both occasions.

The exchanges were equal in the second session, with both sides threatening to score. However, it was Kshetrimayui who struck mid-way in the second session to wrap up the game for the visitors. Sports Odisha had a chance to reduce the margin in the 75th minute, but again a player shot wide. Had the Odisha women taken the chances that came their way, it could have been a different story to tell.

Sports Odisha will next face Odisha FC at the Kalinga Stadium here, December 15.