

Ananya's choice
Ananya calls herself as 'hopeless romantic' and says she would opt for a love marriage when time comes

LEISURE | P2



Putin's vow
Putin says there would be no peace in Ukraine until Kremlin realises its goals

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Wholesale prices rise
Wholesale price index in November rose 0.26% from a year earlier, returning to positive territory after seven months on higher food prices

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Siblings shine
Sisters Rutuparna and Swetaparna enter doubles quarterfinals of BWF Super 100 in Cuttack

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CM distributes land deeds in 2 districts

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday distributed land deeds to displaced families of Hirakud Dam project in Jharsuguda and another irrigation project in Ganjam.

Describing it as a historic administrative decision, Patnaik said the government has ended long-pending problems of displaced people. The government action on resolving land issues of displaced families came after 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman VK Pandian met the affected people of Lakhanpur area in Jharsuguda August 20 and people of Sorada in Ganjam August 26 and 27. A total of 866 families of seven of the 18 displaced villages in Jharsuguda were distributed the land deeds by Patnaik through a virtual meeting. The displaced people of 11 more villages are in line to receive land pattas shortly, benefitting as many as 1,339 families.

The people of Jharsuguda had lost their land during the construction of the Hirakud reservoir in 1957. Similarly, land in 22 villages in Sorada of Ganjam had been recorded in the name of the Water Resources department way back in 1983.

FRIEND INDEED



A man carries a banana plant to feed an injured wild elephant near Nonoi village in Nagaon district of Assam, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

SHORT TAKES

HC nod to Mathura mosque survey

PRAYAGRAJ: The Allahabad High Court Thursday allowed a court-monitored survey of the Shahi Idgah adjoining the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple, an important milestone in the temple-mosque dispute in Mathura. The HC agreed to the appointment of an advocate commissioner to oversee the survey of the mosque premises, which the petitioners claim holds signs suggesting that it was a Hindu temple once. P9



2,366 Maha farmers died by suicide in '23

NAGPUR: As many as 2,366 farmers have died by suicide in Maharashtra between January and October this year, Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation Anil Bhaidas Patil informed the state Assembly Thursday. The Amravati revenue division reported the highest number of such deaths at 951, the minister said in a reply to a question asked by Congress legislator Kunal Patil.



CISF jawan found hanging in Rourkela

ROURKELA: The body of a CISF personnel was found hanging from a tree in the force's barracks in Sundargarh district Thursday, police said. The personnel, identified as Sahil Kumar, 31, a native of Jammu and Kashmir, was posted at the Rourkela Steel Plant, they said. He did not report to work Wednesday night. His colleagues also could not find him anywhere, they added.



14 out of House for questioning breach

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: As many as 14 Opposition MPs were suspended from Parliament for the remainder of the Winter Session for disrupting proceedings as the Lok Sabha security breach incident Wednesday snowballed into a major row, Thursday. While the government asked the Opposition not to 'politicise' the 'grave national issue', the Congress, TMC and others demanded a statement from the Home Minister on the issue.

While TMC's Derek O'Brien was suspended in Rajya Sabha, as many as 13 Opposition MPs, including nine from the Congress and DMK's Kanimozhi, were suspended from Lok Sabha for disrupting the proceedings. Amid Opposition protests, demanding a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the security breach incident, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi moved two resolutions separately for suspension of the MPs for disrupting the Lok Sabha proceedings.

The MPs had moved into the Well of the Lok Sabha raising slogans, questioning the security breach, and demanding a statement from the government.

While TN Prathapan, Hibi Eden, Jothimani, Ramya Haridas and Dean Kuriaikose, all from the Congress, were suspended when the first resolution was adopted,



Suspended Congress MP Hibi Eden (L) and others come out of the Parliament

8 personnel suspended

The Lok Sabha Secretariat has suspended eight personnel for the security breach in Parliament Wednesday, sources said Thursday. Those suspended have been identified as Rampal, Arvind, Vir Das, Ganesh, Anil, Pradeep, Vimit and Narendra.

4 charged under UAPA

Four persons arrested in connection with the security breach in Parliament have been charged under the anti-terror law UAPA besides sections of the IPC while key conspirator Lalit Mohan Jha was held Thursday evening, police sources said.

four Congress MPs - VK Sreekandan, Benny Behanan, Mohammed Jawaid and Manickam Tagore - along with PR Natarajan (CPI-M), Kanimozhi (DMK), K Subbarayan (CPD), SR Parthiban (DMK) and S Venkatesan (CPI-M) were suspended through the second resolution.

However, the Lok Sabha later withdrew the suspension of Parthiban as he was not present in the House and his name was included by mistake.

On such a 'grave national issue', no politics is expected to be done by anyone, Joshi said and called for rising above party politics. He informed the House that the Speaker

has written a letter to the Home Secretary for a high-level inquiry and the probe has already begun.

O'Brien was suspended from the Upper House by Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar for the remainder of the Winter Session for 'unruly behaviour' and 'misconduct'. Leader of the House Piyush Goyal moved a motion in this regard, which was passed by the House. O'Brien did not leave the House chambers even after suspension and the matter of his conduct was referred to the Privileges Committee of the House. The committee has been asked to submit a report on O'Brien's conduct in three months. **More P9**

Fresh I-T searches at BDPL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, Dec 14: Income Tax (I-T) officials Thursday resumed searches at the premises of Boudh Distillery Private Limited (BDPL) at Rambhikata under Harbhanga block of the district six days after making the highest-ever haul of ₹350 crore unaccounted cash from multiple concerns of the firm owned by Jharkhand Congress MP Dheeraj Sahu's family.

Although the I-T officials were tight-lipped about the recoveries made during Thursday searches, sources said it mainly pertained to additional documents on the transactions and sources of the proceeds which are currently being scrutinised with the help of cyber experts.

A team of Excise officials from Bhubaneswar Monday visited the plant premises and conducted verification at the distillery which is in operation now.

When contacted, Boudh Excise superintendent Krishna Nayak confirmed the development stating the Excise team from Bhubaneswar verified some documents in the plant and returned those before leaving.



I-T officials had raided the firm on charge of tax evasion December 6, 7 and 8 which led to the seizure of an unprecedented amount of cash stashed in several cupboards. Cash counting machines from nearby banks were deployed for valuation which continued for several days, creating a sensation across the country and triggered a political slugfest with Prime Minister Narendra Modi promising action against the hoarders.

Meanwhile, the BJP stepped up its attack on BJD.

BJP Odisha unit president Manmohan Samal said the ruling party must come clear about the ownership of the huge amount of cash. "It is impossible to hoard such a huge amount

of cash without the support and assistance of the state government," he said.

The BJD strongly rejected Samal's statement and accused him of making wild allegations.

BJD vice president Prasanna Acharya said that nobody has the guts to bring corruption charges against Naveen Patnaik and he is known across the country for honesty and integrity. In a separate press conference, BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said, "It seems that the Odisha BJP president has more facts compared to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Central ministers on the matter of I-T raid."

Mohanty said the PM December 8 and 12 had posted messages on X twice. "From PM's posts, it was clear that seized cash belonged to a Congress Rajya Sabha MP and Congress was responsible for it. We request Manmohan Babu that if he has more facts than their central leadership, then let him place it before them," Mohanty said.

The BJD spokesperson also said that from a raid in UP ₹500 crore cash and gold were found with a businessman.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No need for any discussion. As you see, security breach has changed nothing. Ours is still a STRONG govt

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	70514.20 ↑ 929.60
NIFTY	21182.70 ↑ 256.40
DOLLAR	83.34 ↓ ₹0.12
EURO	91.06 ↑ ₹1.02
GOLD	₹72,811 ↑ ₹1612
SILVER	₹ 75,119 ↑ ₹3587

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	28.2°C	27.2°C
Min Temp	15.5°C	15.5°C
Humidity	83%	86%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
MAINLY CLEAR SKY

DECADES ON, MEMORIES OF TINY M800 LINGER AS IT ALTERED PERSONAL MOBILITY IN INDIA

Iconic people's car completes 40-yr journey

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: When India was still under the licence raj, Maruti 800, or M800, as the car was popularly known, rolled out December 14, 1983. It was a witness to and a beneficiary of the eco-



nomical liberalisation when the country's economy was opened up in 1991. The tiny 'people's car', which revolutionised personal mobility and served as a link between the old and new journey that India undertook, turned 40 Thursday.

At the brand centre of Maruti Suzuki India's headquarters in South Delhi, among the many modern vehicles on display a tiny 40-year-old white car occupies a prominent space. It is no ordinary car but the first customer

unit of M800. M800 shook up then sleepy passenger vehicles market in India, challenging the duopoly of Hindustan Motor's Ambassador car and Premier Padmini. It soon became the symbol of aspiration for millions of middle class Indians.

From the handing over of the keys of the first unit to Harpal Singh through a lucky draw in 1983, the model went on to clock a cumulative 1 lakh units production in 1986-87. Equipped with far better technology from Suzuki compared to the other products that were available in the market then, M800 was accepted well among Indian customers and

soon crossed 5 lakh units cumulative production milestone in 1992-93. It then doubled it to 10 lakh units by 1996-97. M800 production crossed the cumulative mark of 20 lakh units in 2002-03 and 25 lakh units in 2005-06.

It reigned as the numero uno 'people's car' despite others like Tata Nano attempting to challenge it later on. However, nothing lasts forever. With newer technologies coming in, Maruti Suzuki India had to take the hard call of driving into the sunset. From January 18, 2014 the company stopped production of M800. The mention of M800 continues to evoke nostalgia among many to this day.

Maoists, security forces exchange fire in Boudh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar/Phulbani, Dec 14: An encounter took place between Maoists and security forces in Boudh district Thursday, a senior police officer said.

According to ADG (Operations) Dev Datta Singh, the encounter between the security personnel and the ultras started at about noon and continued till evening at Nalikumbha forest. However, there was no report of any injury.

The Maoists opened fire at the Special Operations Group (SOG) and district voluntary force (DVF) personnel while they were conducting a combing operation in the area.

Singh said the security personnel returned the fire leading to a gun battle. However, there was no report of any casualty so far and search operation was going on, the ADG said.

Meanwhile, a report from Phulbani said that two members of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) surrendered before police in the presence of DGP SK Bansal, who was on a tour to Kandhamal district.

The two Maoists, natives of



neighbouring Chhattishgarh, with several cases against them surrendered before the DGP. They were identified as Ranjit Naitam and Unga Poyam. The two had been associated with the Kandhamal-Kalahandi-Boudh-Nayagarh (KKBN) division of the Odisha State Committee of the CPI (Maoist) Association since 2017 and are involved in several violent activities, the DGP said.

Earlier in the day, Maoist posters opposing mining projects and companies in tribal-dominated regions were found at Mandibishi village in Rayagada district. The posters and banners appealed to local people to protest against the atrocities and punish company brokers.

MANIPUR VIOLENCE

Bodies of 64 victims handed over to kin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Dec 14: The bodies of 64 victims of the Manipur violence lying in morgues since ethnic clashes broke out in the state in May were handed over to their families under tight security, officials said here Thursday.

According to a report by Supreme Court-constituted committee to look into the violence, 175 deaths were reported during the clashes and 169 bodies identified. The bodies of 60 members of the Kuki community, which were kept in the JNIMS and RIMS hospitals here, were airlifted amid tight security arrangements put in place by the Manipur Police and the Army's Assam Rifles unit.

Four bodies of Meiteis that were lying at a morgue in Churachandpur, a district dominated by tribals, were also brought to Imphal and handed over to their families for the last rites, the officials said. In a statement, the Committee on Tribal Unity said the burial rites of the 'fallen KukiZo brethren' will be held Friday at the Martyr Cemetery at Phajiang.

leisure



TREVOR TO RETURN AS HOST OF GRAMMY FOR FOURTH TIME

Comedian and writer Trevor Noah will take centre stage for the fourth time at the Grammys. The former host of The Daily Show revealed on his podcast that he will return again as master of ceremonies for the 66th annual fete.

GRETA GERWIG NAMED CANNES JURY PRESIDENT

Director Greta Gerwig, who set the box-office on fire with her film *Barbie*, will preside over the jury of the 2024 Cannes Film Festival. *Barbie* just picked up nine Golden Globe nominations, reports *Variety*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today you will feel like a winner. All your goals will appear to you to be within reach. Any stress that you experience will soon be relieved. Ganesh says you will understand that even if you don't succeed, you have the affection and support of your near and dear ones.

TAURUS
Right from the morning you could be feeling lethargic, bored. Ganesh says that things could get worse on account of indifferent health. Be careful that you don't fall ill. Try not to take on either too many, or too heavy assignments today. As the hours go by, you will gradually feel more and more fresh and energetic.

GEMINI
You will feel all warm and fuzzy owing to the love, care and concern bestowed upon you by your near and dear ones. This is all owing to the good karma you have gathered in the past. You will be busy with finances in the evening, however, do not let money be a factor when it comes to family and relatives, says Ganesh.

CANCER
A restless or irritating mood is indicated. Keep you cool and be calm even in adverse circumstances, suggests Ganesh. If you do so, you will always succeed in life. It is difficult to wriggle out of adversity, if you have hot temper.

LEO
You will be in the mood to dig up old happenings and problems. You need to let go of the past and concentrate on your future. Academic pursuits will increase and love is likely to bloom. You need to bring a measure of understanding into your personal relationships, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Good luck will put you up against some friendly ghosts from some bygone era. The afternoon brings with it some wonderful marriage prospects and you will consider them with an open mind. However, Ganesh warns you to be extra careful when making decisions regarding advanced education.

LIBRA
Ganesh says there may be issues with your competitors playing around with your emotions and questioning your competency today, but you will be able to defeat them. In your professional field when you may have to face difficult times then these people will come forth to help you. Ganesh says that you have to be careful today as it is a decisive day filled with stress and tensions.

SCORPIO
A no-profit no-loss day in store for you, foresees Ganesh. There are chances that family may suffer from basic requirements at home front. Keep your dinner jacket or evening gown ready as your beloved is all set to invite you for a romantic, candle lit dinner.

SAGITTARIUS
Stress, tension, pressure are miles away from you today. Peace and harmony are likely to join you today. You have a wavering mind today. But, no issues as you have nothing serious to decide. You take up most of the things in good humour, says Ganesh. Keep smiling!

CAPRICORN
Generally, you are not conscious about your outer appearance. But, today is an exceptional day as you pay attention to your clothes, hair, shoes, and overall presentation of yourself. You are not making all the efforts just for the sake of it. You are getting ready for an important meeting, may be personal or professional, predicts Ganesh.

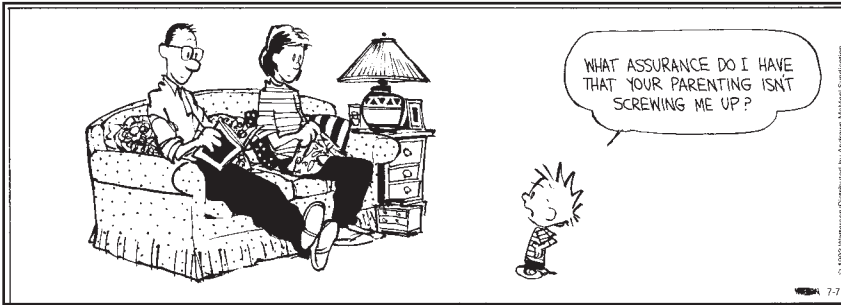
AQUARIUS
The first half of the day will be somewhat unfavourable. At work, the bosses may shout at you and colleagues may not support you enough, feels Ganesh. In the evening, spend some time with your friends and family to unwind from a taxing day at work.

PISCES
You might experience emotional stress this morning and so you will feel low today. But in the afternoon you will feel strong and invigorated. Prevent your emotions from going in the wrong direction. Ganesh says your day will pick up after noon.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



If it's not difficult, it's not love: Mouni

Mumbai: Actress Mouni Roy, who is the host of *Temptation Island India*, has opened up on the challenges within relationships on the show, saying the 'reality has proven once again to be stranger than fiction.'

Mouni said: "The temptations that once resided in the villas have now evolved into meaningful connections. Delivering the final verdict of love will not be an easy task. This show has transformed mere attractions into profound realisations about relationships. It is said true, if it's not difficult, it's not love."

She further emphasised: "I've witnessed individuals undergo significant transformations on the show, evolving into strong and self-assured personalities. Simultaneously, many explored the depths of their connections to their fullest potential. I am genuinely intrigued to witness the unfolding chapters in the lives of these couples."

"I must say, reality has proven once again to be stranger than fiction! The dynamics of relationships presented a roller coaster ride is beyond my expectations. We take pride in breaking toxic patterns and fostering positive changes in relationships," added the Naagin actress.

Temptation Island India airs on JioCinema.

Ananya to have love marriage

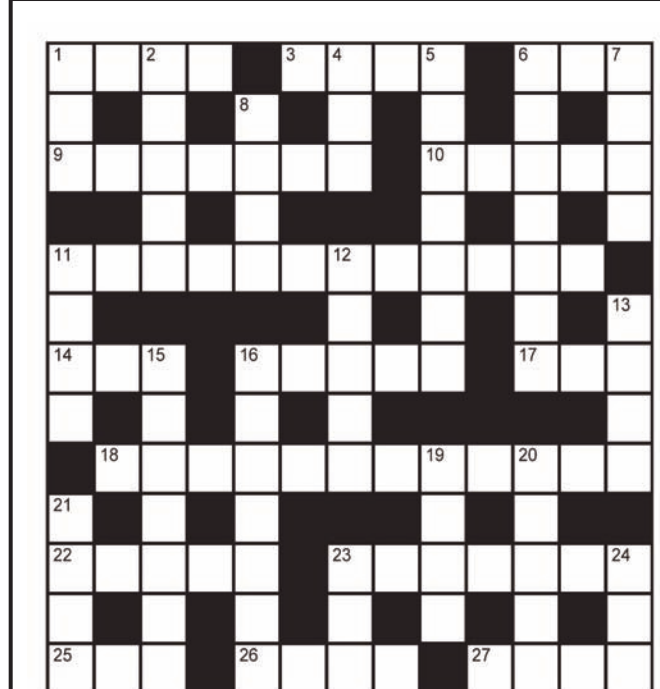
Mumbai: Actress Ananya Panday, who is currently gearing up for the release of her upcoming film *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan* alongside Siddhant Chaturvedi and Adarsh Gourav, opened up about her marriage plans amid dating rumours with Aditya Roy Kapur.

Amid the rumours of dating Aditya, the *Gehraiyaan* actress called herself as 'hopeless romantic' and said that she would opt for a love marriage when time comes.

She said that the benchmark for love is very high for her because of the relationship my parents share. "Their relationship is based on love, respect and trust. I don't think anything less than that will be ok for me. Love makes the world go around. Love is very important, it keeps you grounded. It makes you happy," she added.

FUN post

CROSSWORD

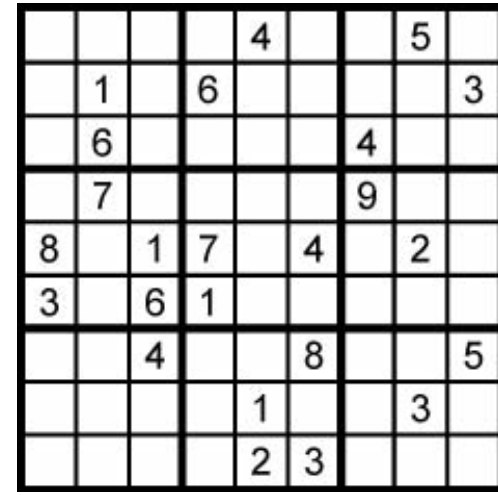


- Across**
- 1 Renown
 - 3 Mozart's "Madamina,"
 - 6 Watch pocket
 - 9 Vacation, maybe
 - 10 Game bird
 - 11 Restaurant requests
 - 14 Prefix with linguistics
 - 16 Witch
 - 17 Rustic locale
 - 18 Make like a chameleon (6,6)
 - 22 Large stringed instrument
 - 23 Spartan
 - 25 The facts of life? (briefly) e.g.
 - 26 Poseidon's mother
 - 27 Kind of jet
 - 6 Soft woolen fabric
 - 7 Tree trunk
 - 8 Water carrier
 - 11 Litter member
 - 12 Domicile
 - 13 Animal shelter
 - 15 Shakespeare character
 - 16 Honesty
 - 19 Hops kiln
 - 20 Corpulent plus
 - 21 Sign of healing
 - 23 Gorilla
 - 24 Go astray
- Down**
- 1 Mediterranean tree
 - 2 Loch Ness monster, etal.
 - 4 Manta
 - 5 Purchase

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

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.

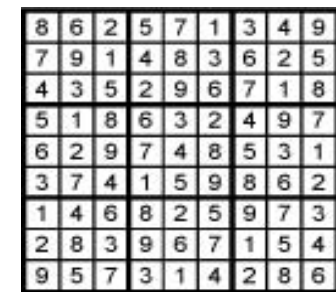


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



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Achievements:

The school has carved a special niche for itself in Odisha by achieving laurels in national and international levels in the in various fields of education, sports, dance, music, art etc. The ex- students of the school are now very well placed in various prestigious posts in national and international fields.

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(Sri Raghunath Mishra)
Chairman

(Sri Pratap Kumar Jena)
Secretary

(Ms. Sandhya Jena)
Principal

downtown

VALEDICTORY SESSION

Bhubaneswar-Central MLA Ananta Narayan Jena lighting the lamp to inaugurate the concluding day of 'Nutan Unnata Abhiyan Odisha' under 'Yuba Odisha Nabin Odisha' initiative at Kamala Nehru Women's Higher Secondary School in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



MOUNTING GARBAGE

BMC pins hope on new project

CIVIC BODY'S PLAN TO SET UP WASTE-TO-ENERGY PLANT AT DARUTHENGA A NON-STARTER

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Following the failure to set up a waste-to-energy plant at Daruthenga in 2014, and later another unsuccessful venture of micro composting centres (MCC) and material recovery facilities at 43 locations, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has now decided to build a 350-tonne MCC at Palasuni with a view to ridding the Capital City of its burgeoning garbage problems.

However, doubts have been raised as to whether the civic body's promises would ever meet with any success on ground given the experience of two failed ventures in the past.

BMC Deputy Commissioner (Sanitation) Manoranjan Sahu claimed that on an average 200 tonnes of waste are being processed at 35 MCCs every day. "The work for 350-tonne MCC is underway at Palasuni and it would be completed soon," he said, adding that the solid waste from Sainik School dump yard is being segregated. The polythene collected from that yard is being sent to Rajgangpur resulting in gradual decrease of the waste volume at Sainik School dumping yard, he asserted.

However, going by BMC's track record, fingers are crossed over the success of the new initiative to process over 800 tonnes



The civic body claimed that the polythene collected from Sainik School dumping yard is being sent to Rajgangpur resulting in gradual decrease in the waste volume there

of garbage collected from the City every day. Nevertheless, it is a matter of concern that the BMC has been unable to find a lasting solution to the garbage disposal issue of the City in its 28 years of existence. This in turn has put a population of over 15 lakh to daily misery and unhealthy existence over the years.

It may be recalled that in 2014 a waste-to-energy plan was conceived for BMC waste manage-

ment. Accordingly, the Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department had signed a MoU with SL Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Bhubaneswar Ltd to set up a 11-mega watt power plant at Daruthenga dumping yard at a cost of ₹200 crore. However, after the Union Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) prohibited dumping of waste at Bhuasuni dumping yard, the power plant became a non-starter as the government developed a cold feet to go ahead with the project.

After SL Municipal Solid Waste withdrew from the project, the garbage pile-up turned into a hill at Daruthenga. Moreover, many fatal mishaps took place during the transport of waste from Sainik School to Daruthenga. Following protests by residents of Daruthenga village, the transport of garbage from Sainik School dumping

yard to Daruthenga was stopped.

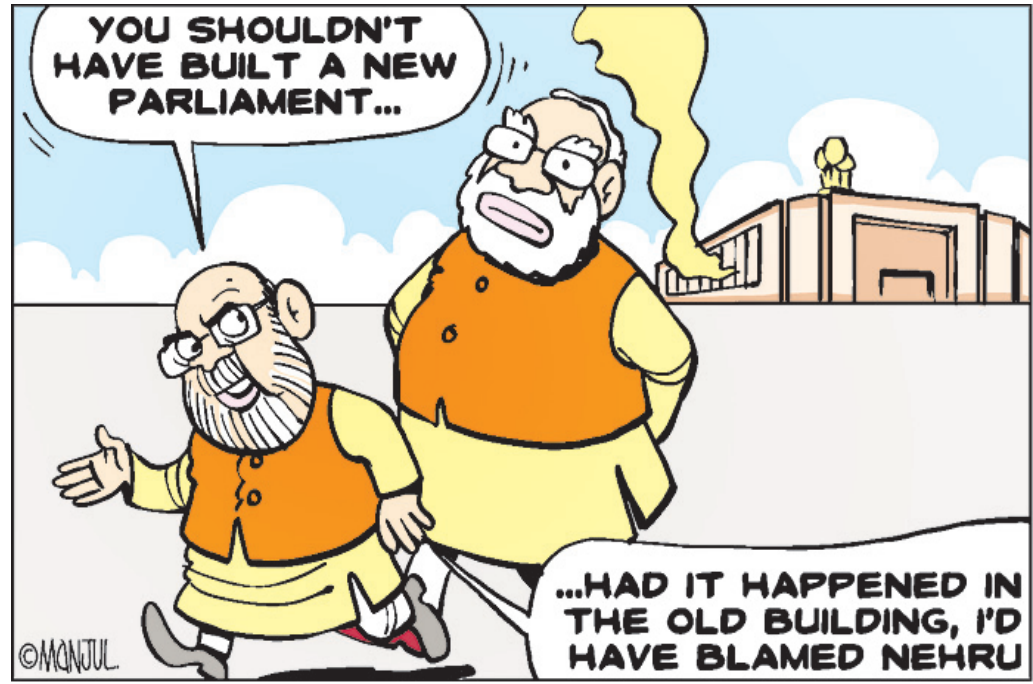
With no options available, the civic body kept on dumping the entire 800 tonne collected garbage at the temporary transit station (TTS) near Sainik School. Over the years, the waste has taken the shape of a hill and the stench emanating from the sludge put the residents of VSS Nagar, Gajapati Nagar, Gadakana, Chandrasekharpur, Chakheisiani, Rasulgarh and Acharya Vihar to untold miseries. Moreover, it has raised concerns about polluting groundwater in these areas.

Former BMC deputy commissioner Srimanta Mishra said, "The waste-to-energy project became a non-starter after the executing firm withdrew upon failing to mortgage 100 acres of land as collateral."

When matters went ahead, in 2019-20 financial year, BMC decided to decentralise waste management under the direct supervision of H&UD department. Accordingly, MCC and Material Recovery Facility were set up at 43 locations to convert waste into manure. However, this project too hit roadblocks owing to various impediments, said sources.

Now, it is to be seen how the upcoming 350-tonne mega MCC project at Palasuni would be able to provide clean air to the residents of smart city and relieve it of its mounting garbage problem.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



With people you stand, Naveen tells party men

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday called upon the party rank and file to rededicate themselves to the service of the people.

He suggested party workers and leaders to undertake plantation programmes, blood donation camps and other social activities marking the observance of the regional outfit's 27th Foundation Day December 26.

Patnaik in an open letter to all ministers, MPs, MLAs, and party functionaries from grassroots to state level, said that the BJD will complete 26 years December 26 and enter into the 27th year of its service to the people of Odisha. The party will observe the day in a fitting manner from block level to state level, he said in the letter.

Keeping in view the ideology and policies of legendary Biju Patnaik on whose name the regional party is named, Patnaik



Naveen asks party workers and leaders to undertake plantation programmes, blood donation camps and other social activities to mark BJD's 27th Foundation Day December 26

said the BJD is working to take the state to greater heights.

On the occasion of the Foundation Day, Patnaik also called upon all party leaders and workers to rededicate themselves to the service of the people. The BJD was founded December 26, 1997, after the demise of Biju Patnaik and his younger son Naveen Patnaik is the party's founder president since its inception.

Patnaik said BJD has gained the blessings of the people by winning all the elections, by-elections, rural and urban polls.

He said that the party now has Zilla Parishad presidents in all 30 districts and won 80 per cent of seats in urban local body (ULB) polls.

"These victories have given us the inspiration to carry forward our service to the people and get closer to them," Patnaik said.

Under the leadership of Patnaik, BJD has won successive elections in Odisha and is in power in the state since 2000. He is the Chief Minister of the eastern state five times in a row.

Govt sends 17 youths to Kochi for training

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Seventeen candidates were sent to the Bird Academy at Kochi, Kerala by the government of Odisha for undergoing training in airport ground handling, Thursday.

The move is part of bolstering skill of youth of the state under (Nutan Unnata Abhilasha) Nua Odisha initiative under the Skill Development

and Technical Education Department.

The comprehensive training program spans 270 days, encompassing 90 days of theoretical instruction, followed by 180 days of on-the-job training (OJT). The selection process chose the 17 candidates through meticulous interview and personal testing conducted by experts from Bird Academy at Bhubaneswar.

Under NUA Odisha pro-

NUA ODISHA INITIATIVE



gramme, the government will bear all expenses related to training, lodging, boarding, and

travel for these trainees. Furthermore, Bird Academy has committed to play a crucial role in facilitating placements for the individuals trained in the specialized aviation job role.

NUA Odisha aims at skilling at least one lakh youth in emerging trades annually over the next three years. They will be offered high-quality training to enhance employability along with industry linkages.

Bribery: Section officer in Vig net

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The state Vigilance here Thursday arrested a government official for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹8,000.

The accused, Subhakanta Swain, presently working as a section officer at the office of chief engineer under the department of Minor Irrigation, allegedly demanded the amount from the complainant for processing and issuance of the his brother's contractor licence, Vigilance sleuths said.

Giving more details, Bhubaneswar Vigilance officials stated that a trap was laid by the sleuths at Subhakanta's office following registration of the case. He was caught red-handed while accepting the bribe money.

Following Subhakant's arrest, the Vigilance sleuths launched simultaneous searches at his residential house in Jharana Sahi of Badagada area, and his office premises. The Vigilance department has registered a case under Section 7 of Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018 against the accused and forwarded him to a court.



FUSION: Artistes perform Odissi and Bharatnatyam during the 14th annual day celebration of cultural organisation Kalingayana Touryatrikam at Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

RTOs to go tough on rogue motorists

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The Regional Transport Offices (RTOs) in Odisha have been directed to conduct special drives to check violations such as drunk driving, riding motorcycles without helmet, speeding and using mobile phones while driving, officials said Thursday.

In a letter to the RTOs, the State Transport Authority (STA) directed for stringent action against traffic violations in view of accidents causing large number of deaths due to fog.

"As you know most of the accidents and fatalities have been reported due to rash and negligence driving, over speeding, drunken driving and hitting against parked/abandoned vehicles, special emphasis shall be given to these matters to prevent accidents and fatalities," it said.



The RTOs were asked to inform the STA if they need support in terms of additional vehicles for patrolling and police assistance.

A detailed plan for the enforcement drives should be formulated in consultation with the district collectors and SPs, the letter said.

The STA directed the RTOs to submit daily reports on the drive. A total of 54,790 accidents happened in the state over the last five years, in which 25,934 people were killed and 51,873 injured, Transport Minister Tukuni Sahu told the Assembly during its last session.

About 95% of country's population uninsured

Report says 84 per cent people from low- and middle-income categories, and 77 per cent from coastal regions, tier-2, and tier-3 cities, lack property insurance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 14: As much as 95 per cent of the country's population is uninsured despite the government and the insurance regulator's efforts to expand coverage, National Insurance Academy said in a report, which was released Thursday.

Unveiling the report, IRDAI Chairman Debasish Panda urged the industry to emulate steps that led to the massive success of the UPI, opening of bank accounts, as well as mobile penetration.

Panda said a compulsory natural calamity insurance in high-risk regions -- as recommended in the report -- is needed if the country wants to achieve insurance for all by the time the nation completes a hundred years as a republic.

According to the report, 95 per cent of the country's population of 144 crore is uncovered.

The high prevalence of lack of insurance coverage assumes importance in the light of the increase in the number of natural calamities and other climate-related disasters to hit the country



Further, it said 84 per cent people from low- and middle-income categories, and 77 per cent

from coastal regions, tier-2, and tier-3 cities, lack property insurance.

The report also called for compulsory crop insurance for farmers who have taken bank loans, supported by premium financing from microfinance institutions and agri-input suppliers.

Giving category-specific insurance gap, the report said currently, annuity and pension protection gap is at a high of 93 per cent.

There is an 87 per cent protection gap on life insurance, which presents a huge business

opportunity, the report said.

On health insurance, the report said 73 per cent of the population is uncovered, and called for collaboration between government, NGOs, and industry groups to create micro health insurance with simplified products.

Pension and annuity coverage also lags with just 24 per cent enrolled in employee retirement schemes. Notably, low-income individuals and lower-middle-income segments exhibit a meagre 14 per cent and 25 per cent penetration, respectively,

as per the report.

Cyber protection gap is rapidly expanding across sectors due to increased exposure, higher digital usage, and growing connectivity and 62 per cent of customers looking to protect their cyber risk, it said.

The National Insurance Academy was established in 1980 in Pune and has since become the preeminent centre for executive training, research and study on insurance, pensions, and related disciplines across Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, apart from the country.

CM rolls out LAccMi scheme in Koraput dist

The launch marks a significant milestone in the development of state's public transport infrastructure with Koraput becoming the sixth district



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: In order to augment the bus network in rural areas, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday launched the 'Location Accessible Multi-modal Initiative' (LAccMi) scheme in Koraput district, extending its reach to 234 panchayats through 63 buses.

The launch marks a significant milestone in the development of the state's public transport infrastructure with Koraput becoming the sixth district to benefit from the scheme.

The LAccMi fleet in Koraput comprises 48 non-air-conditioned buses mainly operating between Gram Panchayats and blocks, alongside 15 air-conditioned buses that will ply from blocks to the district headquarters.

The scheme, first started in Malkangiri district under the 5T initiative, facilitates bus service from panchayats to blocks in every district at a fare of just

LAccMi fleet comprises 48 non-air-conditioned buses to operate between Gram Panchayats and blocks, alongside 15 air-conditioned buses that will ply from blocks to the district headquarters

₹5. More than 1,000 Laxmi buses will run across the state and they will be operated by Mission Shakti members.

Addressing the people, the Chief Minister said that the first phase of the Laxmi bus service started from Malkangiri and reached Koraput today. In the first phase, 63 lakh residents in 1,131 panchayats of Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Gajapati, and Koraput districts got the benefits of the

Laxmi bus service.

Patnaik further said, "This scheme has been started after knowing about the transportation problems of the people by district visits by the CMO officials. Laxmi buses will connect everyone. Take children to school and college, patients to the hospitals, and connect farmers to markets. Mothers will also have access to various activities. Laxmi bus service is a blessing for everyone as it facilitates development."

Stating that this development belongs to all of us, the Chief Minister expressed strong hope that the formation of New Odisha will be realised with the co-operation of all.

5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman VK Pandian said that the buses of Laxmi Bus Yojana were bought with the money of the people of the state. He requested everyone to treat it as their property and take proper care of the vehicles. He informed the people the Chief Minister has approved the proposal to provide land for a new bus stand in Koraput. Speaking on the occasion, Transport Minister Tukuni Sahu said that the Lakshmi Yojana will bring prosperity to rural areas by facilitating transportation.

These buses will cover a combined distance exceeding 12,195 KMs daily, significantly improving transportation accessibility for residents. To ensure safe and efficient service, the operation will be supported by 67 drivers and 119 conductors, all of whom have received comprehensive training.



MATTER OF RIGHTS: Guests attending the 3rd International Nano Children's Film Festival on 'Child Rights' organised by Rush at Puri Poura Sadan in Pilgrim City, Thursday

OP PHOTO

NATIONAL ENERGY CONSERVATION DAY

Join hands for energy efficient economy: CM

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Energy Conservation plays a vital role in mitigating climate change and every watt of energy saved contributes to our sustainable future, said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on National Energy Conservation Day, Thursday.

He said, "Let's all join hands for an energy efficient economy and society, judiciously use energy, embrace renewable energy and ensure zero wastage for a sustainable future."

National Energy Conservation Day aims to raise awareness about global warming and climate change while encouraging initiatives to conserve energy resources. It also celebrates the nation's achievements in energy efficiency and conservation.

National Energy Conservation



Day holds even greater significance as the world faces the dual challenges of climate change and energy security. By promoting energy conservation, we can reduce our reliance on non-renewable fuels, mitigate climate change, and create a more sustainable future for all.

On this occasion, an aware-

ness procession was organized by the department of Energy in the City. It was flagged off by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Minister Pratap Keshari Deb. An awareness drive was also launched on this occasion. Minister Deb said, "The demand for electricity is increasing day by day. Keeping

this in mind, there is an absolute need for infrastructure strengthening and power conservation."

He emphasized on preventing wastage of electricity, adopting new methods of energy conservation. Meanwhile, Regional Science Centre (RSC), Bhubaneswar observed the National Energy Conservation Day for school students by organizing 'mega poster-making contest' and 'slogan writing contest' on the theme "For better and safe future we have to save and conserve energy". The event was attended by around 200 students.

The RSC Project Coordinator Kapil Jain is hopeful for organizing such programme in a larger scale in the future for encouraging energy saving practices and sensitizing people about energy conservation for a sustainable future.

IIT Bhub gets 200 offers in 10 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar is seeing a surge in the placements during the ongoing campus recruitment process. Despite the gloomy scenario in the job markets and recession hitting the global economy, the placements at institute are showing promising trends with around 200 offers received within the first 10 days.

The placement process commenced at IIT Bhubaneswar from 1st of December like the first generation IITs. In the first 10 days of the placements, the Institute saw several software, IT and consulting, analytics companies participating and hiring in good numbers.

This year, organisations like BPCL, HPCL, Reliance Industries Limited, Oracle Corporation, Microsoft, Google, Accenture Japan, Salesforce, Jaguar Land Rover, Zomato, Analog Devices, Tata Capital, Tata Steel, Mathworks, Tiger Analytics, GE



Healthcare and Jindal Stainless Limited are participating in the placements drive

So far, the Institute has received the highest offer of ₹64 lakh per annum. Besides offers in the domestic market, IIT Bhubaneswar has so far bagged 4 international offers. Students of Computer Science department have got maximum offers.

Arun Kumar Pradhan, HOD-Career Development Cell of IIT Bhubaneswar said, "Placements at IIT Bhubaneswar are quite encouraging and gaining momentum. Our students are getting offers in diverse sectors. I am glad to note that many companies including the core industries and PSUs are also hiring students from IIT Bhubaneswar."

BJD's state executive body meeting today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) will hold its state executive body meeting Friday, a party leader said.

Chief Minister and BJD President Naveen Patnaik will preside over the State Executive Body meeting here at the party's state headquarters 'Sankha Bhawan'. Around 80 leaders including MPs, MLAs, ministers, party functionaries and newly joined 5T (transformational initiative) and Nabin Odisha Chairman VK Pandian will attend the meeting. The crucial meeting will be held before the BJD's 27th Foundation Day December 26.

"The office-bearers of BJD student, youth and women wings will also participate in the state executive body meeting," said party's senior vice president Debi Prasad Mishra at a press conference here. However, Mishra did not reveal the agenda of the meeting.



Nat'l workshop by CSIR-IMMT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: As part of its diamond jubilee year celebration, CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (IMMT) organised a 2-day long national workshop on Biochar and Bio-resources here, Thursday.

The workshop was inaugurated in the presence of chief guest Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment Principal Secretary Arabinda Kumar Padhee, CSIR-IMMT Director Ramanuj Narayan. More than 100 participants from various corporates, industries, startups and NGOs attended the workshop.

The workshop was organised in collaboration with IBBN, GIZ, Biochar Crusader which are actively supporting the activities related to biochar and bio-resource management for sustainable agriculture and environment.

Addressing the gathering, Narayan welcomed the collaborators, sponsors (Gold-Sanjivani Agro-Machinery, Nagpur and Silver-Circonomy, Singapore) and participants from various organisations from across India.



He shared information about recent formation of task force on biochar utilisation under Ministry of Steels, government of India and highlighted the emerging scope of R & D towards carbon neutral India. On the occasion Chief Scientist NK Dhal, and CSIR-IMMT CRTDH co-ordinator Yatendra Singh Chaudhary shared their opinion. Kshithij Urs from IBBN and RK Mehta from Biochar Crusader shared their work about the Biochar and Bio-resource theme.

The events in workshop consisted both practical and case-study oriented deliberations by resource persons from various corporates, industries and institutes. Various methods such as trench, drum and continuous rotary pyrolysis system of biochar production was also demonstrated to the participants.

I-T CRACKDOWN ON LIQUOR TRADERS

BJP wants CM to resign

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The Opposition BJP Thursday sought the resignation of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on moral grounds following the seizure of over ₹350 crore from liquor traders in the state by the Income Tax (I-T) department.

The demand was made by BJP Odisha unit president Manmohan Samal.

"How can a liquor trader store such a huge amount of money? The state's BJD government has patronage liquor trade and kept its funds for use during the upcoming elections," Samal alleged seeking clarification from the ruling Biju Janata Dal on the huge black money.

He said the ruling party must make it clear as to who owned such a huge amount of cash. Samal said it is impossible to hoard such a huge amount of cash without the support and assistance of the state government.

"Had the state Vigilance or Economic Offences Wing (EOW) acted and caught these liquor traders, Income Tax raids would

not have been required," he said. The BJD strongly rejected Samal's statement and accused him of making wild allegations against the Chief Minister under pressure from an Odia Central minister.

BJD vice president Prasanna Acharya said that nobody has the guts to bring corruption charges against Naveen Patnaik and he is known across the country for honesty and integrity.

In a separate press conference, BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said: "It seems that the Odisha state BJP president has more facts compared to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Central Ministers on the matter of Income Tax raid."

Mohanty said the Prime Minister December 8 and 12 had posted messages on X twice. "From PM's posts, it was clear that seized cash belonged to a Congress Rajya Sabha MP and Congress was responsible for it. We request Manmohan Babu that if he has more facts than their central leadership, then let him place it before them," Mohanty said.

17TH EDITION OF YATS WINNERS FETED

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik felicitated 20 students who aced the 17th state-level Young Astronomer Talent Search (YATS) program, hosted by Tata Steel in association with Pathani Samanta Planetarium under S&T Dept at Pathani Samanta Planetarium (PSP) here, Wednesday.

This edition of YATS saw the par-



ticipation of more than 80,000 students from 30 districts in the state.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister said, "I congratulate all the students who participated in the activities organised as part of Young Astronomer Talent Search. Congratulations to the district toppers who are selected for the finals and the top 20 winners. I am glad that over 80 thousand students from across 30 districts of our state are participating in

this competition. My congratulations to Tata Steel and Pathani Samanta Planetarium for conducting this unique event successfully year after year, and I wish the programme the very best for its future editions."

Since its inception till date, more than 3,50,000 young science enthusiasts in state have actively participated in YATS. Notably, 180 students have had the privilege of visiting various facilities of ISRO in India.

We will win at least 15 LS seats: Pradhan

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Union Minister for Education and Skill Development, Dharmendra Pradhan, exuded confidence Thursday that the BJP will win at least 15 out of the 21 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha in the general elections scheduled next year. During an interview with a national channel Thursday, Pradhan expressed hope that the party will secure more than 45 per cent vote shares in next year's elections. The BJP had garnered 22 per cent votes in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, while its vote share was 18 per cent in the Assembly elections held the same year. The party managed to win one Lok Sabha and 10 Assembly seats in 2014. In the 2019 general elections, the BJP improved its tally to eight, while its vote share rose to 38 per cent. In the Assembly polls held the same year, the saffron party won 22 seats with a vote share of 32.49 per cent. Meanwhile, the ruling BJD managed to secure 42 per cent and 44 per cent votes in Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, respectively, in 2019. "Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi is the most popular political leader in Odisha. His approval rating continues to remain above 80 per cent whenever any survey is conducted in the state," Pradhan said.

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Kanupur dam project hangs fire with delay in Forest nod



POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec 14: Delay in forest clearance has hit the Kanupur irrigation project in Keonjhar district pushing completion of the much-awaited dam project into uncertainty as it is set to miss the deadline.

It was expected that the project will become operational after works get completed by December this year. However, that is not going to happen as the project is yet to receive forest clearance.

Notably, the irrigation project is being constructed on Baitarani river at Basudevpur under Joda block in Keonjhar district. The project was envisaged 40 years back but was implemented only in 2002 after it received approval of the planning committee. The project is expected to irrigate 29,000 hectare of farmlands in Joda, Champua, Jhumpura, Sadar and Patana blocks of Keonjhar district.

The Water Resources department claimed that 90 per cent of the project work has been completed. However, the project has been mired in uncer-

The irrigation project is coming up on Baitarani river at Basudevpur under Joda block in Keonjhar district

It is expected to irrigate 29,000 hectare of farmlands in Joda, Champua, Jhumpura, Sadar and Patana blocks

tainty in the final leg due to delay in forest clearance. Several works on the project are yet to get completed owing to the delay.

Sources said works on the main dam, spillway and canal are yet to get completed while land acquisition, rehabilitation and compensation works are also lagging behind. On the other hand, the plan outlay has increased to ₹2,438 crore. While it is apprehended that its budget will shoot up to ₹3,000 crore by the time it is completed, the project is also likely to miss the deadline as announced by the state government.

Senior Water Resources official Prasanna Pani said there is an urgent need for forest clearance as the canal passes through Champua, Sadar and Patana forest ranges. He, however, said

that works on the dam and spillway has been completed while the rest is yet to start due to delay in sanction of forest clearance.

A survey was undertaken to identify the volume of forest land in these ranges after the Water Resources department applied for clearance. The survey indicated the presence of 310.11 hectare of forest land at 839 places under these forest ranges, he said.

An enumeration of trees was undertaken and 60,000 trees were identified for felling in 2016.

The Water Resources department has deposited around ₹90 crore with the Forest department during the last eight years towards loss of forest cover, he said. The canal and rest of the works have failed to make any headway without the forest clearance. No action has been taken on the report which is lying with Forest department since last five years. The girth of the tree trunks and their height has also increased during these years, he said.

There will be fresh problems if the Forest department permits felling of the trees. As a result, a fresh enumeration of trees is being undertaken, he said.

The Forest department is asking to deposit more money but not telling the exact amount of money that needs to be deposited. They would deposit the money as and when the Forest department notifies them about the amount, he added.

Champua forest ranger Akshaya Chhatra said the trees are being counted afresh as their girth and height have increased during these years. More than half of the trees have been counted while counting of rest of the trees is underway.



MESMERISING PERFORMANCE: Artistes perform a traditional Dhesma dance on the concluding day of Pallishree Mela organised as part of 'Lok Mahotsav Mondei' in Nabarangpur, Thursday

Minor dies after falling from flyover

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 14: A 13-year-old boy died after falling from Birajapalli flyover at Basanti Colony under Uditnagar police limits here in Sundargarh district Thursday.

The deceased was identified as Rahul Behera, 13, a Class-IX student of Police High School and a resident of Jail Road here.

According to police sources, Rahul along with two of his friends were walking on the flyover Thursday morning while he accidentally fell down from the bridge.

He was immediately rushed to Rourkela Government Hospital, where the doctors pronounced him dead, said Uditnagar PS IIC Ramprasad Nag. The body of the deceased was handed over to his family after post-mortem, said Nag.

Plan afoot for greywater mgmt in ULBs of Ganjam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Dec 14: Ganjam district administration will implement the greywater management projects in all its urban local bodies (ULBs) by March-end.

The district has 17 ULBs, excluding Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC).

Hinjili Municipality and Chhatrapur Notified Area Council (NAC) have already started work on a pilot basis and greywater management projects in these two ULBs are expected to be completed in two months, said Nilamadhab Bhoi, project director, District Urban Development Authority (DUDA), Ganjam. Greywater is waste-

water from non-toilet plumbing systems such as hand basins, washing machines, showers and baths

Around 65 per cent of total household wastewater is greywater, which contributes to water pollution

including chairpersons, councillors, executive officers and officers," Bhoi said. The state has been a pioneer in managing blackwater (used water from household toilets) by establishing FSTP (faecal sludge treatment plant).

"With the execution of the greywater management project, water will be treated at various levels, which will minimise pollution and recharge groundwater," Bhoi said.

Hinjili municipality executive officer Jubilee Behera said they have treated greywater at household levels, lane levels (near drains) and community levels (at the end of drains in the street).

NIT-R placed at rank 676 globally

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 14: NIT Rourkela has secured 676th rank globally and 21st rank in India in the 'QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2024'.

Using a methodology comprising indicators designed to measure an institution's ability to tackle the world's greatest environmental, social and governance (ESG) challenges, the QS Sustainability Rankings 2024 has featured over 1,400 universities from around the world.

A total of 56 universities/institutes from India have been listed in this ranking. NIT Rourkela has bagged top positions among other NITs. NIT Rourkela debuted in the list and received recognition for its exemplary efforts.

"Our commitment lies in nurturing a campus culture that fully integrates sustainability into academic and daily pursuits. This milestone refers to our dedication to making a positive impact on the environment and society reaffirming the institution's commitment to environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and sustainable practices," K Umamaheshwar Rao, Director, NIT Rourkela said.



TALENT HUNT: Girls play Kho-Kho as part of a talent search under Nua 'O' Yuba Odisha, Nabin Odisha programme organised by Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) at DAV ground in Basanti Colony of Rourkela, Monday

Youth dies in mishap during morning walk

Rairangpur: In a tragic incident, a youth died on the spot after an unidentified vehicle hit him during his morning walk on the bypass road on National Highway-220 under Halda police limits in Mayurbhanj district in the wee hours of Thursday. The deceased has been identified as Shiba Bradra, 22, of Chirugoda village under Halda police limits in Mayurbhanj district. Informed, police reached the spot, seized the body and sent it to Rairangpur hospital for post-mortem. Police handed over the body to his family members after post-mortem and started an investigation after registering a case (144/23) at Halda police station. The driver along with the unknown vehicle fled from the spot after the accident, said the police.

3 bears enter into house; CCTV footage viral

Malkangiri: Three bears were seen entering houses at MV 7 village in Malkangiri district in search of food in the middle of night, Wednesday. The matter came to light after, a CCTV footage showing three bears entering the house of one Arun Dewan in the village by scaling the boundary wall went viral, Thursday. The act was captured in the CCTV camera installed in front of the house. The development has panicked the residents of the village and surrounding areas. Meanwhile, it is believed that rampant deforestation in the area has destroyed the habitat of many wild animals in the region resulting in food scarcity. As a result, they are now venturing out into human habitations.



Hindalco's CSR initiatives make strides in Nimpali

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Community development programmes of Hindalco, Hiraakud, an Aditya Birla Group company, have made a huge difference in the tribal-dominated district of Sambalpur through its project 'Ama Pada' in Nimpali village.

Nimpali village has a population of a little over 300 people. Of this, 90 per cent are Scheduled Tribes (STs) and 5 per cent Scheduled Castes (SCs). Low literacy rate and backwardness have made life difficult for these people who strive hard to make their ends meet. Looking at the difficulties of the villagers, Hindalco, under the aegis of the Aditya Birla Centre for Community Initiative and Rural Development, started intervening at several levels. A primary survey conducted by the Hindalco



CSR team revealed that most of the households do not have toilets. So the company started construction of toilets for every household to develop, linking it to the government's Swachh Bharat mission. They succeeded in making Nimpali an open defecation-free village.

As availability of water was a major issue, Hindalco's CSR team dug a huge pond to provide water for the villagers. Furthermore, under project 'Ama Pada', they renovated one completely dilapidated Anganwadi centre building in Nimpali, furnishing it also with better teaching and learning materials.

Rescued newborn suffering from internal bleeding

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambalpur, Dec 14: The health condition of the newborn girl, who was rescued from an abandoned borewell in Sambalpur district Tuesday night, is stable but she suffers from internal bleeding, doctors said Thursday.

The girl, who has no claimant, is currently undergoing treatment at the special newborn care unit (SNCU) of Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR). A five-member team of doctors is monitoring her health.

"An ultrasound test of the baby revealed internal bleeding in her body. We are hopeful that it will stop by itself in 3-4 days, otherwise, we might have to change the course of treatment. The health condition of the baby is stable but, internal problem is an issue," VIMSAR Superintendent Lalmoan Nayak told PTI Thursday.

The doctors are in touch with the government paediatric hospital Sishu Bhawan at Cuttack.

The signs she is showing are very common in preterm babies with gross Hypothermia (a condition that occurs when the body loses heat fast, causing a dangerously low body temperature). If the complications do not subside in a few days, we will take decisions accordingly, Nayak said.

He said that the internal bleeding could also be a sign of Necrotizing Enterocolitis - a serious gastrointestinal problem that mostly affects premature babies. She weighs 1.6 kilograms and was born in 34 weeks. The next three days would be very crucial, he said.

Hospital sources said that the baby was brought to the SNCU around 11.30pm Tuesday in a critical condition. The child, when brought out of the borewell, had no clothes on. Her body temperature was



low due to exposure to cold in the borewell. She was kept in the neonatal intensive care unit following which her condition im-

proved, he said.

Meanwhile, the police Wednesday registered a case under Section 307 (attempt to murder) and other sections of the IPC against unknown accused in connection with the incident. The police will investigate from all angles to find out how the incident took place and the person responsible for it, Additional Superintendent of Police HC Pandey said.

The baby was rescued from inside the borewell at 9.40pm Tuesday. Villagers had first heard her cries from inside the borewell and informed the authorities.

The infant was lodged inside the borewell on a plastic bottle, which shielded her from broken glass within, said DG, fire services, Sudhansu Sarangi.

The rescue team, which included fire officials and a unit of Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force, immediately supplied oxygen to the baby. During the res-

cue operation, a 100-watt electric bulb was also lowered inside the borewell to keep the baby warm due to the low night time temperature.

He informed that three excavators were roped in to rescue the child. While one excavator was engaged in digging, the other two excavators removed the soil. Manual digging was also carried out to gain access to the pipe of the borewell, he said.

The child was trapped 13-feet deep in the borewell. During the operation, the iron pipe of the borewell emerged as the challenge for the rescue team. Though the iron pipe kept the newborn safe, it was a difficult task for the team to retrieve the baby by cutting the pipe.

FOCUS ECONOMY

DATA VS REALITY



Much of the inflation is because of government policies such as maintaining high petrol prices despite a longer period of soft international prices

While periodic renovation of buildings is necessary rebuilding for the sake of it without a discussion with the people or other stakeholders necessarily does not mean that it would achieve the stated objective. The supposed rail upgradation to Vande Bharat and ignoring the usual trains again made the Railways go back to basics and restore the number of general coaches and improve upkeep of ordinary sleeper bogeys. The Railways are also realising that dynamic fare disrupts the lives of average travellers and creates a myth about higher earnings.

The Budget notes that revenue expenditure is estimated to grow by 1.2% at ₹35.02 lakh crore in 2023-24 over ₹34.59 lakh crore. Major components of revenue expenditure include interest payments, defence revenue expenditure, and transfers to states in the form of Finance Commission grants and centrally sponsored schemes. Grants to Central autonomous bodies are a substantial part of the Central sector schemes.

Sitharaman says that India's national debt has increased from \$1595 billion in 2018 to \$3288 billion in 2023 and projected to rise to \$4816 billion by 2028. Outstanding government debt and other liabilities are rising to ₹169.46 lakh crore in March 2024 from ₹152.69 lakh crore in March 2023. Though this is considered manageable, its servicing costs are high. The government needs to review various projects for their utility. Interest payments are estimated to be ₹10.80 lakh crore, 30.8% of the total revenue expenditure. The fiscal policy statement highlighted the total expenditure as ₹45.03 lakh crore in 2023-24; increase of 7.5% over 2022-23. The states are to get about ₹10.21 lakh crore.

Despite India growing at a better pace than Pakistan and Sri Lanka, neighbouring Bangladesh and Vietnam have overtaken it!

INFA

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has projected a promising economy that could take the country to a path of glory with huge capital expenditure and rising deficits that is showcased politically to charm voters. She was partially correct during a short duration discussion on the state of the economy in the Rajya Sabha. But despite efforts, deficits remain high, exports drop, rupee slides and government measures such as high cess on petrol, rechristened additional excise duties, and tolls have not added to the ease of the people.

Occasional growth, such as in the second quarter of the year at 7.6% being termed as India being the fastest-growing major economy may cheer up countrymen, but it is not a solution to the overall economic situation. India's growth is not constant but seasonal, often to cater to the festive mood. Most world economies are taking corrective steps before that. It seems as per the RBI, an economy is on fire facing persistent threat of food inflation and severe constriction on farm level prices, both considered extremes. It calls for easing of policies and firming of the dollar that makes imports expensive.

The finance minister compared achievements with developed countries and their growth. The Indian economy despite its large size has yet to match the growth parameters of France, Germany, UK, the US or China, though many of them are in slowdown. Their economies are larger. Even a small growth is substantial than what India could achieve.

Much of the inflation is because of government policies such as maintaining high petrol prices despite a longer period of soft international prices. Despite Israel-Gaza or Russia-Ukraine wars, the crude oil prices have slumped to \$70 a barrel and may fall further as Western economies, particularly the US

sees a glut of oil owing to the slowdown. Instead of a demand of 2 million barrels, it remains at 594,000 barrels. The slowing global economy is impacting Indian exports.

While the benefits of low oil prices are not being passed on to the consumers in India, it has led to an inflationary economy. The Indian GST is high. Organisations such as the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) have taken advantage to jack up road toll rates atrociously. Toll collections have increased to ₹48028 crore in 2022-23 from ₹33907 crore last year and ₹17942 crore in 2017-18. This is hurting the economy, including farmers' input and transportation costs, according to Statista.

Allocations for education and health have been cut and insurance premia allowed to rise by 30%. Farmers finding prices un-remunerative have been destroying many vegetable crops, including cauliflower, onion and tomato during the season, though prices of many commodities spiralled in the retail market.

The Opposition has charged the government with being cut off from ground realities during the discussion following a notice from TMC's Derek O'Brien.

Former Finance Minister P Chidambaram said it was "jobless growth." Ram Gopal Yadav of Samajwadi Party alleged the ruling members were only indulging in propaganda and publicity. Of 194 nations, India is at 133 in the growth index even though it is the fifth largest economy. AITC's Jawhar Sircar said in 2022 India's youth unemployment rate was 23.22%, which was even higher than 11.3% of Pakistan, 12.9% in Bangladesh and 14.4% of Bhutan.

Sitharaman says that investments in infrastructure and productive capacity have a larger multiplier effect on growth and employment. The Union Budget steeply increased the capital expenditure outlay by 37.4% to ₹10 lakh crore. This is being spent to demolish government buildings, railways stations, National Museum, National Archives and others.

This apart, reckless construction of roads and other supposed infrastructure have had a heavy toll on the Himalayan states facing severe devastation. Various construction lobbies are preventing the government from reviewing vast delicate areas in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and northeastern parts of the country.



Shivaji Sarkar

THE SLOWING GLOBAL ECONOMY IS IMPACTING INDIAN EXPORTS



Peter Singer

WHO prequalification normally takes 270 days after the WHO recommends a vaccine. That is an unacceptable delay. The WHO should accelerate its process and tell the public how quickly it can complete prequalification

WHO prequalification normally takes 270 days after the WHO recommends a vaccine. That is an unacceptable delay. The WHO should accelerate its process and tell the public how quickly it can complete prequalification

When vaccines for COVID-19 first became available, governments' highest priority was to get them through the regulatory process. The US Food and Drug Administration normally takes about ten months to authorise the use of a new vaccine, but it approved the use of the Pfizer vaccine in a breathtaking 21 days, and authorisation for Moderna's vaccine took just 19 days. WHO prequalification normally takes 270 days after the WHO recommends a vaccine. That is an unacceptable delay. The WHO should accelerate its process and tell the public how quickly it can complete prequalification.

1Day Sooner was founded to represent people who wanted to volunteer to take part in human challenge trials to accelerate vaccine development. When the organisation was established in March 2020, its focus was a vaccine against COVID-19: getting it out one day sooner would, quite literally, save thousands of lives. Many of the organisation's staff and a high proportion of the volunteers were effective altruists.

The organisation's original mission has broadened to promoting efficient development of life-saving medical research and the speediest and most equitable distribution of its products. As part of that broader mission, 1Day Sooner set up 1Day Africa to promote vaccination on the continent by strengthening Africa's scientific capacity and its ability to manufacture vaccines locally.

Now, 1Day Africa is concerned that the WHO and national governments are not assessing the safety and effectiveness of the new malaria vaccine with the same urgency as they assessed the COVID-19 vaccines. As a result, the organisation is pressing for the production of as many doses of R21 as possible in 2024, and getting those doses into the arms of children as quickly as possible, to prevent millions of cases of malaria and save hundreds of thousands of lives.

Some of the relevant facts are in dispute, including how long the WHO's prequalification process needs to take, and how quickly the necessary quantity of doses can be produced. But one thing should be clear: failing to save the lives of African children when that can be achieved for as little as \$3,300 each would render hollow our lofty rhetoric about the equal worth of every human life.

The writer, Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, is Founder of the organisation The Life You Can Save.

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WISDOM CORNER

To work without attachment is to work without the expectation of reward or fear of any punishment in this world or the next. Work so done is a means to the end, and God is the end.

RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHANSA

He who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance; one cannot fly into flying.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Man is fond of counting his troubles, but he does not count his joys. If he counted them up as he ought to, he would see that every lot has enough happiness provided for it.

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1939: Premier of the Gone with the Wind. The award winning film was adapted from the Pulitzer winner Margaret Mitchell's book by the same name.

1978: US recognizes China. 30 years after the creation of the People's Republic of China, President Jimmy Carter announced that the United States would formally recognize the communist country starting January 1, 1979. The announcement also called for the severing of relations with Taiwan, a position that was quickly reversed under protests.

2009: Maiden flight of Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Considered to be one of Boeing's most fuel-efficient airplanes, the Boeing 787 Dreamliner has suffered from problems associated with its lithium-ion batteries.

SPECTRUM NATION

Strike at root of corruption

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lambasted the Congress after scores of rupees (around ₹400 crore) in cash were seized from a party MP during tax raids in Odisha and Jharkhand. Prime Minister said, "The countrymen should look at the pile of these notes and then listen to the honest 'speeches' of their leaders. Whatever has been looted from the public, every penny will have to be returned, this is Modi's guarantee."

Confiscation of huge black money shows that demonetisation has failed abysmally to curb corruption. Underlining that some of the mechanisms that could help reign in corruption are weakening, Transparency International ranked India at 85 among 180 countries in its Corruption Perception Index report 2023, down from 79 in 2016.

Our system and administration are rigged to favour the rich and the powerful. They can evade taxes, indulge in corruption and nepotism with impunity and can keep their black money in tax havens such as Mauritius, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, British Virgin Islands, where names are kept secret and tax is not required to pay and if paid a very

lowly amount.

In 2012, the CBI director had openly admitted that Indians are the largest depositors in banks abroad with about \$500 billion illegal money stashed in tax havens. Now, it would have increased by a big margin.

In 2016, around 500 Indian names were found in the Panama Papers who had alleged illegal properties worth around ₹20,078 crore. Similarly, over 380 Indians have been named in the 2021 Pandora Papers.

The government has detected an increasing amount of GST being evaded each year, but recoveries have not kept pace with detection. Nationally, authorities uncovered GST evasion exceeding ₹4.4 lakh crore, recovering about ₹1.1 lakh crore, roughly 25% of the total.

There has been a steady increase of income tax arrears from ₹5,75,340 crore in 2013-14 to ₹11,14,182 crore in 2017-18. According to the CAG, the percentage of tax termed 'difficult to recover' (categorised by the department) over total arrears continued to be abnormally high ranging from 96% in 2013-14 to more than 98% in 2017-18. Stock markets are manipulated to raise the value of shares of some se-

lect companies.

The banks have written off bad loans worth ₹14.56 lakh crore in the last nine financial years starting 2014-15. If only around 15% loans written off is recovered, then what about the remaining 85%? Why does not the government investigate this?

The CAG, in an audit report on the 'Implementation of Phase-1 of Bharatmala Pariyojana' from 2017-18 to 2020-21 has highlighted the cost escalation in constructing the 29.06 km Dwarka Expressway from ₹18 crore per km to ₹250 crore per km.

Some sought to know the source of 'benami wealth' seized from liquor traders. Corruption stems from our electoral system. Instead of addressing root causes, the ruling class and politicians talk of fighting corruption to hoodwink the masses. According to private think tank, the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), the Lok Sabha elections 2019 was the "most expensive election ever, anywhere" with money spent for the exercise at around ₹55-60,000 crore, and the ruling BJP is estimated to have spent 45% of the total expenditure. According to income tax agency, in recent Assemblies elections in five states, the entire

amount of cash seized has surpassed ₹1,000 crore.

Touted as a tool for transparency in election funding, Electoral Bonds, generated donations worth over ₹9,188 crore for all political parties put together between 2016 and 2022. Among all parties, the BJP received 57% of the total donations generated through Electoral Bonds, according to data released by the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR). The average asset of a Rajya Sabha MP is estimated at ₹80.93 crore, according to the analysis of election affidavits of 225 of the 233 MPs.

When the top level people indulge in corruption, it percolates down to every section of society. One or two might be caught but most of the corrupt people are never caught. Now, leaders in the Opposition and those who are opposed to the ruling dispensation are targeted more. Cleansing political parties and the electoral system, preventing use of illegal money in election by all parties is the first step towards tackling the evil of corruption.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

OUR SYSTEM AND ADMINISTRATION ARE RIGGED TO FAVOUR THE RICH AND THE POWERFUL

Rebuilding Gaza

Sir, The deep-rooted conflict between Israel and Hamas highlights a significant impasse concerning the prospect of a "two-state solution." Both sides seem unwilling to embrace this long-standing proposal, intensifying the challenges faced in the aftermath of the conflict. Rebuilding Gaza after the devastation involves complex political hurdles, including opposition from the Biden administration against Israel's reoccupation and strained relations between Israel and the United Nations. Additionally, financial support from the European Union, the United States Congress, and the Gulf Arabs appears uncertain, casting doubts on the feasibility of a swift recovery. The involvement of the Palestinian Authority, though suggested, encounters widespread doubt due to its perceived inefficiency and corruption, complicating the governance and the reconstruction process further. Moreover, the once-prevailing idea of a two-state solution seems to have lost its credibility over the years, with changing conditions making it increasingly difficult to envision a viable path forward. Extremist factions on both sides exacerbate the situation, perpetuating mutual distrust and hindering the exploration of alternative political solutions. Amid this turmoil, the call for innovative approaches beyond the traditional two-state solution emerges as a pressing need. Addressing the immediate disaster in Gaza demands a cohesive and visionary long-term plan for Palestine. The complexities, animosities, and historical challenges underscore the urgency for new, constructive proposals capable of transcending the longstanding impasse and offering hope for a sustainable resolution.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Raj surprise

Sir, The BJP choosing first-time MLA Bhajan Lal Sharma as the Rajasthan Chief Minister ahead of party veteran and former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje is a bold move. This is the first instance in thirty-three years of a Brahmin leader becoming a Chief Minister in the desert state. The state will also have two young Deputy Chief Ministers, Diya Kumari (52) and Prem Chand Bairwa (54). In picking the trio, the saffron party has showed that infusing fresh blood in the states and grooming the next generation of leaders are its priority.

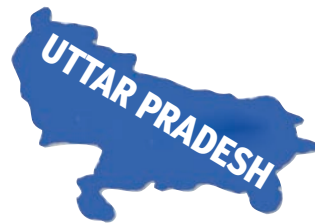
NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

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

Orissa POST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010



Delhi LG, CM flag off 500 electric buses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal flagged off 500 electric buses here Thursday, taking the number of such buses in the national capital to 1,300.

The Delhi government said the capital has the highest number of electric buses plying on its roads in the country. "We have rolled out 500 (electric) buses today. These are zero emission buses. We will continue to do such things to make Delhi better," Saxena said.

Kejriwal in his turn thanked Saxena and promised to keep improving the city transport. "I want to congratulate the people of Delhi on this occasion. I also want to thank the LG for taking out time from his busy schedule to grace this occasion. We now have 1300 electric buses in Delhi. We will continue to strengthen Delhi's transport system," he told reporters.

In a post on X, Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said, "Congrats Delhi!!! We're celebrating another huge milestone today! Flagged off 500 new E-buses along with Hon'ble CM @ArvindKejriwal and Hon'ble @LtGovDelhi. Success is never overnight, it is a guaranteed re-

sult of Consistency! We are yet again leading the way with a record 1300 e-buses."

Later, addressing a press conference, the minister said the addition of the buses is a strong step in the fight against pollution. "In winters, pollution levels go up. One CNG bus emits 800 gram of carbon dioxide per kilometre. One electric bus saves that much amount of carbon dioxide going into the atmosphere," he said.

Before the Thursday addition, 800 electric buses had been plying on Delhi roads since January 2022. These buses have covered a distance of more than 42 million kilometres and cut more than 34,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide so far, the minister said.

By 2025, Delhi will have a total of 10,480 buses with electric ones making up 80 per cent of the fleet. This will help cut 4.67 lakh tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, according to the minister.

The new buses are air-conditioned, comfortable, and equipped with CCTV cameras and panic buttons. "If you do not feel comfortable while travelling, you can press the panic button and immediately the live feed to the command and control centre will start. The feed will also be accessible to Delhi Police that will be able to step in," he said.



Delhi tops in sexual, workplace harassment cases in 2022



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 14: The national capital has not only recorded the highest number of sexual harassment cases among metropolitan cities, as per the National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) report for 2022, it has also taken the lead in workplace-related incidents.

Startling statistics from 2022 reveal that Delhi accounted for 19 reported cases, outpacing Mumbai with 15, Hyderabad with nine, and Bengaluru with eight cases. Despite the severity of the issue, reluctance to report incidents of sexual harassment at the workplace persists among victims.

Fear of reprisal and of losing one's livelihood, the stigma associated with coming forward, and the risk of tarnishing one's

professional and personal reputation contribute to the underreporting of workplace sexual harassment.

Sometimes, even after women gather the courage to complain, they face major difficulty in getting the higher authorities to act on a complaint, especially if it involves a very senior person.

For instance, in May this year, the Delhi Government's Directorate of Education initiated disciplinary proceedings against a vice principal in a city Government school over complaints of sexual harassment against him by some women teachers. However, this action came after the Delhi Commission for Women received several complaints of sexual and mental harassment against the head of the school for boys in Qadipur area in the national Capital.

According to the DCW, the complainants had stated that the accused had sexually and mentally harassed the teachers of the school and the educators had submitted several complaints against him before the higher authorities as well, but to no avail.

Further, the DCW also learnt that a FIR under Sections 354(A), 354(C), 354(D) and 506 of the Indian Penal Code was also registered against the said accused by another woman in 2022.

Workplace sexual harassment inflicts significant harm, serving as a stark manifestation of gender discrimination in professional settings. It also represents a violation of fundamental rights enshrined under Article 19 of the Constitution, eroding equality and jeopardising the physical and psychological well-being of workers.

UP police to recruit 700 women in first phase

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 14: The recruitment for the first all-women battalion of the Uttar Pradesh police is set to begin soon.

In the first phase, the state government is expected to announce vacancies for around 700 policewomen anytime between December and January, said a government spokesperson. Additionally, 20 per cent of over 60,000 vacancies for the post of civil police Constables will be reserved for women.

Sources in the Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment & Promotion Board said that the state is expected to conduct exams for the recruitment of Constables before the Lok Sabha polls.

Interestingly, the Board is also expected to announce over 25,000 more openings for the posts of Sub-Inspectors, Jail Wardens, PAC Constables, firemen, mounted cops, and Special Security Force (SSF).

Similarly, vacancies for the posts of Sub-Inspectors in the civil police as well as SSF, fire service Second Officer and computer operators will also be declared for women and youth soon, sources said. In total, the number of vacancies through the police department alone are



expected to be over 86,000 if other posts like that of SSF personnel, jail warden etc are added.

Sources said that since 4.5 lakh candidates applied for the 2,000 spots for Radio Operators, for the remaining 83,000 posts, over 20 lakh candidates are expected to apply. The move to set up UP's first all-women battalion is seen as a bid to do away with caste-centric politics and focus on the underprivileged, women, youth, and farmers as suggested by the Prime Minister recently.

Meanwhile, the Board on Wednesday advertised 546 seats under the sports category quota for recruitment of Constable-rank personnel in civil police and the PAC. The process to apply for the seats will begin from Thursday (December 14) and the last date will be January 1.

In a first, Delhi to get mothers' 'milk bank'

The MCD Saturday had presented a budget estimate of ₹16,683.02 crore for the year 2024-25. Besides, the 'milk bank' project, the civic body in its budget also provisioned funds for construction of around 20 school buildings in different zones of the city and use of artificial intelligence to monitor civic amenities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Delhi's first municipal-run "milk bank", proposed to be setup at a hospital, will have a facility to store mother's milk at low temperatures for future use, officials said.

In its budget presented on December 9, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) had proposed the establishment of its first lactation management unit or "milk bank" at the Swami



Dayanand Hospital.

However, the municipal commissioner in the budget speech did not elaborate on the planned project. The Swami Dayanand Hospital (SDH) is located in east Delhi and is the only civic hospital in the region.

A senior doctor at SDH said a detailed proposal on the modalities of setting up the "milk bank" will be sent to civic authorities by the hospital. "It will essentially be a facility where mother's milk can be stored at low temperatures, so that it can be used for babies in the future. It will be akin to a blood bank," the doctor said.

Sharing the purpose of such a bank, he said at times, a child after birth may not be in a position to feed or may be admitted in an ICU. The idea is to store mother's milk so that when a baby needs it, it is available if the mother is either not lactating or lactation level has gone down, the doctor said.

"In such a scenario, milk is collected using breast pumps by a mother, and it is then hygienically handled by a trained staff and carried to the designated milk bank. The AIIMS has such a facility," he said. He, however, termed the proposal "very ambitious" and expressed reservations over its ultimate execution in the long run, given the fund issues at the MCD.

"Storing mother's milk at low temperatures will require the use of cutting-edge technology and a trained staff to handle it. This has to be kept in mind. Having a plan is one thing, but executing it needs funds and manpower, which the civic body lacks at present," an official source said.

Besides, the job of the MCD is to provide primary health care, and this project is a "bit on the ambitious side", the source said. Asked who else can benefit from such a "milk bank", the doctor said babies who may have lost their mothers at birth or early age.

The MCD Saturday had presented a budget estimate of ₹16,683.02 crore for the year 2024-25. Besides, the "milk bank" project, the civic body in its budget also provisioned funds for construction of around 20 school buildings in different zones of the city and use of artificial intelligence to monitor civic amenities.

The civic body has also proposed to set up various testing labs in 60 primary health centres under a public-private-partnership model.

UP tourism department to revamp website ahead of Maha Kumbh

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Dec 14: The Uttar Pradesh tourism department has decided to revamp its official website to ensure that visitors to various destinations in the state are not hassled.

The move has been initiated in the run-up to the Maha Kumbh 2025 and rising tourist footfall in important places of UP, including Varanasi and Mathura. "A request for proposal (RFP) has been floated by the government to invite experienced and qualified service providers for the annual maintenance, updates and enhancement of our website," said an official spokesperson.

"The selected agency will streamline the department's website, ensuring it is well-equipped with various technical features such as data encryption, search engine optimization (SEO), error-free user experience and regular software updates," he added.

"The website of the UP tourism department functions as a central hub for information and resources related to tourism in the state. The website has been designed to provide a wide range of information and services to both tourists and stakeholders interested in the promotion and development of tourism in the state," said the spokesperson.

For the annual maintenance of the web portal, the agency will be engaged through a three-year contract, which will enhance the website's performance, management and security and optimize its features.

Kanpur jail launches unique prisoner reform initiative

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kanpur, Dec 14: The Kanpur district jail has launched a unique prisoner reform initiative under which food outlet will be run by its current and former inmates.

Jail superintendent B.N. Pandey said that the outlet has become functional from Monday. While food will be prepared by the prisoners in the jail kitchen, former inmates will not only manage the outlet but also act as home delivery executives as the jail aspires to take the initiative online.

On its first day, the outlet managed a sale of an impressive ₹5,500 -- most of it coming from people visiting their kin lodged in the jail. Tea, sold for ₹10 per cup, and espresso, sold for ₹20 per cup, made for the bulk of the revenue.

The idea was mooted by District Magistrate Vishak G. Iyer who



was impressed by the culinary skills of inmates as they churned a variety of food items for the erstwhile jail canteen.

"We believe that the initiative will bring a change in the mindset of people behind bars. Also, it will send a message that the government is interested in their rehabilitation," said Iyer, who

provided government funds for the project.

It was decided that 10 current and 10 former inmates be engaged in the initiative. The inmates have decided to serve only vegetarian food with a high sale value.

The menu would be revised after the outlet makes its way

to food aggregator platforms, Pandey said, adding talks with two major app-driven service providers were already in the final stages. The project's nodal officer, Anil Kumar, said the rates had been kept reasonable.

"A thali (meal) of four rotis, two curries, dal, rice and salad is sold for ₹70. This is the costliest item on the menu," said Kumar, adding samosa, noodles, rajma-rice, kadhi-rice, chole-rice and, puri-sabzi would also be sold.

"Chefs from reputed institutes and hotels will train inmates to better their skills and add new items to the menu," he said. The food joint will be managed by a prisoner welfare and rehabilitation cooperative society.

A bank account has been opened in the name of the society, and earnings from the outlet would be credited to this account.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.B-1453:
WORKS DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
BALLIGUDA (R&B) DIVISION, BALLIGUDA
 Telephone & Fax: 06846-243242, E-mail: eepwd.balliguda@gmail.com
 Bid Identification No. S.E.BLG-13/2023-24
 Dated: 07.12.2023

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Building and Road Works as per DTCN available in the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in .
1	Estimated Cost	Rs. 16.93 Lakh
2	No. of Works	01 (One) Only
3	Period & Time of completion	01 (One) Calendar Month
4	Date & Time of availability of the bid document in the portal	18.12.2023 to 29.12.2023 (upto 5.00 PM) for online bidding
5	Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal	Upto 5.00 PM of 29.12.2023
6	Date & Time of bid opening	11.30 hours on Dated 30.12.2023
7	Name & Address of the Officer Inviting Bid	Superintending Engineer, Balliguda R&B Division, Balliguda, Dist: Kandhamal, Pin-762103

Others can be seen from Detailed Notice Inviting Tenders, available in website www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Corrigendum if any, shall only be published in the above website. Sd./Superintending Engineer Balliguda (R&B) Division
 OIPR-34038/11/0013/2324

WORKS DEPARTMENT No.B-1456
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
RAIRANGPUR (R&B), DIVISION
 e-mail: - eerbrairangpur@yahoo.co.in
Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. SE 54 of 2023-24

- Nature of work: - Electrical Works
- Number of works: 1 (One)
- Amount put to Tender: - Rs.25,92,100.00
- Class of Contractor: - HT electrical Contractor
- Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal: - Dt.20.12.2023 at 10:00 AM
- Last Date / Time of receipt of bid in the portal: - Dt.28.12.2023 up to 04:00 PM
- Date of opening of bid: - Dt.29.12.2023 at 11:00 AM
- Name & address of the Office inviting bid: - Superintending Engineer, Rairangpur (R&B) Division
- The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "<http://tendersodisha.gov.in>". All future corrigendum will be available on ONLINE mode only.

Superintending Engineer Rairangpur (R&B) Division
 OIPR-34041/11/0018/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.L-184:
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER OF
HORTICULTURE (NORTHERN ZONE)
AT/PO- FARM ROAD, SAMBALPUR-768002
 (email: eehortnz@gmail.com)
 Notice No.: 1330/EE/Hort.NZ, Dated 12.12.2023
 Bid Identification No. 06 / Hort. / NZ / 2023-24, Dt. 12.12.2023

01	Total Nos of Works	Six
02	Estimated Cost	Rs.05,04,221/- to Rs.21,01,125/-
03	Period of Completion	45 days to 90 days
04	Time of availability of bid document in the portal	From 10.00 Hrs. of 18.12.2023 to 17.00 Hrs. of 28.12.2023
05	Last date & time of dropping of copies of uploaded documents, draft, affidavits, Schedules etc. in the tender box at the office of the undersigned at Farm Road, Sambalpur - 768002.	From 11.00 AM of 26.12.2023 to Before 17.00 Hrs. of 29.12.2023
06	Time of Opening of Bids	10.30 AM of 04.01.2024 onwards
07	Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	Executive Engineer (Agril.), Northern Zone, Horticulture, At/PO - Farm Road, Sambalpur, Pin-768002.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Sd./ Executive Engineer (Agril.), Northern Zone, Horticulture, Sambalpur
 OIPR-01465/11/0011/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA E-mail: eerwkingsa@yahoo.com
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, KESINGA
e-Procurement Notice
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. SERWKSNG-Online-07/2023-24

- Name of Works : Building Works (As per Annexure)
- Total No. of Work : 2 Nos.
- Estimated Cost : 20.14 & 20.14 (Approximately)
- E. M. D. : Please refer DTCN
- Cost of Tender Document : Rs 6000/- (Online)
- Class of Contractor : 'C & B' Class
- Period of Completion : 04 (Four) Calendar Months
- Other details : As per DTCN

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender
		From	To		
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Kesinga	SERWKSNG - Online - 07/2023-24	16.12.2023 at 11.00 A.M.	26.12.2023 Upto 17.00 P.M.	22.12.2023 upto 11.00 A.M.	27.12.2023 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website i.e. www.tenderodisha.gov.in.
 OIPR-25153/11/0013/2324 Sd./ Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Kesinga



People watch figure skaters perform on the opening day of the largest skating rink in St. Petersburg with an area of 11,000 square metres in St. Petersburg, Russia



An Indian Army official shows his skill during the full dress rehearsal for 'Military Tattoo' show ahead of the 'Vijay Diwas' celebrations, at RCTC ground in Kolkata, West Bengal



Tibetan spiritual guru the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, arrives to attend a long life prayer to devotees at Sed-Gyued Institute of Buddhist Studies at Salugara, Siliguri in Darjeeling district, West Bengal



Firefighters attempt to rescue people after a fire broke out in a hospital in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh



Women pose for pictures near the Bell Tower amid snowfall in Beijing, China



Britain's Prince William, centre, attends the Lord High Admiral's Divisions to view a parade of 202 Royal Navy Cadets, at the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth, England



Penguins stand near the Chilean O'Higgins base in Antarctica

AP/PTU/REUTERS PHOTOS



It means if something like this happens in our House (legislature), and we seek a discussion we will be suspended. Don't the MPs have the right to seek a discussion and get answers
AADIYA THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) LEADER

SC EXTENDS INTERIM BAIL GRANTED TO SATYENDAR

The Supreme Court Thursday extended till January 8 the interim bail granted to former Delhi minister Satyendar Kumar Jain in a money laundering case. The apex court is seized of a petition filed by Jain challenging the April 6 order of the Delhi High Court dismissing his bail application in the case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED)



of the day quote

People are paying hefty sums to these travel agents, but some unscrupulous agents cheat them. We don't want to stop anyone moving abroad, but we don't want them to fall prey to unscrupulous agents
ANIL VUJ | HARYANA HOME MINISTER

Our government has also decided to provide social security pensions to persons with disabilities and unmarried individuals. A widower who has attained the age of 40 years and his own verified annual income is up to Rs 3 lakh will be eligible for the scheme benefit
MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR | HARYANA CM

We apologise that we could not catch the culprits. But we promise that we will put the real culprits behind bars and expose those who played politics over the same
SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL | SAD CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

2 Maoists killed in encounter

Gadchiroli (Maharashtra): At least two Maoists were killed in an encounter with the police in the forests near the Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh border, an official said here Thursday. The incident followed a tip-off that a large contingent of Maoists were camping near Bodhintola, around 10 km from the Godalwahi outpost in Chhattisgarh. The intel said that the Maoists were planning to ambush and carry out sabotage activities on the security forces and kill local tribals by branding them as police informers.

15 injured in gas cylinder blast

Hyderabad: Fifteen workers were injured in a cooking gas cylinder explosion in a bakery kitchen in Hyderabad Thursday. The injured have been admitted to a hospital, where the condition of six of them is stated to be critical. Police said the explosion occurred in the kitchen of Karachi Bakery in Gagan Pahad area under the limits of Rajendranagar Police Station on the city outskirts.

Delhi LG, CM flag off 500 electric buses

New Delhi: Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal flagged off 500 electric buses here Thursday, taking the number of such buses in the national capital to 1,300. The Delhi government said the national capital now has the highest number of electric buses operating in any city of the country, adding that over 7,000 CNG buses are plying on the roads.

PARLIAMENT SECURITY BREACH

Oppn demands statement from Shah

THE DEMAND WAS RAISED IN BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT AND ALSO OUTSIDE BY LEADERS OF VARIOUS PARTIES WHILE PROTESTING AGAINST THE BREACH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Leaders of various opposition parties Thursday demanded that Home Minister Amit Shah make a statement on the issue of the Parliament security breach followed by a discussion on the matter in both Houses.

"In view of the gravity of the situation adversely impacting upon the security of the institution of Parliament and Parliamentarians, on behalf of the opposition and INDIA parties, we demand that a statement of Union Home Minister on this serious matter be followed by a discussion in regard to urgent remedial security measures in the abode of Democracy," Mallikarjun Kharge said in a post on X after a meeting of opposition parties in the morning. "Is it a crime to urge the Union Home Minister to make a statement in the House? Is it a crime to want a discussion on the perilous security breach? Does it not invoke draconian shades of dictatorship, a hallmark of the present dispensation?" he asked after 14 MPs were suspended.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said the INDIA bloc



Suspended TMC MP Derek O'Brien during a silent protest outside the Parliament House

parties demand a detailed statement by the home minister in both Houses, followed by a discussion on the security breach witnessed in the Lok Sabha. The demands also include strict action against BJP MP Pratap Simha who provided the visitor passes to the intruders.

Congress MP Manish Tewari said a Joint Committee of Parliament comprising members who have prior experience in policing, security and law must be set up to concurrently investigate the breach.

His party colleague Shashi Tharoor said, "If you can smug-

gle in the smoke canisters, then you can easily smuggle in something far more serious. The issue is the security lapses. The problem the MPs have is the feeling that the government is not taking this seriously enough."

AAP MP Sushil Kumar Rinku said the lapse in security arrangements should be seriously looked into and it should be made sure that such incidents do not recur. Karti Chidambaram of the Congress termed Wednesday's security breach incident a "colossal failure of systems". Several Congress MPs, in-

Security tightened

Day after the security breach in Parliament, stringent measures were put in place in and around the building Thursday with police and Parliament security personnel thoroughly checking the credentials of those entering the complex. Security personnel deployed outside Transport Bhavan which is metres away from the Parliament complex did not allow anyone to go beyond the barricades before checking their identity cards and entry passes.

cluding Kharge, had given notices for adjournment in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to discuss the issue while setting aside all other business of the House. But those were rejected by the chair.

While Congress MP and whip Manickam Tagore has given an adjournment notice in Lok Sabha, party MP and whip in Rajya Sabha Naseer Hussain gave a similar adjournment notice under Rule 267 for discussing the issue.

Some parties are also contemplating meeting President Droupadi Murmu on the security issue and seeking her intervention as it involves the security of all MPs.

Court acquits man accused of raping, killing 6-yr-old

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Idukki (Kerala), Dec 14: A court in Kerala Thursday acquitted a man accused of raping and killing a six-year-old girl, who was his neighbour, at Churukkulam estate in this high range district two years ago.

The Fast Track Special Court for the trial of offences under the POCSO Act acquitted the accused - Arjun - saying "prosecution failed to establish all the circumstances which are consistent with the guilt of the accused and inconsistent with his innocence." Special Judge Manju V further said that in cases of unnatural death, it was the bounden duty of the investigating officer to reach the place of occurrence without any delay, inspect the premises, collect all evidence and notice every minute details with care and caution till the mystery was unravelled.

The court said that the "unscientific way of collecting evidence without showing the shrewdness and intelligence reasonably expected from an investigating officer, seriously affected the prompt and timely collection of evidence in the case". "So, in view of the evidence discussed above, I find that the prosecution failed to prove its case that the accused committed offences punishable under sections 449, 376(2)(n), 377, 376A, 376AB, 302 of Indian Penal Code and sections 5(i), (j)(iv), (l) and (m) r/w s.6 of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act," the court said in its 90-page verdict acquitting the accused.

Patanjali students shine

AGENCIES

Haridwar, Dec 14: The district-level Mahakumbh boxing tournament was organised at the Bhalla Stadium here recently.

The girl students of Patanjali Gurukulam participated in the event with great enthusiasm and won medals in various categories.

Tejaswini of Class V and Radhika of Class VIII of Patanjali Gurukulam were selected for the state-level Mahakumbh competition for their excellent performances. Devika of Class VI won a silver medal while Anushka Pal of Class VIII bagged a bronze in the competition. Baba Ramdev blessed the victorious participants for their



excellent performance. Patanjali Gurukulam's Principal Sadhvi Devmayi wished the players all the best for their bright future and inspired them so that they can do well in future competitions.

Army rescues 1,217 stranded tourists

AGENCIES

Gangtok, Dec 14: The Indian Army has rescued 1,217 tourists stranded in high-altitude areas in eastern Sikkim due to snowfall and inclement weather, officials said Thursday. The rescue mission was conducted by the Trishakti Corps of the army, and the tourists were moved to safer areas and provided with shelter, warm clothing, medical aid and hot meals, they said. "The rescue and relief operation by the army, which commenced December 13 continued till early morning hours of December 14. A total of 1,217 tourists were evacuated from the forward areas of East Sikkim to an army transit facility," an official said.

SNIPPETS

SC conditionally suspends conviction of Afzal Ansari

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Thursday conditionally suspended the conviction of former BSP MP Afzal Ansari in a 2007 Gangsters Act case, saying his Ghazipur constituency will be deprived of its legitimate representation in the legislature since a by-election may not be held given the remaining tenure of the current Lok Sabha. A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Dipankar Datta and Ujjal Bhuyan, in a majority judgement of 2:1, directed that the Ghazipur parliamentary constituency shall not be notified for by-election in terms of provisions of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) till the high court has decided Ansari's appeal against his conviction. While Justice Kant and Bhuyan delivered the majority verdict, Justice Datta dismissed Ansari's appeal against the Allahabad High Court order.

Cow vigilante Bittu Bajrang's brother set on fire in Haryana

Faridabad: A group of men allegedly poured flammable liquid on cow vigilante Bittu Bajrang's brother and set him on fire here, police said Thursday. He has sustained 54 per cent burn injuries and is currently being treated at a private hospital, they said. Bajrang alias Rajkumar, the national president of Goraksha Bajrang Force, was arrested in connection with the Nuh violence but is out on bail. According to police, Bajrang's younger brother Mahesh Panchal was allegedly attacked on Wednesday night by six to seven men. They allegedly poured some flammable liquid on Panchal and set him on fire at Chacha Chowk in Baba Mandi, Faridabad, police said. After getting information on the incident, a police team reached the hospital. Panchal told the police that he recognised one of the attackers as one Arman, who had a juice shop in Baba Mandi earlier.

Top court rejects Sisodia's plea seeking review of earlier order

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has dismissed AAP leader Manish Sisodia's pleas seeking review of its October 30 verdict dismissing his bail petitions in the corruption and money laundering cases related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. A bench of Justice Sanjay Khanna and Justice SVN Bhatti dismissed the review petitions Wednesday. "We have carefully perused the review petitions as also the grounds in support thereof. In our opinion, no case for review of the judgment dated October 30, 2023, is made out. The review petitions are, accordingly, dismissed," the bench said in its order passed Wednesday. It also rejected Sisodia's request for an oral hearing on the review petitions.

MAHADEV APP CASE

Maha govt forms SIT to probe Dawood brother's involvement

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Nagpur, Dec 14: Maharashtra government Thursday formed a Special Investigating Team (SIT) to probe the involvement of underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's brother, Mustakim, in the Mahadev App case.

The Mahadev App is known for betting and thereby defrauding gullible public to tune of crores of rupees. Replying to a 'Calling Attention Motion' raised by Ashish Shelar (BJP) in the state assembly, Shelar alleged that an FIR against the App was registered on November 7 for defrauding the small banks to the tune of crores of rupees and the 28 per cent government service tax was also not paid. Mustakim and Amit Sharma - business partner - of Dawood Ibrahim are accused of pumping finances in J.P. Infrastructure, a building construction firm of Vijay Jain.

Amit Sharma and Jain are partners in a building project JP Dek in Dindoshi which was funded by Ramesh Shah and Edelweiss Company. The Edelweiss Company has said that company has no financial relationships with J.P. Infra Mumbai, J.P. Infra India Pvt. Ltd and has not financed projects like JP Dek in Goregaon neither anywhere else as alleged. Meanwhile, while making a detailed statement in the Lower House, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said the Mahadev App was registered in South America, Venezuela through Telegram social media platform.

Delete IAS Sindhuri's photos within 24 hrs: SC to IPS Roopa

A PUBLIC DISPUTE UNFOLDED BETWEEN IAS SINDHURI AND IPS ROOPA, WITH ALLEGATIONS OF UNAUTHORISED RELEASE OF SENSITIVE PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEOS OF SINDHURI

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: In a dramatic turn of events, the Supreme Court Thursday asked IPS officer D Roopa to delete her social media posts against IAS officer Rohini Sindhuri within 24 hours.

A SC bench, led by Justice Abhay S Oka, which addressed a dispute involving two high-ranking civil servants, said if it is impossible to delete all the posts, Roopa should at least put up a post that she was withdrawing all her comments against Sindhuri.

A dispute unfolded between Sindhuri and Roopa in public

with allegations of the unauthorised release of sensitive photographs and videos of the former.

Moreover, Roopa made accusations claiming unethical behavior on the part of Sindhuri.

The bench expressed its dismay at the lack of agreement on mediation, which had been offered earlier. Justice Oka emphasized the need for a resolution, stating, "If IAS, IPS officers continue to fight like this and refuse mediation, this must come to an end. How will the administration work?"

Sindhuri was aghast over dragging her family into the controversy. "How can she bring



my family into this? My 10-year-old son is asking me. Complete character assassination," she had stated.

Thursday, the top court directed Roopa to delete the alleged defamatory posts from social media platforms within 24 hours and issue an apology.

The court pointed out that the trial was in primary stages, and actions must be taken in the interest of both the civil servants.

Sindhuri detailed her grievances, claiming that Roopa had verbally abused her on a recent flight and sent derogatory texts to her parents. She further alleged that Roopa had linked her with male officers, damaging her reputation.

Justice Oka urged both parties to demonstrate their

bonafide, emphasizing, "We are on administration of the State. Both must understand in this court there is no place for emotions."

The court also questioned Roopa's involvement in investigating Sindhuri, stating, "You are an IPS officer. How are you concerned with allegations made against someone else being probed by someone else?"

Roopa, in response, accused Sindhuri of sending inappropriate pictures to male bureaucrats, prompting the court to reiterate its focus on the administration of the state and emphasise that emotions have no place in the courtroom.

international



Former President Donald Trump's policies toward China left America more vulnerable and more isolated in the global economy
JANET YELLEN | US TREASURY SECY



TURKISH MP DIES
An opposition Turkish lawmaker died Thursday, two days after suffering a heart attack and collapsing in front of Parliament as he finished a speech criticising the government's policy toward Israel

of the day quote

The European Union is losing its credibility because of a lack of a strong position in the war between Israel and Hamas
LEO VARADKAR | IRELAND'S PM

I think it's my responsibility to make faith and patriotism and family and hard work cool again in this country, I think they're pretty cool and I think that's my job as your next president
VIVEK RAMASWAMY | REPUBLICAN US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

India's initiative to include the African Union as a permanent member of the G20 under its presidency is a significant step in reform that should inspire the "much older" United Nations to make the Security Council contemporary
RUCHIRA KAMBOJ | PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO THE UN

SHORT TAKES

Imran Khan's lawyer arrested

Lahore: Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's lawyer and a leader from his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party was arrested on Thursday outside the Lahore High Court where he was attending the lawyers' strike against the Supreme Court's decision to allow military courts to try civilians allegedly involved in the May 9 violence. Lawyer Sher Afzal Marwat, who is also the senior vice president of Khan's PTI, was arrested under a public order ordinance, Punjab police said.

Three arrested in Denmark

Copenhagen: Three people were arrested in coordinated actions across Denmark and one person in the Netherlands on suspicion of plotting to carry out "an act of terror," Danish police said Thursday. Flemming Drejer, operative head of Denmark's Security and Intelligence Service, known by its acronym PET, said that Denmark was not changing the terror threat level, which has been at "serious," the second-highest level, since 2010.

Bilawal PPP's PM candidate

Islamabad: The Pakistan Peoples Party Thursday announced that its chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari would be its prime ministerial candidate and his father Asif Ali Zardari the presidential nominee in the general election scheduled to be held February 8. The move comes as the PMN-L party had already announced that its chief and former three-time premier Nawaz Sharif would be the nominee for the post of prime minister.

'NO PEACE UNTIL GOALS ACHIEVED'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, Dec 14: Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday there would be no peace in Ukraine until the Kremlin realises its goals, which remain unchanged after nearly two years of fighting that has sent tensions soaring between Moscow and the West.

Speaking at a year-end news conference that lasted over four hours and offered him an opportunity to reinforce his grip on power, Putin gave some rare details on what Moscow calls its "special military operation".

He dismissed the need for a second wave of mobilisation of reservists to fight in Ukraine — a move that has been deeply unpopular. He said there are some 617,000 Russian soldiers there, including around 244,000 troops who were called up to fight alongside professional military forces. "There will be peace when we will achieve our goals," Putin said, repeating a frequent Kremlin line. "Victory will be ours." Putin highlighted Russian military gains in Ukraine as the conflict's second winter approached.

"Almost all along the line of contact our armed forces, let's put it modestly, are improving their positions, almost all in an active stage of action and there is an improvement in the position of our troops all along," he said. "The enemy has declared a big counteroffensive, but he hasn't achieved anything anywhere," Putin added, claiming that the latest Ukrainian attempt to create a bridgehead on the eastern



The Russian President, who has held power for nearly 24 years and announced recently he is running for reelection, was greeted with applause as he arrived in the hall in central Moscow

Giving rare detail on what Moscow calls its special military operation, Putin dismissed the need for a second wave of mobilization of reservists to fight in Ukraine — a move that proved deeply unpopular in the past

bank of the Dnieper River also fizzled and Ukrainian troops suffered heavy losses. He alleged that Kyiv was sacrificing its troops in order to show some success to its Western sponsors as it seeks more aid.

"I believe it's stupid and irresponsible on behalf of the country's political leadership, but it's their business," he said. Putin, who has held power for nearly 24 years and announced last week he is running for reelection, was greeted with applause as he arrived in the hall in central Moscow. He didn't hold his traditional news conference last year after his military failed to take Kyiv and as the Ukrainian army retook territory in the east and south.

But with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy forced to plead for more U.S. aid amid a stalling counteroffensive and fracturing Western support, he decided to face the media once

more — although the session is heavily choreographed and is more about spectacle than scrutiny.

It was the first time that Putin, who has heavily limited his interaction with foreign media, faced questions from Western journalists since the fighting in Ukraine began. Ordinary citizens had the chance to submit questions alongside those from journalists, and Russian state media said at least 2 million of them had been sent in ahead of time.

The news conference began with questions about Ukraine and highlighted concerns some Russians have about another wave of mobilization. "There is no need" for mobilization now, Putin said, because 1,500 men are being recruited every day. As of Wednesday evening, 486,000 soldiers have signed a contract with the Russian military, he said.

Putin's remarks about another wave of mobilization were met with skepticism by some independent Russian media, which pointed out that he had promised not to draft reservists for Ukraine and then reversed course and ordered a "partial" call-up.

The move, which he announced in September 2022, prompted thousands of Russians to leave the country. He reiterated that Moscow's goals in Ukraine — "de-Nazification, de-militarization and a neutral status" of Ukraine — remain unchanged. He had spelled out those loosely defined objectives the day he sent troops into its neighbor in February 2022.

The claim of "de-Nazification" refers to Russia's allegations that Ukraine's government is heavily influenced by radical nationalist and neo-Nazi groups — an allegation derided by Kyiv and the West.

Mother, jailed for 20 yrs, cleared of killing babies

Folbigg's lawyer, Rhane Rago, said her legal team was preparing a claim for "substantial" compensation for her wrongful imprisonment

REUTERS

Sydney, Dec 14: A woman imprisoned for 20 years over the deaths of her four children, and pardoned in June, saw her convictions quashed by New South Wales state Thursday, with her lawyer saying she plans to claim "substantial" compensation.

Kathleen Folbigg was convicted in 2003 of murdering three of her children, and of manslaughter in the death of her fourth.

Folbigg maintained her innocence and said the children had died of natural causes over a decade, from 1989-1999.

In 2019, an initial inquiry into the case reaffirmed Folbigg's guilt.

But in 2022, a second inquiry led by a former chief justice found new evidence suggested two of the children had a genetic mutation that may have caused their deaths.

Folbigg was released from prison in June this year after being pardoned. "I am grateful that updated science and genetics has given me answers as to how my children died," an emotional Folbigg told reporters outside a criminal appeals court in Sydney.

"However, even in 1999, we had legal answers to prove my innocence. They were ignored. And dismissed," she said.

"The system preferred to



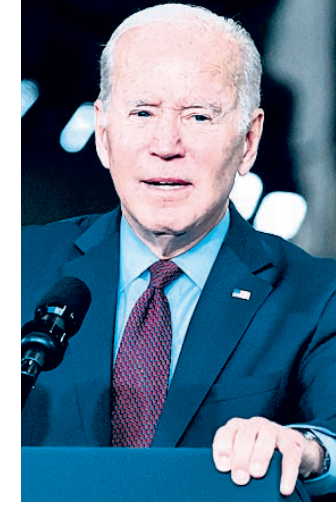
blame me rather than accept that sometimes, children can and do die suddenly, unexpectedly, and heartbreakingly." Folbigg's lawyer, Rhane Rago, said her legal team was preparing a claim for "substantial" compensation for her wrongful imprisonment.

"I'm not prepared to put a figure it, but it will be bigger than any substantial payment that has been made before," she said.

The case, which relied predominantly on circumstantial evidence, caused controversy among scientists and statisticians, some of whom were part of the campaign to secure Folbigg's release.

"Although there was new scientific evidence (in 2019) ... basic scientific principles were not adhered to from the time of trial," said Anna-Maria Arabia, chief executive of the Australian Academy of Science.

Biden impeachment inquiry authorised



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Dec 14: The House Wednesday authorised the impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden, with every Republican rallying behind the politically charged process despite lingering concerns among some in the party that the investigation has yet to produce evidence of misconduct by the president.

The 221-212 party-line vote put the entire House Republican conference on record in support of an impeachment process that can lead to the ultimate penalty for a president: punishment for what the

“Instead of doing anything to help make Americans' lives better, they are focused on attacking me with lies”
JOE BIDEN | US PRESIDENT

Constitution describes as "high crimes and misdemeanours," which can lead to removal from office if convicted in a Senate trial. Biden, in a rare statement about the impeachment effort, questioned the priorities of House Republicans in pursuing an inquiry against him and his family.

"Instead of doing anything to help make Americans' lives better, they are focused on attacking me with lies," the President said following the vote.

"Instead of doing their job on the urgent work that needs to be done, they are choosing to waste time on this baseless political stunt that even Republicans in Congress admit is not supported by facts."

Authorizing the months-long inquiry ensures that the impeachment investigation extends well into 2024, when Biden will be running for reelection and seems likely to be squaring off against former President Donald Trump — who was twice impeached during his time in the White House.



A Palestinian boy salvages canned food after an Israeli strike on residential buildings in Rafah, Gaza Strip. PFI PHOTO

Israel vows to fight on in Gaza

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rafah, Dec 14: Israel vowed to keep fighting in Gaza until it crushes Hamas after one of the deadliest single battles of the war for its soldiers, even as it faces mounting international calls for a ceasefire and unease on the part of its closest ally, the US.

The ambush in Gaza City, one of the hardest hit areas of the war, showed Hamas' resilience and

called into question whether Israel can defeat it without wiping out the entire territory. Support for Hamas has surged among Palestinians — in part because of the militant group's stiff resistance to a far more powerful foe — while the US has expressed growing discomfort over civilian deaths.

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan was visiting Israel on Thursday, days after President

Joe Biden said that Israel was losing international support because of its "indiscriminate bombing." Israel has imposed a total siege on northern Gaza, including Gaza City, and has flattened much of it in what is already one of the 21st century's most devastating military campaigns.

Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to fight to the end, "even given the great pain and the international pressure."

Pakistan extends deadline for Afghan refugees

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Dec 14: Amidst mounting international pressure, Pakistan has extended the deadline for the repatriation of Afghan nationals without proper documents and waiting to relocate to Western countries till February 29.

The development comes a week after US Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West visited Pakistan and met with Pakistan's caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani.

"The decision to extend the deadline from December 31 to February 29, 2024, was taken to encourage Afghan nationals to obtain legal documents or finalise evacuation arrangements in a third country as soon as possible," the Dawn newspaper quoted the caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi as saying.

Solangi was speaking to the media after the caretaker federal cabinet on Wednesday ex-



tended the deadline for the repatriation of Afghan nationals who have been residing in the country without proper documentation, but waiting to relocate to Western countries under their respective resettlement plan.

During the visit of West, the two sides discussed a range of issues, including the ongoing drive against undocumented Afghans, the report said. The forced expulsion of Afghans without documentation has drawn widespread criticism from human rights activists, UN officials, and others, who have asked Pakistan to reconsider the controversial policy.

On Wednesday, the cabinet also decided that Afghan nationals who have to leave for a third country and do not have any legal documents or processing fees would be fined USD 400 for overstaying in Pakistan instead of the earlier fixed amount of USD 800.

Earliest version of Mickey Mouse to become public domain in 2024

DISNEY STILL SOLIDLY AND SEPARATELY HOLDS A TRADEMARK ON MICKEY AS A CORPORATE MASCOT AND BRAND IDENTIFIER, AND THE LAW FORBIDS USING THE CHARACTER DECEPTIVELY TO FOOL CONSUMERS INTO THINKING A PRODUCT IS FROM THE ORIGINAL CREATOR

AGENCIES

Los Angeles, Dec 14: M-I-C-K-E-Y will soon belong to you and me. With several asterisks, qualification and caveats, Mickey Mouse in his earliest form will be the leader of the band of characters, films and books that will become public domain as the year turns to 2024.

In a moment many close observers thought might never come, at least one version of the quintessential piece of intellectual property and perhaps the most iconic character in American pop culture will be free from Disney's copyright as his first screen release, the 1928 short "Steamboat Willie," fea-

turing both Mickey and Minnie Mouse, becomes available for public use.

"This is it. This is Mickey Mouse. This is exciting because it's kind of symbolic," said Jennifer Jenkins, a professor of law and director of Duke's Center for the Study of Public Domain, who writes an annual Jan. 1 column for "Public Domain Day." "I kind of feel like the pipe on the steamboat, like expelling smoke. It's so exciting."

US law allows a copyright to be held for 95 years after Congress expanded it several times during Mickey's life. "It's sometimes derisively referred to as the Mickey Mouse Protection Act," Jenkins said. "That's oversimplified be-



cause it wasn't just Disney that was pushing for term extension. It was a whole group of copyright

holders whose works were set to go into the public domain soon, who benefited greatly from the

20 years of extra protection." "Ever since Mickey Mouse's first appearance in the 1928 short film Steamboat Willie, people have associated the character with Disney's stories, experiences, and authentic products," a Disney spokesperson said in a statement. "That will not change when the copyright in the Steamboat Willie film expires."

Current artists and creators will be able to make use of Mickey, but with major limits. It is only the more mischievous, rat-like, non-speaking boat captain in "Steamboat Willie" that has become public.

"More modern versions of Mickey will remain unaffected

by the expiration of the Steamboat Willie copyright, and Mickey will continue to play a leading role as a global ambassador for the Walt Disney Company in our storytelling, theme park attractions, and merchandise," Disney's statement said.

Not every feature or personality trait a character displays is necessarily copyrightable, however, and courts could be busy in the coming years determining what's inside and outside Disney's ownership. "We will, of course, continue to protect our rights in the more modern versions of Mickey Mouse and other works that remain subject to copyright," the company said.

business

of the day quote

Focus on design and creation of IP is crucial to India's ambitions as a product nation

S KRISHNAN | IT SECRETARY

India has unique advantages like raw material availability, a huge labour pool and well-established textile industry to become a leading destination for global textile and apparel value chain

DARSHANA VIKRAM JARDOSH | UNION MINISTER

We have an aggressive business plan for next year. We are looking to add 100 more sales outlets and enhance installed production capacity by 1 lakh units

TAE-JIN PARK | MD AND CEO, KIA INDIA

SHORT TAKES

Adani Group cash reserves rise 13%

New Delhi: Adani group companies have reported a 13.7 per cent rise in cash reserve to ₹45,895 crore in the first half of the current fiscal as earnings across the business rose while debt was almost unchanged. In the half-year credit performance report, Adani said while EBITDA rose to ₹71,253 crore in April-September this fiscal from ₹57,219 crore a year back, gross assets increased 6 per cent to about ₹4.5 lakh crore. Gross debt was almost unchanged at ₹2.26 lakh crore, but after considering cash reserves, the net debt at ₹1.80 lakh crore was 3.6 per cent less than ₹1.87 lakh crore in April-September 2022. The group's flagship incubator Adani Enterprises Ltd and ports unit Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone were top EBITDA earners. Adani Enterprises had the biggest debt of ₹103,926 crore, followed by APSEZ ₹99,901 crore and Adani Power Ltd ₹91,742 crore. City gas firm Adani Total Gas Ltd had the lowest borrowing in the group of ₹4,773 crore.

Vedanta debt refinancing

New Delhi: Vedanta Resources Ltd (VRL), the UK-headquartered parent company of Vedanta group, said it has secured a \$1.25 billion loan from private credit lenders to refinance/repay part of the \$3.2 billion debt maturing in 2024 and 2025, but this did not prevent S&P Global from downgrading its ratings. In a statement, Vedanta Resources said the fundraising will help "create a long-term sustainable capital structure" and demonstrate its continued ability to access global capital markets and investor confidence in the underlying business. Unimpressed, S&P Global downgraded Vedanta Resources to 'CC' from 'CCC' on potential bond extensions and continues to keep it on CreditWatch Negative list.

Volvo to increase prices by 2%

New Delhi: Volvo Car India Thursday said it will increase prices up to 2 per cent from January 1, 2024. The decision to raise prices is the result of rising input costs and volatile foreign exchange rates, the automaker said in a statement. Most of the passenger vehicle makers Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai Motor India, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, Honda, Volkswagen, Skoda Auto, Audi and BMW, have announced plans to increase the prices of their vehicles in January to offset the adverse impact of rising input and material costs.



If you think in terms of households only four per cent of Indian citizens participate in the stock market while about 50 per cent of US households are invested in stocks

PRAVIN JADHAV | FOUNDER AND CEO, DHANA

BoE KEY INTEREST RATES AT 15-YEAR HIGH

The Bank of England has kept borrowing rates unchanged despite mounting worries over the state of the British economy. The central bank Thursday left its main interest rate at a 15-year high of 5.25 per cent, where it has stood since August following the end of nearly two years of hikes. On Wednesday, the US Federal Reserve also kept rates on hold



58.34% OF BE TAX COLLECTION AT ₹10.64L-CRORE IN APRIL-NOV

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Net direct tax collection in the eight months of the current fiscal touched 58.34 per cent of Budget Estimates (BE) at ₹10.64 lakh crore.

The net tax collection for April-November stood at ₹10.64 lakh crore, which is 23.4 per cent higher than the corresponding period of last year, the Ministry of Finance said.

Gross collections, before issuing refunds, grew 17.7 per cent to ₹12.67 lakh crore in the April-November period.

Refunds amounting to ₹2.03 lakh crore issued from April to November of the current fiscal.

Special initiative was taken for cases where refunds had failed initially and subsequently issued to validated bank accounts, the ministry said.

In the current fiscal, ₹18.23 lakh crore is expected to be collected in direct taxes (personal income tax and corporate tax), and ₹15.38 lakh crore from indirect taxes (GST, customs, excise).

Earlier this week, a senior finance ministry official said that the government is likely to stick to the budgeted estimate of a total tax collection target of ₹33.61 lakh crore for the current fiscal in the revised estimates.

So far, direct tax collection is up by about 20 per cent and indirect tax is higher by 5 per cent.

8-MONTH HIGH WPI inflation spikes

THE WPI INFLATION WAS IN THE NEGATIVE OR DEFLATIONARY ZONE FOR THE PAST SEVEN MONTHS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Wholesale price-based inflation rose to an eight-month high of 0.26 per cent in November, driven by a sharp jump in food prices, especially onion and vegetables.

The WPI inflation was in the negative or deflationary zone for the past seven months since April and was at (-0.52 per cent in October.

The last positive WPI inflation was recorded in March at 1.41 per cent.

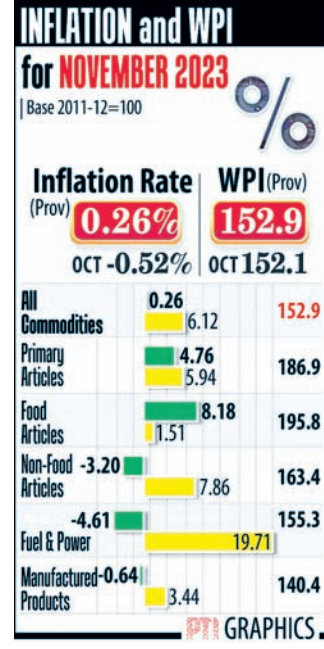
"Positive rate of inflation in November 2023 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, minerals, machinery & equipment, computer, electronics & optical products, motor vehicles, other transport equipment and other manufacturing etc," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in a statement.

Food inflation spiked to 8.18 per cent in November, from 2.53 per cent in October.

Inflation in onion zoomed 101.24 per cent in November, from 62.60 per cent in the previous month.

The government last week banned exports of this kitchen staple till March next year in a bid to increase domestic availability and contain prices, which skyrocketed to ₹80/kg in the retail market. It expects prices to cool to ₹40/kg by January.

Inflation in vegetables was 10.44 per cent, as against (-21.04 per cent in October.



In paddy and fruits, inflation was 10.44 per cent and 8.37 per cent respectively. Inflation in potato remained low at (-27.22 per cent in November.

During the month, inflation in manufactured products stood at (-0.64 per cent, fuel and power (-4.61 per cent and non-food articles (-3.20 per cent.

Barclays Research said the magnitude of increase in wholesale food prices was more than in retail food prices, indicating wholesalers did not pass through the entire price rise to consumers, which may be reflected in elevated retail food prices in

WHOLESALE PRICE-BASED INFLATION AT 0.26% IN NOVEMBER

PRICES IN FOOD SEGMENT SPIKED TO 8.18% IN NOV, FROM 2.53% IN OCT

INFLATION IN ONION ZOOMED 101.24% IN NOV, FROM 62.60% MoM

December, unless supply (particularly of vegetables) increases.

The RBI in its monetary policy review last week had said that there would be an uptick in the inflation data for November and December due to pressure on food prices.

"Going ahead, the inflation outlook would be considerably influenced by uncertain food prices. High-frequency food price indicators point to an increase in prices of key vegetables, which may push CPI inflation higher in the near term," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had said.

Retail or consumer price-based inflation rose at its fastest pace in three months at 5.55 per cent in November, driven by a spike in food prices, data released earlier this week showed.

The RBI had projected retail inflation to average 5.4 per cent this fiscal.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) in its December outlook released Wednesday said India's inflation forecasts for 2023 and 2024 are in line with recent data and are still within expectations. It forecast retail inflation at 5.5 per cent for this fiscal.

D-St continues its dream rally

Sensex, Nifty rally over 1% to hit lifetime highs as US Fed ignites rate cut hopes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 14: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty rallied over 1 per cent to hit all-time highs Thursday, propelled by intense buying in IT, tech and realty stocks after the US Federal Reserve kept its key interest rate unchanged and signalled rate cuts next year.

Persistent buying by foreign investors and sliding crude oil prices in the international markets also supported domestic equities, traders said.

Rising for the second straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 929.60 points or 1.34 per cent to settle at 70,514.20, its all-time closing high. During the day, it surged 1,018.29 points or 1.46 per cent to hit its all-time intra-day peak of 70,602.89.

A total of 2,064 stocks advanced while 1,702 declined and 126 remained unchanged.

The Nifty rallied 256.35 points or 1.23 per cent to settle at a record closing high of 21,182.70.



During the session, it jumped 284.55 points or 1.35 per cent to 21,210.90, its record intra-day peak.

The rupee recovered from all-time lows to close at 83.33 against the US dollar Thursday, gaining 7 paise as the greenback weakened in the overseas markets.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Hong Kong settled in positive territory, while Tokyo and Shanghai ended lower. European markets were trading in the green. The US markets ended with significant gains Wednesday.

The BSE benchmark advanced 33.57 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at 69,584.60 Wednesday. The Nifty gained 19.95 points or 0.10 per cent to 20,926.35.

INVESTORS RICHER BY ₹3.83L-CR

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies surged to an all-time high of ₹355 lakh crore Thursday, with investors becoming richer by ₹3.83 lakh crore as the benchmark Sensex hit its all-time high level driven by a rally in global equities. The market capitalisation (mcap) of BSE-listed firms hit a record high of ₹3,55,02,238.83 crore (\$4.26 trillion). Investors' wealth climbed by ₹3,83,006.92 crore from ₹3,51,19,231.91 crore Wednesday.

Indian Jewellery Shopping Festival 2023: Lalchnd declares winners of lucky draw

BHUBANESWAR: Lalchnd Jewellers, the leading jewellery brand of eastern India, has announced the winners of the lucky draw held during the Indian Jewellery Shopping Festival 2023. From October 15 to November 22, Lalchnd Jewellers had taken centre stage at the world's largest jewellery festival. The spectacular event was aimed at highlighting India's rich jewellery heritage. It offered patrons a chance to get immersed in the enchanting beauty of exquisite craftsmanship and the allure of dazzling prizes. The brand extended its heartiest congratulations to the lucky winners - Ambika Bhanja (Baramunda) and Swarup Bhol (Patia) - from Bhubaneswar. Both winners have won a 25-gram gold coin each. Many other lucky winners across India have also won exciting prizes, such as a kilogram of gold, Jadau Jewellery worth ₹10 lakh, temple jewellery worth ₹10 lakh, ornaments studded with diamonds and precious stones worth ₹5 lakh, gold jewellery worth ₹2.5 lakh and diamond-studded gold coins from Divine Solitaire. In an industry where tradition and innovation go hand in hand, Lalchnd Jewellers has consistently been a trailblazer and a trend-setter. The brand continues to introduce groundbreaking contests and festivals that resonate deeply with the people of Odisha and beyond. After a successful Indian Jewellery Shopping Festival 2023, Lalchnd Jewellers stands tall not just as a beacon of outstanding craftsmanship and uncompromising business ethics, but also as a bridge that connects hearts.



Tata Power unveils new ad on 'Switch to Green, Clean Energy'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 14: Tata Power, one of India's largest integrated power companies has launched a brand film promoting the message of "Embrace Mother Earth. Love Our Planet. Switch to Green and Clean Energy."

As Tata Power stays steadfast in its commitment to 'Sustainable is Attainable', this is another step towards inspiring citizens to make sustainable lifestyles a reality and underscore the importance of individual action and responsibility towards a cleaner, greener future.

The film makes an earnest plea to all Indians to love Mother Earth and embrace a sustainable lifestyle. As a socially responsible company, Tata Power is ensuring the adoption of sustainable products and services for both corporate India and its large user consumer base across India.

It is also working on popularising how a sustainable lifestyle is 'attainable' for millions of Indians through wide-

scale adoption of affordable green energy products and solutions like rooftop solar, EV charging, solar microgrids, group captive solutions, pumped hydro power, smart home automation solutions to promote energy efficiency.

Jyoti Bansal, Chief - Brand & Communications, Tata Power, said, "As we see global leaders congregate and debate at COP28, it is clear that No Action is not an option. Tata Power took the lead in creating the right conversations with Sustainable is Attainable. We take this to the next level as we urge the people to embrace their responsibility and accelerate individual action towards Sustainable Lifestyles and clean energy solutions. The film seeks to inspire a profound appreciation for our planet. The young children cleaning the globe in the film serve as a powerful symbol of how small acts can become catalysts for a big change. We strive to make this a Movement to encourage each one of us to become custodians of Planet Earth - the only home we will ever have."



TOP SUPPLIER Russian oil imports hit 4-month high

REUTERS

New Delhi, Dec 14: India's Russian oil imports in November rose to a 4-month high of 1.6 million barrels per day (bpd), up 3.1% from October, making up about 36% of the nation's overall imports last month, data obtained from trade sources showed.

Russia became India's top oil supplier this year as the south Asian nation was drawn to Russian oil discounts after some Western companies shunned purchases from Moscow following its invasion of Ukraine in February last year.

India, the world's third biggest oil importer and consumer, has traditionally relied on Middle Eastern producers for meeting the bulk of its oil needs and rarely made purchases from Russia in the past due to high transportation costs.

Last month, India overall imported about 4.5 million bpd oil, a decline of about 4.5% from October and a growth of 13% over the same month last year, the data showed.

Iraq and Saudi Arabia were the next top oil suppliers to India after Russia in November.

India cuts logistics costs to below 9% of GDP

REUTERS

New Delhi, Dec 14: India's logistics costs have come down to below 9% of gross domestic product, helped by rising state spending on roads, ports and digitisation, a report commissioned by the federal government said Friday, and could boost manufacturing.

"In terms of competitiveness, logistics costs for our producers - both domestic and exporters - have come down," Rajesh Kumar Singh, secretary at the federal Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIT) said after

HIGHER STATE SPENDING

the launch of the report.

The report "Logistics Cost in India" authored by Delhi-based think-tank National Council of Applied Economic Research, said logistics costs including transportation, warehousing, insurance and administrative charges had come down thanks to improvements in road network, tax reforms and digitisation of supply chains.

The logistics costs were down in the range of 7.8% to 8.9% of GDP in 2021/22, compared to 8.8% to 10% of GDP in 2012/13,

said Poonam Munjal, the lead author of the report.

According to the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index, India climbed six places to rank 38th out of 139 countries in 2023, helped by improving road and port networks and digitisation of the supply chains.

The average dwell time, the waiting time for a truck cargo at a port, was just 3 days in India when compared to 7 days in the United States and 10 days in Germany, said the World Bank report.

"Our next aim is to improve our global logistics ranking, among the top 25 countries," said Singh.

Booming Indian coal demand powers rise of state-run giants

Already the most coal-dependent major economy, India's reliance on the fuel for power generation is set to rise for a third straight year as the addition of renewables slows, giving the two giants, NTPC and Coal India, a boost

REUTERS

Singapore, Dec 14: Booming demand for Indian coal is driving up the shares of miner Coal India and power generator NTPC Ltd, state giants investors once dismissed as plodding dinosaurs, but which are now outperforming the wider market and global peers.

NTPC, which produces mostly coal-fired power, has surged 78%, far ahead of a gain of 17% in the broader Nifty Index, while shares of Coal India are up 55% for their best year in 2023.

Analysts expect their efforts to boost efficiency and access to cheap capital to extend the

rally, with most recommending that shareholders buy more of the two stocks or retain their holdings, LSEG data shows.

By comparison, shares of coal miners elsewhere, such as Indonesia's Adaro Energy, Australia's Whitehaven Coal and US-based Peabody plummeted this year. Shares of China Shenhua and China Coal Energy rose, but less than the Indian companies.

Among coal-fired power generators, South Korea's KEPCO, US-based Duke Energy and American Electric Power suffered sharp declines. Russia's Inter RAO shares rose 16.2%.

Still, with a price to earnings



ratio of 7.63, Coal India is cheaper than major Chinese peers, and NTPC is undervalued, compared with many Chinese and American counterparts.

Foreign funds have been boosting their stakes, despite tougher global environmental, social and governance (ESG) norms for in-

stitutional investors.

NTPC investors include the asset management units of Goldman Sachs and Nippon Life, Vanguard and Blackrock, while Fidelity, Mellon Investments and Charles Schwab figure among Coal India's top 20 shareholders, LSEG data showed.

NTPC, Coal India booked record profits of 78% and 55% respectively, outpacing historic growth

"Foreign shareholding in the company has steadily moved higher over the last two years, highlighting the dialing-down of the ESG discount," JPMorgan said in an August note on Coal India.

Both companies were long seen as dividend stocks.

Of the eight years of growth the Nifty saw in the last decade, Coal India and NTPC outperformed it just once each. Coal India lost 57% of its value in the decade through 2020, while NTPC lost more than a third. Since 2021, NTPC has tripled in value to \$34 billion, while the

world's largest coal miner has grown 2.5 times to \$26 billion.

In an October note titled, "This elephant can dance," Bobcaps said NTPC's lower cost of debt gave it an edge in the power industry and it stood to benefit from the government's view that thermal additions were key to stability.

NTPC, the only major Indian company still adding coal-fired capacity, is also boosting coal output from its own mines, while Coal India is slashing thousands of jobs a year and outsourcing some operations to boost margins.

While most of the miner's sales are on low-margin, long-term contracts to utilities, surplus output has allowed bigger spot sales in the lucrative auction market. By comparison, tightening funding has choked global coal miners.

4 players including debutant Shubha Satheesh score half centuries against England in 1-off Test

FINE KNOCK: Jemimah Rodrigues drives during her half century in the Test against England, Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Navi Mumbai, Dec 14: Debutants Shubha Satheesh (69, 76b, 13x4) and Jemimah Rodrigues (68, 99b, 11x4) scored half centuries as India scored 410 for the loss of seven

wickets in the one-off Test against England at the DY Patil Stadium here Thursday. In fact India had four half centuries as they put the England bowlers to sword, the other two being Yastika Bhatia (66, 88b, 10x4, 1x6) and Deepti Sharma (60 n o, 95b, 9x4, 1x6). Skipper Haremanpreet Kaur (49) could have been the fifth batter to reach the coveted



half century mark, but fell a run short.

Playing their first Test in nearly two years, and their maiden red ball game on home soil in nine years, India rarely took the foot off the pedal on a batting-friendly surface scoring

nearly five runs per over.

The 24-year-old Shubha stood tall with a brilliant knock as she laid the platform for a large total. She became the 12th Indian batter to score a fifty on debut, but she could not convert it into a century. She departed when Sophie Ecclestone (1/85) had her caught by Nat Sciver-Brunt.

Jemimah too produced a good knock and added 115 runs for the third wicket with Subha before playing on to Lauren Bell (2/64).

Kaur began with a sweep shot and looked in rich vein of form, but her bat got stuck in the ground while completing a run and Dani Wyatt's throw ended her stay. However, before her departure she and Yastika put on 116 runs for the fifth wicket.

Yastika scored briskly without taking any risks. However, she followed Kaur back to the pavilion quickly. It was then the turn of Deepti and Sneha Rana (30) to take over. They added 92 runs for the seventh wicket to take India

past the 400-run mark.

Earlier Indian openers Smriti Mandhana (17) and Shafali Verma (19) started confidently, but failed to convert their starts. Had they been a little more circumspect they could have also scored heavily. However, in their urge to go for quick runs both Mandhana and Verma perished.

The England bowling looked quite innocuous to say the least. Spinners Ecclestone and Charlie Dean (1/62) toiled away but did not have the variety to trouble the Indian batters.

With indications that the pitch may turn from the third day onwards, England's task will definitely be cut out if India manage to put on a 450-plus total.

BRIEF SCORES

India 410 for 7 (Shubha Satheesh 69, Jemimah Rodrigues 68, Yastika Bhatia 66, Deepti Sharma 60 n o, Lauren Bell 2/64) versus England. Match to continue.

Home girls enter quarters

SIBLINGS RUTUPARNA, SWETAPARNA SCRIPT THRILLING WIN

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, 14 December, 2023: Most of the seeded players had a comparatively easy day in office at the BWF Super 100 badminton tournament at the JN Indoor Stadium here, Thursday. In singles, defending champions in the men's and women's sections Kiran George and Unnati Hooda scripted facile victories while in the women's doubles it was smooth sailing for the favourites Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Castro.

However, in the mixed doubles category it was contrasting fortunes for Tanisha and Ashwini. While Tanisha won her match, Ashwini and her partner Rohan Kapoor lost a three-game thriller. Also winning their women's doubles match was the home favourites, sisters Rutuparna Panda and Swetaparna Panda.

In singles action, Unnati Hooda defeated Ashmita Chaliha 21-18, 21-16 to advance to the next round. She however, will have a tough time defending her title due to the presence of former World Champion Nozomo Okuhara in the draw. The Japanese showed her forte while disposing of Stephanie Widjaja 21-11, 21-16. On the other hand, India's Chirag Sen created a huge flutter by stunning third-seeded Mads Christophersen 21-10, 15-21, 21-17. In another men's singles



Rutuparna Panda and Swetaparna Panda in action at the JN Indoor Stadium in Cuttack, Thursday

match, George easily defeated Iqbal Diaz Syahputra 21-14, 21-16 to advance to the next round. In women's doubles Rutuparna and Swetaparna had to fight hard against compatriots Simran Singh and Ritika Thaker before winning 21-14, 14-21, 21-19 in a three-game thriller to enter the quarterfinals. The last game was a nerve-wracking affair with leads changing hands frequently. In the end, the Odia siblings

held their nerves to win the game. In another match Ashwini and Tanisha trounced Bala Radhakrishnan and Varshini Viswanath 21-13, 21-13. In the mixed doubles segment, Tanisha and Dhruv Kapila defeated Indonesians Amri Syahnawi and Winny Oktavina Kadow 21-16, 21-12 to enter the quarterfinals. However, Ashwini and Rohan Kapoor went down to Sumeeth Reddy and N Sikki Reddy 14-21, 21-17, 14-21.

Profligate India lose to Germany

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, Dec 14: Penalty corner woes continued to haunt India as they failed to convert even once from 12 attempts in the semifinal of the Junior Men's World Cup against Germany here Thursday. The end result was that the Germans scripted a clinical 4-1 victory to seal their spot in the final. Six-time champions Germany, on the other hand, earned just two penalty corners in the whole match but scored on both the occasions.

The goal scorers for Germany were Ben Hasbach (8th and 30th penalty corner), Glander Paul (41st, penalty corner) and Florian Sperling (58th). Sudeep Chirmako (11th) scored the solitary goal for India with a field effort. India will now play for the bronze medal Saturday.

However, the Indian colts started well and matched Germany move for move. Even though Hasbach gave Germany an early lead, the Indians were quick to retaliate through Chirmako who scored with a fierce shot. However, after the first quarter the Indians failed to keep up with the Germans.

India could have got the upper hand had they converted one of the four PCs they earned. But it was not to be. In the second quarter they wasted six.

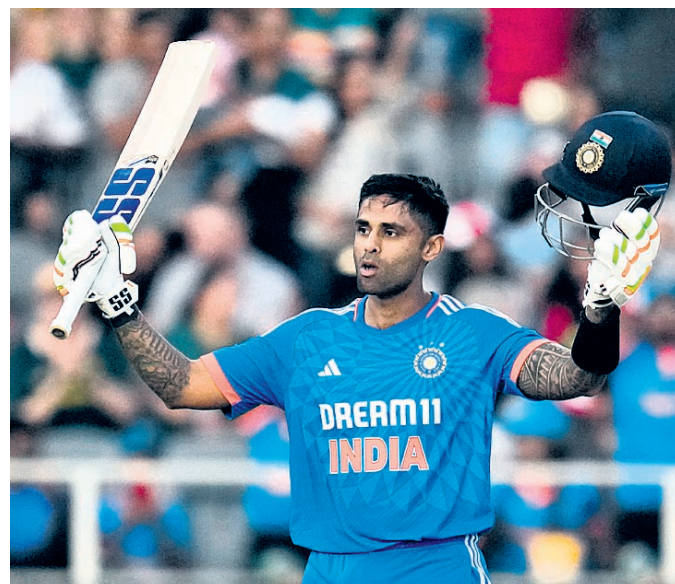
SA fade in dazzling SKY

AGENCIES

Johannesburg, Dec 14: Riding on skipper Suryakumar Yadav's (100, 56b, 7x4, 8x6) brilliant century, India defeated South Africa by 106 runs to level the three-match T20I series here Thursday. After the first game had been washed out, the South Africans had won the second by five wickets. In the process, India maintained their record of losing a bilateral T20I series to South Africa since 2015.

Chasing a victory target of 202, South Africans fell behind early on and were reduced to 42 for the loss of four wickets by the seventh over. Since then, the issue was never in doubt. Then Kuldeep Yadav (5/17) destroyed the South African middle and lower-order.

Earlier Suryakumar or 'SKY' as he is popularly known exploited a bone-dry surface to make a brilliant hundred as India made a competitive 201 for seven. It was SKY's fourth T20 century. After India had lost Shubman Gill (8) and Tilak Verma (first ball duck), Suryakumar and Yashasvi Jaiswal (60, 41b, 6x4, 3x6) put on 112 runs for the third wicket to build the platform for a competitive total. After Jaiswal was dismissed, Suryakumar glowed brightly in the sky to take the in-



Suryakumar Yadav after his century against South Africa

nings forward.

Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj (2/26) was the pick of the South African bowlers. He dismissed Gill and Verma off successive deliveries. However, that was not enough to stop SKY and Jaiswal's murderous assault on the other South African bowlers. At the half-way stage India were 87 for two, poised for acceleration. They did that successfully with 114 runs coming in the last 10 overs with Surya

doing the bulk of the scoring.

Pacer Andile Phehlukwayo bore the brunt of Suryakumar's assault. The Indian skipper hammered Phehlukwayo for 22 runs in the 13th over hitting three sixes and a four to bring up his half century.

BRIEF SCORES

India 201 for 7 (Suryakumar Yadav 100, Yashasvi Jaiswal 60, Keshav Maharaj 2/26) beat South Africa 95 in 13.2 overs (Kuldeep Yadav 5/17) by 106 runs.

OFC CONFIDENT OF GOOD SHOW

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Odisha FC (OFC) will kick off their campaign in the second edition of the Indian Women's League (IWL) against Sports Odisha at the Capital Football Arena here Friday. By virtue of finishing among the top eight teams last season, Odisha FC have been given direct entry into the main stage of the event.

Head coach Crispin Chhetri is hopeful of good show this season and also doing well in the first game. "We are well-prepared for tomorrow's (Friday) match. Our objective is to finish at the top and fight for the championship. We have had a very good pre-season training session," Chhetri said.

Chhetri pointed out that the game between two sides from Odisha indicates the talent pool in the state. "Both the teams will have a large number of local players. That is good for the development of football in the state," Chhetri added.

This year the tournament will be played on home and away basis between six teams. The other teams participating in the tournament are Gokulam Kerala FC, East Bengal, Sethu FC and HOPS FC. In the inaugural game played Thursday Gokulam FC defeated HOPS FC 1-0.

Shami doubtful for SA series

AGENCIES

Bangalore, Dec 14: Senior pacer Mohammed Shami, who is recovering from an ankle injury, is racing against time to be fit for the Test series against South Africa, starting December 26 at Centurion. Though Shami was included in the Test squad that was announced November 30, the 33-year-old's availability was subjected to his recovery after the treatment.

Sources informed Thursday that Shami might not board the flight to South Africa along with other members of the Test squad such as captain Rohit Sharma, senior batter Virat Kohli and fellow pacer Jasprit Bumrah. The Test squad members will be leaving Friday for Johannesburg.

Shami is likely to continue his recuperation at home. If he does not get fit for the Test series against South Africa, he is likely to return to the Indian squad for the home series against England starting January 25 in Hyderabad. At this point of time, the BCCI does not want Shami to take the workload in white ball cricket. However, he may be a surprise inclusion in the squad for the T20 World Cup keeping in mind his phenomenal success in the 50 overs game.

If a replacement is indeed required for Shami in South Africa, then the selectors have the option

Putting suicidal past behind him

NEW DELHI: It may seem strange, but there was a phase in Mohammed Shami's life where he had contemplated suicide. Now however, he has put that horrific past behind him. In 2020 he had revealed in an Instagram chat with skipper Rohit Sharma that particular phase of his life. He had said, "I think if my family had not supported me back then I would have lost my cricket. I thought of committing suicide three times during that period." Shami was asked Wednesday if he still thinks about that phase. "Now, I don't think about it. Every person goes through such a phase. It was a bad time. I don't think about that phase. I live in today," Shami stated during a conversation on a news channel.

of drafting in a bowler from the India 'A' squad.

"The selectors have not named a replacement for Shami yet, but the belief is that with many players already in South Africa for T20Is, ODIs, Tests, and 'A' series, one of the pacers can be co-opted into the Test set-up," a source stated.

Before the first Test against South Africa, the Indian team will play a three-day intra-squad match starting December 20. The second Test against the Proteas will start at Cape Town January 3, 2024.

SHORT TAKES

Iyer back as KKR captain

Kolkata: Indian middle-order batter Shreyas Iyer will lead Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in IPL 2024, the management announced Thursday. The 29-year-old had missed the entire IPL 2023 season because of a back injury that required surgery in April. In his absence Nitish Rana took over. "The way he (Shreyas) has worked hard to recover from his injury and the form he has displayed in the World Cup is a testament to his character," KKR said in a release. Rana has been named Iyer's deputy. "There were a few challenges due to my absence. Hopefully this year we will play better this year," Iyer said.

6 foreigners in Kalinga Super Cup

New Delhi: The Kalinga Super Cup will follow the AFC's six foreign players rule, the AIFF informed Thursday. "The 16 participating teams can register up to six foreign players in the starting line-up with one from Asia," the AIFF said. "This decision has been taken in view of the fact that winners of the Kalinga Super Cup will qualify for the AFC Champions League 2 2024-25," it added. The tournament will be played across two venues in Odisha, January 9-28. The draw will take place Monday. The 12 ISL clubs have gained direct entry, while the I-League franchises will play the qualifiers to determine the remaining four teams.

Warner ton puts Oz in command

Perth: David Warner (164, 211b, 16x4, 4x6) hit a scintillating century in his farewell Test series as Australia reached 346 for five against Pakistan's inexperienced bowlers on the opening day of the three-match series here Thursday. Warner's brilliant innings vindicated captain Pat Cummins' decision to bat first on a hard bouncy pitch. The 37-year-old Warner, who will be retiring after the last Test in his Sydney hometown, made Pakistan toil in the first couple of sessions before he holed out at deep square-leg in the last hour. Mitchell Marsh was unbeaten on 15 on his home ground and Alex Carey was 14 not out after reaching the end of a great first day for Australia.

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