



# Spreading Happiness



Inauguration & Laying Foundation Stone of OMC's Projects by

**Shri Naveen Patnaik**  
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha

18th December 2023 | 5pm  
Convention Centre, Lokaseva Bhavan, Bhubaneswar



## Other Projects

10 Sample Processing Units

Drill Core Library, Bhubaneswar

Chrome Ore Beneficiation Plant, South Kaliapani

Sanganna High School, Laxmipur, Koraput

Heli-Borne Survey Initiative



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TAYLOR SWIFT TOPS BILLBOARD'S THE GREATEST POP STARS OF 2023

Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift has grabbed the top spot on 'The Greatest Pop Stars' of 2023 by Billboard. SZA secured second place followed by Beyonce on the third spot, reports *Billboard*.

MICHAEL JACKSON'S STOLEN MUSIC RECORDINGS BLOCKED FROM AUCTION

King of Pop Michael Jackson's estate has blocked the sales of some extremely rare unreleased recordings. Slated for auction by Gotta Have Rock and Roll, the estate, citing theft, demanded an immediate end to the auction and the return of the tapes, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES

Today you will feel like going green, and Ganesha approves. You could plant a sapling, or organise some dustbins to keep the neighbourhood clean. If you wish to make the world a better place to live in, do it but take it step by step.

TAURUS

You are likely to become too ambitious today and strive to outdo others. So says Ganesha. You will be over eager to do some thing big, lay your hands on something precious and valuable. Though you are quite likely to succeed to some extent you over enthusiasm may land you in serious problems that may affect your persona; and private life.

GEMINI

Putting things in order will be your top priority, says Ganesha. You will possibly have a romantic dinner with your sweetheart. Seductive conversations may culminate in sensuous consummation. Your personal feelings will stir up your partner's private thoughts.

CANCER

It is high time you paid attention to your family. You have been so lost in work and in making money that you have almost forgotten the very people you have been slugging for. Your spouse has been trying hard to improve the relationship. Ganesha feels it is time you respond to your partner's needs.

LEO

You will leave no stone unturned to satisfy and please your partner today. So your chances of slipping up are very slight. You will be able to impress your partner today. You need to be careful in all your financial dealings today, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

Your communication and creative abilities are your best weapons. You will be overflowing with zest for life and will exude cheerfulness. However, Ganesha warns that your creativity will bloom fully only in situations where there is no pressure or strain.

LIBRA

Ganesha says that you will be full of joy, enthusiasm and vigor today. Your knowledge will improve by being in the company of intelligent people. Anything that you take up today will have your luck or destiny supporting you. Ganesha wishes you success in all your undertakings.

SCORPIO

Focus is the buzzword for you; your eyes should be set on the things you aim, advises Ganesha. You may even indulge into some kind of research work. Today, you may bump into an old pal with whom you relive those good old school days and rejuvenate yourself.

SAGITTARIUS

Benevolence will be your middle name today. Being frank and open-minded will have its own advantages. You might just give your life partner a patient ear. This will make them feel treated well, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN

You have been waiting to hear some good news for long, and today is the day when the wait will be finally over. With your eyes firmly set on your goal, you will develop likings for your work. This will help you make plans and take decisions for the future, feels Ganesha. You wished to change your current job, but with some good news coming in you may not wish for the same any more.

AQUARIUS

Today, you will want to expand your horizon of knowledge. You will give a tough fight to your opponents and come out triumphant, feels Ganesha. Troubles will not be able trouble you as you will be able to turn them into your advantage. You are clever, talented and have all that it takes to fly high. Just believe in the strength of your wings.

PISCES

Today you will feel generous and calm. You will shower those in the family who are younger than you with this generosity and as a result be the object of their fondness. With a clear perspective you will be able to see things for what they are. The only downside of the day is that your expenses might take a toll on your wallet, says Ganesha.

Don't take social media too seriously: Zeenat

Mumbai: Actress Zeenat Aman, a stalwart, who has left an indelible mark on the film industry, recently expressed her gratitude, acknowledging her followers while simultaneously offering valuable advice.

In recent times, the veteran actress has seamlessly transitioned into becoming a favorite on social media, captivating her audience with captivating pictures and engaging anecdotes.

Zeenat recently expressed her gratitude on Instagram for reaching 500k followers. Her caption reads, "My Romeo is nowhere in sight, but I did see the ticker on my profile quietly cross the 500k followers count. It is simply extraordinary to me that I can connect with quite literally hundreds of thousands of you through this page. It has been an invigorating experience, for myself and no doubt my career. In these past months I have also observed the many deceits of social media.

So while I will thank you for your love, I will first say - don't take social media too seriously. It is such a powerful tool. Use it to inspire, entertain and connect you. Not to fan your insecurities, ignite your envy or inject your venom. Now, I would be amiss to not express the extent of my gratitude. Our community and its growth has been entirely authentic and organic. And the love I have received is overwhelming. I am honoured and delighted by you."

Zeenat Aman has gained significant success with *Haré Rama Haré Krishna*, *Don*, *Dharam Veer*, *Qurbani* and *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*.

AGENCIES



Mumbai: Actress turned writer Twinkle Khanna, at her book launch, titled *Welcome To Paradise*, humorously addressed Akshay's question about the relevance of men. However, her clever and amusing response has caused discomfort among netizens.

Actor Akshay Kumar asked her, "All the main characters are all women. So I just want to know whether men are irrelevant," and left people at the event laughing. To this, Twinkle described men as 'dessert'. She said, "No, you need dessert right? To be happy. So men are important for us to enjoy ourselves and indulge. And I think that a lot of this that I could do is including going to study. I would not be able to do it if he hadn't supported me the way he has."

Sharing the post, she wrote on Instagram, "At the book launch he stumped me with this question about my book and my brain had to do a few cartwheels to come up with a suitable answer. What answer would you have given if you were in my place? While reading the book did you feel that men were irrelevant."

Twinkle's take on men sparks controversy

While many praised for her witty answer, one user was disappointed about calling men 'dessert.' The person commented, "Can we call women 'a dessert' and get away with it?"

The *Mela* actress replied, "You can't but you can blame centuries of patriarchy for your current predicament humour is always about punching up and not down."

While many praised for her witty answer, one user was disappointed about calling men 'dessert.' The person commented, "Can we call women 'a dessert' and get away with it?"

AGENCIES



Shruti on toxicity in relationships

Chennai: Actress Shruti Haasan and her boyfriend Santanu Hazarika have been in a relationship for three years and are currently living together, opened up about her relationship, discussing both their toxic traits.

Reflecting on a past toxic relationship, she said, "I was in one spiraling relationship for a long time. I thought my head was on my bum because it was so chaotic. Being a singer, and songwriter, I was like this toxic thing is so tasty. Now, I am self-sufficient in my music. I can create the chaos with myself, put it in a box and put it away and have a lovely relationship with my boyfriend, with our cat in our house."

Speaking about her toxic trait, she said, "Sometimes I go like far into the 'I am a missfit who doesn't belong and that is a toxic trait I have but you shouldn't carry that when you are on a set. Even my boyfriend Shantanu has that trait and we both are like, 'Look at us alone, weird,' but that's how toxic we get." When asked who coincides in an argument, Shruti shared that "whoever is wrong coincides and we talk about it."

On the work front, Shruti is gearing up for the release of *Salaar: Part 1 - Ceasefire*.

AGENCIES



Alia's mantra to battle anxiety

Mumbai: Actress Alia Bhatt, who held an AMA (Ask Me Anything) session with her Instagram followers, Sunday, opened up about her mental health and dealing with separation anxiety from daughter Raha.

During the session, when a fan asked her, "How do you deal with anxiety?"

She wrote, "We all have certain things that might trigger our anxiety - for example, I find myself getting very worked up with any sudden change or a situation I have no control over... but it took me a long while to understand that... so prior to any of these moments, I just try and be aware of it and if it's too much, I allow myself to check out and feel the way I feel!"

"The *SOTY* actress continued, "Trying to control how you feel sometimes does more harm than good. Also speak to someone who you can trust! It helps!" Alia was also asked if she 'still feels separation anxiety' from her and actor-husband Ranbir Kapoor's one-year-old daughter Raha Kapoor. She wrote in response, "It is never easy leaving her (Raha). But I guess that will take a while to change (red heart emoji)."

Knowing she's with family even when I am away makes me feel less guilty somehow."

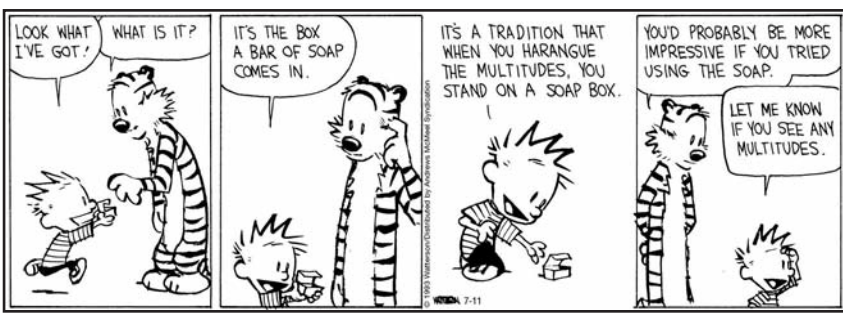
AGENCIES



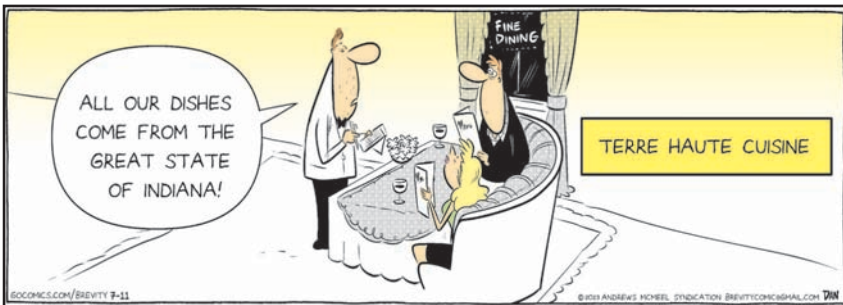
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

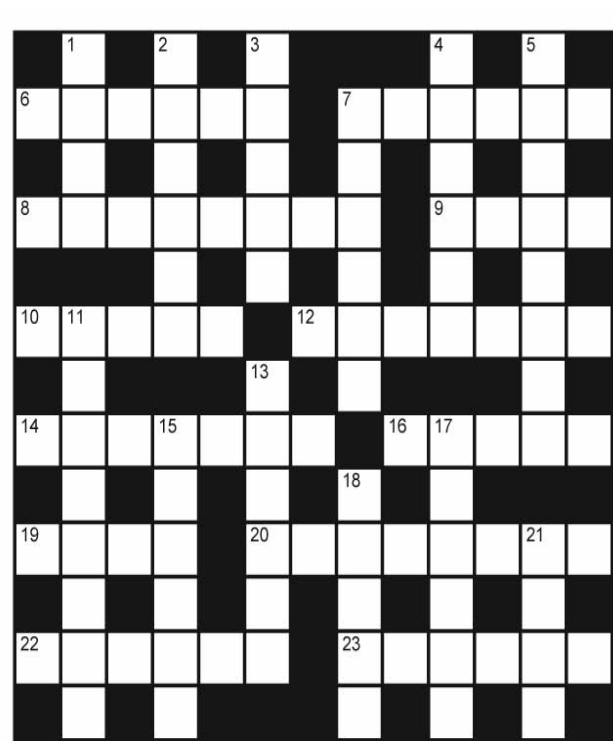


BREVITY



FUN post

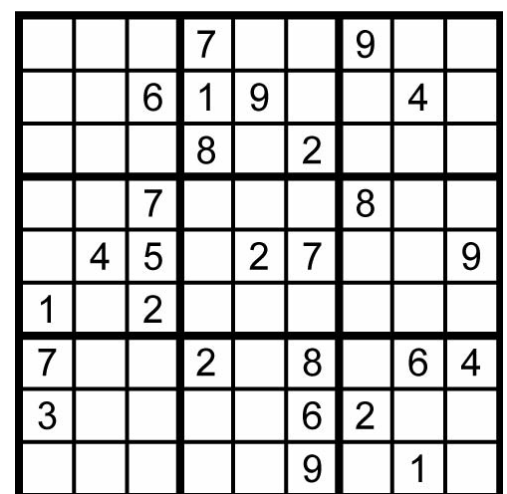
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 6 Type of net
  - 7 King Minos, for one
  - 8 Insults
  - 9 Not up yet
  - 10 Fur source
  - 12 Cut off
  - 14 Letter carrier
  - 16 Hesitate
  - 19 Desire
  - 20 Legendary Sword of \_\_\_\_\_
  - 22 Guard
  - 23 Novelist's need
- Down
- 1 Shocked reaction
  - 2 Hub
  - 3 Harp types
  - 4 Watch out!
  - 5 Haphazard
  - 7 Resting place (3-5)
  - 11 Double-crosser
  - 13 Garish
  - 15 Papeete locale
  - 17 Amusement venue
  - 18 Colour of honey
  - 21 European erupter

SUDOKU

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

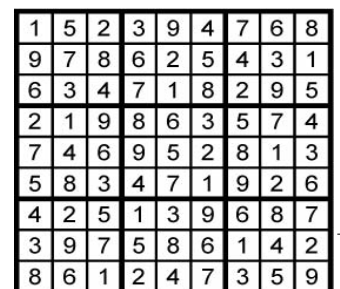


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

### Tackling anxiety

Actor Alia Bhatt shares her struggles with anxiety, emphasising and advocating self-awareness

LEISURE

### New truce calls

Israel's government faces local protests and calls for a cease-fire from some of its closest European allies

INTERNATIONAL | P8

### FPIs showing optimism

In a dazzling resurgence, foreign investors have graced the Indian equity markets with an influx of nearly ₹1.5 lakh crore in 2023

BUSINESS | P9

### Fantastic feat

Arshdeep Singh's maiden five-wicket haul helps India win the first ODI against South Africa by 8 wickets at Johannesburg

SPORTS | BACK PAGE

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BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY DECEMBER 18 | 2023

P 1

## Diarrhoea kills 3 more in Steel City; total toll 7

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Dec 17:** Diarrhoea claimed three more lives Sunday in Rourkela city taking the total death count due to the outbreak to seven within just three days.

The deceased were identified as hotelier Pranab Swain, Md. Aslam and Atul Kishan of Gandhi Road area in the Steel City. Earlier, four deaths owing to the outbreak were reported Saturday.

The affected patients have been admitted to the Rourkela Government Hospital, and 10 more government and private healthcare facilities in the city. The number of affected persons has crossed over 200, sources said.

Sources said 15 persons were discharged following their recovery from Rourkela Government Hospital Sunday while 118 patients were still undergoing treatment.

Meanwhile, an eight-member medical team from Bhubaneswar and Sundargarh reached RGH and conducted treatment of patients and reviewed the situation.



The team includes IDSP joint director Dr Ashok Paikaray, RRT member Dr Surajit Garabadu, assistant professor Dr Nalinikant Tripathy, Dr Ashis Biswal, paediatrician Dr Bibekanda Singh, microbiologist Dr Ranjan Samal, GDMO Dr Som Subhankar of Sundargarh DHH and Dr Sagar Dalai.

District Collector Parag Harshad Gavali, local MLA and Minister for Labour and ESI Sarada Nayak, and Sundargarh MP Jual Oram also visited RGH and reviewed the situation.

The district administration sensitised the residents to drink clean and boiled drinking water and avoid taking stale food through public address systems.

The disease has spread mostly in the slum areas and nearby areas to Rourkela including Chhend, Tarkera, Panposh, Nalla Road, Plant Site, Labour Tenement and Birjapalli.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



...Let's also add: "Anyone even whispering about jobs, education, or health can be arrested as a preventive measure"

### WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	26.6°C	26.2°C
Min Temp	13.5°C	13.4°C
Humidity	75%	77%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST  
MAINLY CLEAR SKY

## WORLD'S LARGEST OFFICE SURAT DIAMOND BOURSE OPENS



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Surat Diamond Bourse building, in Surat, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Surat, Dec 17:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday inaugurated the Surat Diamond Bourse, the world's largest and modern centre for international diamond and jewellery business.

The Surat Diamond Bourse (SDB) building, the world's largest office complex with more than 67 lakh square feet of floor area, is located at Khajod village near Surat city.

It will be a global centre for trading of both rough and polished diamonds as well as jewellery, as per an official statement.

It will comprise a state-of-the-art 'Customs Clearance House' for import and export, jewellery mall for retail jewellery business and facility of international banking and safe vaults, it said.

Several diamond traders, including those based in Mumbai earlier, have already taken possession of their offices, which were allotted by the management after auction, SDB's media convener Dinesh Navadiya said in a statement recently.

The SDB is part of the Diamond Research and Mercantile (DREAM) City.

### CROP LOSS, DEBT BURDEN

## Farmer kills self in Bolangir village

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bolangir/Titlagarh, Dec 17:** A farmer committed suicide by consuming pesticide over alleged crop loss and debt burden at Binekela village under Titlagarh block in Bolangir district, late Saturday night.

The deceased was identified as Chamru Bag, 49, in the village. Family members rushed him to Titlagarh hospital first and later shifted him to the Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital in Bolangir after his condition deteriorated. He, however, succumbed while undergoing treatment.

Family members alleged that he ended his life after being distressed over crop loss and debt burden. The incident has spread shockwaves in the area. Chamru had undertaken paddy cultivation on two acre farmland and grown cauliflower in his backyard. He is survived by his wife and two sons. Titlagarh agriculture officer and Malard revenue inspector visited Binekela village and took stock of the situation. This year, two farmers in Bolangir district have committed suicide over alleged crop loss.

### PM'S FIRST COMMENTS ON HOUSE SECURITY BREACH

## Probe, not debate

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a detailed investigation into last week's major security breach of Parliament, countering demands from protesting Opposition parties for a debate in the House on the incident.

"What happened is very serious," PM Modi told the Dainik Jagran newspaper in an interview published Sunday, his first comments on Wednesday's breach. "There is no need to debate this, there should be a detailed investigation into this," he said.

The Prime Minister further said probe agencies are investigating the incident and taking stringent measures, noting that it is equally necessary to go to the root of people behind it and their motives. The newspaper said he described the breach as "painful and a matter of concern".

Efforts should also be made to look for a solution with collective spirit. Everyone should avoid squabbling over such an issue, he said. "The gravity of the incident which happened in Parliament should not be underestimated," said the Speaker, adding that the Speaker has also been taking necessary steps with all seriousness.

Police arrested six people, filing terrorism charges against four, after a man jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber while members were in session, shouted slogans and set off a smoke canister, December 13. A second man tried to follow him. Both were caught by lawmakers and security personnel, and taken away.

Opposition parties have demanded a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah. Some members have also sought Shah's resignation. As many as 14 lawmakers have been suspended for disrupting Parliament proceedings by demanding a discussion on the incident.

The government has insisted that the security in Parliament complex is the responsibility of the Lok Sabha secretariat and it has been following the Speaker's directives. It has also cited numerous such violations in the past, accusing the opposition of



### PM running away from debate: Cong

**New Delhi:** The Congress Sunday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of running away from a debate on the security breach in Parliament and said the reason for it is that questions will be raised on the role of the Mysuru BJP MP in facilitating the entry of those who jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber. In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "The Prime Minister has finally broken his silence on the extraordinary events in the Lok Sabha on December 13th. He says probe is needed and not debate and that such a probe is on." All that INDIA parties are asking for and will continue to press for is a statement by the Home Minister on what happened December 13 and how exactly it happened, Ramesh said. The PM is running away from a debate for a very simple reason. Questions will be raised on the role of the Mysuru BJP MP Pratap Simha in facilitating the entry of the intruders into the Lok Sabha on December 13th, he said.

politicising the issue.

Four days after the breach, the Delhi Police Sunday sped up the investigations as teams recorded the statements of family members of the accused and claimed to have recovered fragments of some broken and burnt mobile phones from Rajasthan's Nagaur.

## 7 LIVES LOST IN 2 ROAD ACCIDENTS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Dec 17:** As many as seven lives were lost in two horrific road accidents in Sundargarh and Mayurbhanj districts, sources said Sunday.

Five persons died and two others suffered injuries in Sundargarh district Sunday, after a speeding truck hit the auto-rickshaw they were travelling in, police said.

The accident took place near Telendihi village in the afternoon when the seven passengers were returning from a picnic, they said. After a head-on collision, both the vehicles fell into the nearby paddy field. Tension ensued at the accident site after people gathered. Irate locals called for action against the driver of the Hyva truck, who fled the spot after the accident.

Five persons died on the spot, a police officer said, adding, the injured have been admitted to Sundargarh Town Hospital and their condition is critical.

The deceased have been identified as Munsan Khaton (48) and her granddaughter Inayat (4), Ishrat Khaton (42) and her daughter Muskan (19), and auto-rickshaw driver Muhammad Sajjad. Soni, 14, another daughter of Ishrat, sustained critical injuries.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed grief over the death



Five persons died and two others suffered injuries in Sundargarh district Sunday, after a speeding truck hit the auto-rickshaw they were travelling in

of five persons and announced an ex-gratia of ₹3 lakh to the kin of the deceased persons from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF). Patnaik also directed the officials to provide free treatment to the injured persons, said the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) in a statement.

In a separate tragic incident, two school students died and another was injured after an unidentified vehicle hit their motorcycle in Mayurbhanj district, police said Sunday.

The incident took place near Silaghati in Khunta area Saturday night, they said. The deceased were identified as Chhotray Singh (20) and Tapan Murmu (18). The injured, Mukund Soren, was admitted to Pandit Raghunath Murmu Medical College and Hospital, Baripada. Police have registered a case of unnatural death and started an investigation.

## JSW chief Sajjan Jindal faces rape accusation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 17:** A 30-year-old woman has accused industrialist Sajjan Jindal of raping her after promising to marry her, a charge denied Sunday by the billionaire.

The woman, whose social media profile describes her as an actor, claimed she met Jindal (64), the chairman and managing director of the USD 23-billion JSW Group, at a cricket match in Dubai a few years ago which led to a friendship and subsequently to the industrialist getting attracted to her.

The alleged sexual assault happened January 24 last year inside the JSW Group headquarters, the woman, a Mumbai resident, has claimed, adding that the industrialist had promised to marry her.

She approached the police February 16, and the first information report (FIR) was filed at the BKC police station in Mumbai December 13 under sections 376 (rape), 354 (outraging modesty of a woman) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC.

In a statement issued Sunday evening, Jindal denied the allegations as being false and baseless. "He is committed to providing full cooperation through out the investigation. As the investigation is ongoing, we will refrain from commenting further at this stage. We kindly request you to respect the privacy of the family," said the statement, issued by the industrialist in his personal capacity. The 30-year-old woman has claimed that she first met Jindal in the VIP box of the Dubai stadium, where they exchanged contact numbers. She claims she later met Jindal inside a star hotel in suburban

Bandra and south Mumbai's Jindal Mansion and also went on a drive with him in a car before the alleged sexual assault. In the FIR, she mentions that Jindal has been avoiding contact with her since the alleged sexual assault.

INDUSTRIALIST DENIES CHARGE



### 'ENTREPRENEURS' MAKE HAY AS PEOPLE HUNT FOR ANTIDOTE TO 'SHANI'

## Blackened dogs, monkeys bring in big bucks

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Dec 17:** The lure of money is making dogs and monkeys go black.

With the astrological programmes on social media going overboard in highlighting the power of 'Shani' and astro gurus prescribing feeding of black dogs and black monkeys as a cure for the ills brought about by 'Shani' effects, the demand for black dogs and black monkeys has escalated in recent months.

"The demand for spotless black dogs has risen manifold in recent months while the demand for black monkeys is comparatively less because not everyone is willing to have a pet monkey. Black



dogs, without even a speck of any other colour, are extremely rare but we have to cater to the demand," said Raju, who now earns up to ₹10,000 to ₹20,000 per month selling black dogs.

How Raju gets these black dogs is an interesting story. This young man, in his mid-thirties,

steals puppies of good breed and then dyes them black.

"Pedigreed dogs that are black (read dyed black) can easily fetch up to ₹6,000 while street dogs that are spotless black are sold for ₹1,000 to ₹2,500. When we do not get dogs of good breeds, we depend on street dogs for a living," he explains.

However, he insists, that he uses "good quality hair dye" to make sure that the dog does not suffer an allergy.

Raju and half a dozen other 'entrepreneurs' like him manage to sell over a dozen dogs every week. "We do not have a shop. We sit with the dogs on roadside and within no time, the customers start lining up," he added.

The puppies—black, brown or white, are dyed black and then sold. "Since we use good quality dyes so that the animal does not suffer any allergy and it takes two to three months before the dye starts wearing off. By then the customer and his family get so emotionally attached to the animal that they keep him despite his changing colours," Raju said.

While the black dog business is booming in several major cities, the black monkey business is mainly restricted to holy places like Allahabad and Varanasi where foreign tourists seem rather enchanted by black monkeys.

"Black monkeys are extremely

rare to find and foreign tourists give us money if we possess one. Just one black monkey is enough to help us sustain our family," said Kripa who walks around the ghats of Varanasi with his Bhole, a brown monkey that has been dyed black.

"I dye Bhole's hair every six weeks so that his brown hair does not show up and he gets me my daily bread," says Kripa.

Raju and Kripa are unaware of the fact that dyeing dogs and monkeys can attract action under the Wildlife Protection Act that prohibits the use of chemicals on animals.

The police, meanwhile, feel that it is too trivial an act to warrant attention.

# international

## of the day quote

It is time for us to cherish our friendship and reiterate the commitment to preserve and promote the spirit of 1971 that remains the bedrock of our (Bangladesh-India) ties

It's always been a formula that has worked for me in my life be it in my academic background, be it as a student, be it in my career, as a businessman and now on this journey

We consider the criminal US a principal culprit in all these crimes in Gaza and against Palestinians

## SHORT TAKES

### Malaysia: Floods displace thousands

**Kuala Lumpur:** Floods displaced more than 6,500 people in four states in Malaysia following heavy rains Sunday. The east coast states of Kelantan and Terengganu are the worst hit, with more than 6,370 people being held in 39 flood relief centres, according to the Social Welfare Department. Meanwhile, the west coast states of Perak and Selangor recorded 85 and 50 flood victims, respectively, Xinhua news agency reported.

### Cold wave grips parts of China

**Beijing:** Temperatures in parts of China, including in provinces Shanxi, Hebei and Liaoning, hit their lowest levels since records began, state broadcaster said Sunday, as a cold snap gripped large swathes of the country. The city of Yichun in Heilongjiang could see a record low of minus 47.9 C (minus 54.2 F), recorded in January 1980, broken early next week, according to a meteorological forecaster from the area. The agriculture ministry launched an emergency response and the national disaster prevention body issued a directive to local authorities to prepare emergency plans, as well as snow and ice removal equipment.

### Plane crashes, three killed

**Oregon (US):** A small plane crashed into power lines in Oregon late Saturday afternoon and killed all three people on board, police said. Polk County emergency services received the report of the single engine plane crash in Independence around 4:55 pm, the Independence Police Department said in a statement posted on social media. Police said the initial investigation found the collision with electrical power lines resulted in a small brush fire and a power outage in the community about 12 miles (19.3 km) southwest of Salem.

### ECP resumes ROs, DROs training

**Islamabad:** Pakistan's election commission resumed training of Returning Officers (ROs) and District Returning Officers (DROs) as it ramped up preparation for the general elections following the Supreme Court's verdict over their appointment, a media report said Sunday. Pakistan's apex court late on Friday suspended an order by the Lahore High Court (LHC) on the appointment of bureaucrats as Returning Officers, a ruling that led to uncertainty over the much-awaited February 8 elections.



**Criminal gangs find the ugliest ways to exploit our humanity and don't have a problem with putting people's lives at risk by putting them on boats**

RISHI SUNAK | UK PRIME MINISTER

### KUWAIT BURIES LATE EMIR SHEIKH NAWAF

Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah, whose six-decade career in public service primarily focused on domestic issues, was buried Sunday as world leaders made their way to pay their respects and meet the new ruler of the Gulf state



# Israel faces new truce calls

*The protesters are calling on the government to renew hostage negotiations with Gaza's Hamas rulers, whom it has vowed to destroy*

AGENCIES

**Deir Al-Balah, Dec 17:** Israel's government faced local protests and calls for a cease-fire from some of its closest European allies Sunday after a series of shootings, including of three hostages who were waving a white flag, added to mounting concerns about its conduct in the 10-week-old war in Gaza.

Israel could also face pressure to scale back major combat operations when US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin visits this week, as Washington has expressed growing unease with civilian casualties even while providing vital military and diplomatic support.

Netanyahu vowed to bring back the estimated 129 hostages still in captivity. Israeli media reported that David Barnea, the head of Israel's Mossad spy agency, met over the weekend with Qatar's Prime Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, who has mediated with Hamas, to discuss renewed talks.

Gaza meanwhile remained under a communications blackout for a fourth straight day — the longest of several outages during the war, which aid groups say complicate rescue efforts

## Russia has no plan to attack NATO: Putin

AGENCIES

**Moscow, Dec 17:** Kremlin chief Vladimir Putin dismissed as complete nonsense remarks by US President Joe Biden that Russia would attack a NATO country if it won the war in Ukraine, adding that Russia had no interest in fighting the NATO military alliance.

The war in Ukraine has triggered the deepest crisis in Moscow's relations with the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and Biden warned last year that a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia would trigger World War Three.

In a plea to Republicans not to block further military aid earlier this month, Biden warned that if Putin was victorious over Ukraine then the Russian leader would not stop and would attack a NATO country.

"It is complete nonsense - and I think President Biden understands that," Putin said in an interview, adding that Biden appeared to be trying to justify his own "mistaken policy" on Russia.

The US-led NATO alliance was founded in 1949 to provide Western security against the Soviet Union.

After the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, it was enlarged to include some former Soviet and Warsaw Pact countries. Putin has repeatedly cast the post-Cold War expansion of NATO as evidence of the West's arrogant way of dealing with Russia's security concerns.

# China faces 'middle-technology trap': Official think-tank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, Dec 17:** A top state-run Chinese think-tank warned China of a potential "middle-technology trap" unless it opens doors "wide open" for new investments and scientific innovation to deal with increasing containment in the ongoing tech war with the US.

"China's manufacturing sector is still in the downstream of the global value chain, and it faces a risk of being hamstrung at the low and mid-end by developed countries such as the United States, Germany and Japan," the Chinese Academy of Sciences said in its latest report.

"The countries that develop later usually have difficulties in industrial upgrading and transitioning to high-income coun-



Families and supporters of Israeli hostages held by Hamas in Gaza attend a rally calling for their return, in Tel Aviv, Israel

■ FIERCE BOMBARDMENT AND FIGHTING ACROSS GAZA AFTER HOSTAGE TALKS

■ PALESTINIANS SAY AT LEAST 40 KILLED OVERNIGHT, MANY WOUNDED

■ RESCUES HAMPERED BY FOURTH DAY OF BLACKOUT AS WELL AS SHELLING

■ ISRAEL SAYS 121 SOLDIERS KILLED IN GAZA GROUND CAMPAIGN

and make it even more difficult to monitor the toll on civilians.

In a sign of desperation, dozens of Palestinians surrounded aid trucks after they drove in through the Rafah crossing with Egypt, forcing them to stop before climbing aboard, pulling the boxes down and carrying them off.

### SHOOTINGS DRAW SCRUTINY

Military officials said Saturday that the three hostages who were mistakenly shot by Israeli troops had tried to signal that they posed no harm. It was Israel's first such acknowledgement of harming hostages in a war that it says is largely aimed at rescuing them.

The three hostages, all in their

20s, were killed Friday in the Gaza City area of Shijaiyah, where troops are engaged in fierce fighting with Hamas. An Israeli military official said the shootings were against the army's rules of engagement and were being investigated at the highest level.

Israel says it makes every effort to avoid harming civilians and accuses Hamas of using them as human shields. But Palestinians and rights groups have repeatedly accused Israeli forces of recklessly endangering civilians and firing on those who do not threaten them, both in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, which has seen a surge of violence since the start of the war.



ASEAN-JAPAN 50th YEAR COMMEMORATIVE SUMMIT

Leaders of ASEAN nations, from left, Philippine's President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Thailand Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Laos's Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone, Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Manet, Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, East Timor's Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao pose for a group photo prior to their talks session during ASEAN-Japan 50th Year Commemorative Summit in Tokyo Sunday

### Australia battles floods

**Sydney:** Australian authorities Sunday urged thousands of people in north Queensland state to move to higher ground because of the danger of flooding from torrential rains. Queensland authorities said major flooding was underway in some suburbs of Cairns, a tourist hub of around 170,000 people located around 1,700 km (1,060 miles) north of state capital Brisbane. "Properties in these areas may continue to experience flooding with the approaching high tide and continued rainfall. Residents should move to higher ground now," Queensland Fire and Emergency Services said on its website in one of several emergency alerts for parts of north Queensland.

### 13 dead after storm strikes Argentinian coastal city

**Buenos Aires:** At least 13 people have been killed in Argentina, a local city mayor said Saturday, following a severe electrical storm that struck along the South American country's Atlantic coast. Federico Susbielles, mayor of Bahia Blanca, confirmed the death toll in a post on X. The city is near the southern tip of Buenos Aires province, one of Argentina's top grain-producing regions. In a statement, the office of President Javier Milei offered condolences to the families of the victims, and recommended that locals remain inside their homes through Sunday morning, citing destructive wind gusts in the area exceeding 150 kph (93 mph).

### Chileans head to polls to replace dictatorship-era constitution

**Santiago:** Chileans are once again heading to the polls to decide whether to replace their constitution that dates back to the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship. This is the second time in as many years that Chile has held a vote to replace its current text, a promise born after large-scale, passionate and sometimes violent protests against inequality gripped the nation in 2019. The first assembly elected to draft a new text was dominated by leftwing forces but their draft, which focused on social, indigenous, environmental and gender rights, was overwhelmingly rejected by voters last September.

**Chinese Academy of Sciences says China faces a risk of being hamstrung at the low and mid-end of the global value chain**

**China's top leaders this week pledged to mobilise a variety of resources to break technological containment amid the ongoing tech war with the US**

tries because they lack original technological advances after technological importation, imitation, absorption, and tracking," the report said.

The "middle-technology trap" describes a scenario in which developing countries benefit from industrial transfers due to their low-cost advantages, but face long-term economic stagnation when the advantages diminish, and local firms struggle to catch up with the core technologies re-



The report came amid stepped-up technology curbs by the US, while Chinese manufacturers are finding it increasingly difficult to move up value chains

tained by developed nations, South China Morning Post reports. Concerns over China's state of the economy were increasing as the property sector, which is one of the growth sectors of the country is in deep crisis. Besides, China for the first time in re-

# Over 60 drown after migrant boat capsizes off Libya: UN report



The shipwreck, which took place overnight between Thursday and Friday, was the latest tragedy in this part of the Mediterranean Sea, a key but dangerous route for migrants seeking a better life in Europe

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Cairo, Dec 17:** A boat carrying dozens of migrants trying to reach Europe capsized off the coast of Libya, leaving more than 60 people dead, including women and children, the UN migration agency said.

The UN's International Organisation for Migration said in a statement late Saturday that the boat was carrying 86 migrants when strong waves swamped it off the town of Zuwara on Libya's western coast and that 61 migrants drowned, according to survivors.

"The central Mediterranean continues to be one of the world's most dangerous migration routes," the agency wrote on social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

The European Union's border agency said in a statement on Sunday that its plane located the partially deflated rubber boat Thursday evening in Libya's search and rescue zone.

Alarm Phone — a hotline for migrants in distress — said in a tweet that some migrants onboard reached out to the volunteer group who in turn alerted authorities including the Libyan coastguard, "who stated that they would not search for them."

A spokesman for the Libyan coast guard was not immediately available for comment.

Libya has in recent years emerged as the dominant tran-

sit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East, even though the North African nation has plunged into chaos following a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed longtime autocrat Moammar Gadhafi in 2011.

More than 2,250 people died on the central European route this year, according to Flavio Di Giacomo, an IOM spokesperson. It's "a dramatic figure which demonstrates that unfortunately not enough is being done to save lives at sea," Di Giacomo wrote on X.

According to the IOM's missing migrants project, at least 940 migrants were reported dead and 1,248 missing off Libya between January 1 and November 18.

The project, which tracks migration movements, said about 14,900 migrants, including over 1,000 women and more than 530 children, were intercepted and returned to Libya this year.

In 2022, the project reported 529 dead and 848 missing off Libya. Over 24,600 were intercepted and returned to Libya.

Human traffickers in recent years have benefited from the chaos in Libya, smuggling in migrants across the country's lengthy borders, which it shares with six nations. The migrants are crowded onto ill-equipped vessels, including rubber boats, and set off on risky sea voyages.

## North Korea fires suspected ballistic missile

REUTERS

**Seoul, Dec 17:** North Korea fired an unidentified ballistic missile Sunday, Japan's Coast Guard and the South Korean military said, as Pyongyang condemned US-led military shows of force as tantamount to "a preview of a nuclear war".

The missile was launched towards the sea off North Korea's east coast, according to the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff.

About 20 minutes after initially reporting the launch, the Japanese coast guard said the missile had already fallen.

It appeared to have fallen outside Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), broadcaster NTV reported. The launch came after warnings from officials in Seoul and Tokyo that nuclear-armed North Korea was preparing to test-fire a missile, including one of its longest-range intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) this month. All of North Korea's ballistic missile activities are banned by United Nations Security Council resolutions, though Pyongyang defends them as its sovereign right to self defence.

Less than half an hour after the launch, North Korean state media carried a statement from the defence ministry criticizing "military gangsters" in the United States and South Korea for raising tensions with drills, displays of force, and nuclear war planning.

## of the day quote

The ease in US bond yield and expectation of multiple rate cuts by the US Fed in 2024 further fuelled market optimism

**VINOD NAIR** | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEOJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

Many companies experienced a positive trend in November, thanks to the festive spirit of Diwali and the ongoing wedding season

**SUNIL VACHANI** | PRESIDENT, CEAMA

At Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages our commitment to positively impact our community extends beyond refreshing beverages. The financial and digital literacy programme in Tamil Nadu is a testament to our dedication to fostering change

**HIMANSHU PRIYADARSHI** | CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS (COMMUNICATIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER), HCCB

## SHORT TAKES

### 9 of top-10 firms' mcap jumps

**New Delhi:** The combined market valuation of nine of the top-10 most valued firms jumped ₹2.26 lakh crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys emerging as the biggest gainers amid an overall bullish trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,658.15 points or 2.37 per cent. The combined market valuation of the nine firms, including Reliance Industries, TCS, ICICI Bank and Infosys, jumped ₹2,26,391.77 crore, while Bharti Airtel emerged as the only laggard from the top-10 pack. Reliance Industries continued to retain the title of the most valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever, State Bank of India, ITC, Bharti Airtel and LIC.

### ACC-Ambuja EBITDA grows

**New Delhi:** After Adani Group taking over ACC and Ambuja Cement, the EBITDA has risen to ₹1,350 per tonne from ₹350 and the group is looking to scale it up to ₹1,400 by 2024, sources said. In a move to broaden its business verticals, Adani Group last year acquired Ambuja Cement Ltd and ACC Ltd. The acquisition placed Adani in direct competition with Ultratech Cement, India's largest cement manufacturer. And Adani Group is now planning to double the annual cement making capacity by 2027. Since taking over in September 2022, the EBITDA per tonne of cement has increased from ₹350 to ₹1,350, company sources said adding this will be scaled up to ₹1,400 per tonne by 2024.



India should offer the EU the same deal which is eventually agreed with the UK on spirits, and what has been agreed with Australia on wines. India should not offer any concessions if the EU does not open up its market for Indian products by repealing rules pertaining to maturation

**VINOD GIRI** | DIRECTOR GENERAL, CIABC

## INSURANCE FOR ALL BY 2047: LIC CHAIRMAN

In a bid to achieve 'Insurance For All by 2047', LIC will play a significant role and to meet that objective it is planning to launch a product especially designed for rural areas. "The focus would be how to cover maximum rural masses who actually need insurance. In coming days, rural share will also go up to our total business kitty," LIC Chairman Siddhartha Mohanty said



## Zee-Sony merger to take more time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** Media major Zee Entertainment Sunday said it has sought an extension in the December 21 2023 deadline of its proposed merger with Culver Max Entertainment (CMEPL), formerly known as Sony Pictures Networks India.

Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) had approached Culver Max and Bangla Entertainment Pvt Ltd (BEPL) for an extension in the deadline to complete the proposed merger, which will create India's biggest media conglomerate, said regulatory updates.

We hereby inform you that under the Merger Cooperation Agreement dated December 22, 2021, entered into amongst the Company, BEPL and CMEPL, the Company has requested CMEPL and BEPL to extend the Date required to make the Scheme effective, as per the terms of the Merger Cooperation Agreement, ZEEL said.

The proposed \$10-billion merger of ZEEL, BEPL and CMEPL has received regulatory approvals from fair trade regulator CCI, bourses NSE and BSE, shareholders and creditors of the company.

# FPIs flood equity markets

Despite global uncertainty, foreign investors' optimism in Indian equities stands firm and if this trend persists in Dec, it could become the best year for FPI flow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** In a dazzling resurgence, foreign investors have graced the Indian equity markets with an influx of nearly ₹1.5 lakh crore in 2023, fuelled by optimism over the country's resilient economic fundamentals amid shadows of a gloomy global scenario.

Experts believe that the positive trend may continue in 2024. This follows Indian equities witnessing the worst-ever net outflow of ₹1.21 lakh crore by FPIs in 2022 on aggressive rate hikes by the central banks globally after net inflows for three consecutive years.

Going forward, as the general elections approach next year, political stability and economic growth will become focal points for foreign investors. Besides, global cues on the inflation and interest rate scenario would dic-

## FPI FLOW THROUGH THE YEARS

### Equity Markets

2023 - INFLOW OF ₹1.5L-CR  
2022 - OUTFLOW OF ₹1.21L-CR  
2021 - INFLOW OF ₹25,752CR  
2020 - INFLOW OF ₹1.7L-CR  
2019 - INFLOW OF ₹1.01L-CR

### Debt Markets

2023 - INFLOW OF ₹60,000CR  
2022 - OUTFLOW OF ₹15,910CR  
2021 - OUTFLOW OF ₹10,359CR  
2020 - OUTFLOW OF ₹1.05L-CR



tate the flow of foreign money into Indian equities, said Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India.

India, with its promising position for economic growth, is expected to continue attracting foreign investment flows, he added.

As of now, the foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net investment of around ₹1.5 lakh crore in the Indian equity markets and around ₹60,000 crore in the debt market. Collectively, they pumped over ₹2 lakh crore into the capital market, accord-

ing to data available from the depositories.

Of ₹1.5 lakh crore net equity market inflow, close to ₹43,000 crore have been invested in the first two weeks of December following the enhanced political stability, owing to the BJP's success in recent elections across three significant states. If this trend persists, it could become the best year for FPI flow.

FPIs made a net infusion of ₹25,752 crore in equities in 2021, ₹1.7 lakh crore in 2020, which was the best year, and ₹1.01 lakh crore in 2019.

In the year 2022, the flows from

In 2023 so far, FPIs have pumped over ₹2L-cr into the capital market

## Number of GST return filers up 65% in 5 years

ACTIVE TAXPAYERS COUNT REGISTERED UNDER GST INCREASED FROM 1.06CR TO 1.40CR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** The number of GST return filers rose about 65 per cent to 1.13 crore in 5 years till April 2023 as compliance by taxpayers improved, the finance ministry said Sunday. Also, the number of active taxpayers registered under GST increased from 1.06 crore as of April 2018, to 1.40 crore.

As per data shared by the ministry, 90 per cent of eligible taxpayers are filing GSTR-3B returns by the end of the filing month in current fiscal year, up from 68 per cent in 2017-18, the first year of GST rollout. "Simplification in Rules and Procedure in GST has resulted in increase in return filing percentage by eligible taxpayers," the ministry said in a post on X.

A nationwide Goods and Services Tax (GST) was rolled out July 1, 2017. It subsumed over a dozen local taxes like excise, service tax and VAT. The number of GSTR-3B filers increased from 72.49 lakh in April 2018, to 1.13 crore as of April 2023.

GSTR-3B is the monthly return form for filing outward supplies details and tax payment. "With effective policy and sys-



temic changes in GST, the compliance level in GST return filing has improved over the years," the ministry said in another post on X.

Increase in return filing across the years indicates improvement in compliance level, the ministry added.

Monthly collection from GST came in at ₹1.68 lakh crore in November. It is for the sixth time that gross GST collection has crossed ₹1.60 lakh crore mark in current fiscal.

The Goods and Services Tax collection has been showing an upward trend on an annual basis since its rollout on July 1, 2017, and the average gross monthly mop-up in the current fiscal so far is ₹1.66 lakh crore, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said in the Lok Sabha earlier this month.

The collection had touched a record ₹1.87 lakh crore in April.

## 'Trade may take a hit of 2.6% in 2023'

ELECTRONICS, SERVICES EXPORTS TO CONTAIN SLIDE IN GROWTH RATE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** Robust exports performance in electronic goods, particularly smartphones, and services sectors will help India contain the fall in growth rate of overall trade, which is expected to decline by 2.6 per cent in the current year, a report said.

Economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) in its report said that despite global challenges, India's exports and imports of goods and services are likely to dip by 2.6 per cent to \$1,609 billion in 2023 as against \$1,651.9 billion in 2022.

The decline in India's merchandise exports mirrors the global trend of a 5 per cent decline (as per UNCTAD's Global Trade Update) and aligns with China's 5.2 per cent drop in merchandise exports during January-November 2023, it added.

In 2023, sectors which are expected to register growth include, aviation turbine fuels, motor gasoline, smartphones, basmati rice, motor car-medium size, turbo-jets, and auto components.

Smartphone exports are expected to jump by about 93 per cent to \$14 billion during the current calendar year as against \$7.2 billion in 2022.

"In 2023, smartphone will emerge as a major success story for India. This significant increase will contribute to the overall rise in India's electronics exports, which reached \$26.8 billion, marking a growth of 26.2 per cent," it said, adding im-



The decline can be attributed to weak global demand and India gradually losing its competitiveness in labour intensive sectors

**AJAY SRIVASTAVA** | CO-FOUNDER, GTRI

ports of electronic goods will grow by over 8 per cent to \$81 billion.

Imports of finished electronic products like computers, laptops, and other hardware may decline by over 10 per cent this year.

Exports of traditional sectors such as engineering goods, petroleum products, chemicals, gems and jewellery, readymade garments of all textiles, cotton yarn/fabrics/made-ups, handloom products, plastic, marine

products, leather, carpets, hand-craft, and tea are expected to fall in 2023.

Exports of petroleum products may also fall by over 9 per cent to \$86 billion. "Conversely, imports of petroleum crude are projected to rise to \$139.8 billion in 2023, marking a 14.1 per cent increase over 2022," GTRI Co-Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

The report said that India's merchandise exports may decline by 5.3 per cent to \$429.4 billion in 2023 from \$453.3 billion in 2022. Similarly, the imports could dip by 7 per cent to \$670 billion this year as against \$720.2 billion in 2022.

Services exports, on the other hand, are expected to rise by 10.5 per cent to \$333.5 billion in 2023 as against \$302 billion in

The World Trade Organization has hope that the global merchandise trade volume would grow only by 0.8% in 2023

2022. Imports however may record a flat growth at \$176.4 billion in 2023.

"Exports of goods and services are expected to slightly increase to \$763 billion in 2023 from \$755.3 billion in 2022. Imports, however, may dip by 5.7 per cent to \$845.8 billion in 2023 from \$896.6 billion in 2022. Consequently, the total value of exports and imports together could be reduced by 2.6 per cent, from \$1,651.9 billion in 2022 to \$1,608.8 billion in 2023," the report said.

It added that gold imports may increase by over 18 per cent to \$43.33 billion this year. "Interestingly, this decrease in exports occurred despite a considerable depreciation in the Indian Rupee against the US Dollar. Over the span of one year, the average INR/USD exchange rate had depreciated from 77.5 in June 2022 to 82.1 in June 2023," Srivastava said.

He added that normally, a weaker domestic currency can boost exports by making a country's products more competitive in the global market. "However, in India's case, the depreciation of the INR did not translate into increased export volumes," he said.

## Fifth time in a row, Reliance biggest wealth creator

DURING 2018-23, THE TOP 100 WEALTH CREATORS OF INDIA INC CREATED WEALTH OF ₹70.5 LAKH CR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** Reliance Industries Ltd was the biggest wealth creator during the five-year period from 2018 to 2023 while Adani Enterprises Ltd was the top all-round wealth creator, according to a study by Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

The study, based on stock market performance of companies, said for the fifth time in succession, Reliance emerged as the largest wealth creator, adding ₹9,63,800 crore wealth over 2018-23.

It was followed by Tata Consultancy Services (Rs 6,77,400



crore wealth addition), ICICI Bank (Rs 4,15,500 crore), Infosys (Rs 3,61,800 crore) and Bharti Airtel (Rs 2,80,800 crore).

"A low-profile company, Lloyds Metals, has emerged the fastest wealth creator with 2018-23 price CAGR of 79 per cent," it said. Adani Enterprises Ltd, the flagship incubator firm of the Adani Group, is a close second with a CAGR of 78 per cent.

It said ₹10 lakh invested in 2018 in the top 10 fastest wealth creators would be worth ₹1 crore in 2023, a return CAGR of 59 per

cent. Motilal said Capri Global is the most consistent wealth creator, outperforming the BSE Sensex in all the last five years with the highest price CAGR of 50 per cent.

Defining 'all-round wealth creators' as one which is the biggest, fastest and consistent stock market performer, the study said Adani Enterprises has emerged as the best all-round wealth creator. It is the 9th biggest wealth creator, second fastest and fifth most consistent. It is followed by Varun Beverages,

COMPANIES WITH HIGHEST WEALTH ADDITION FROM 2018-23
Reliance Industries - ₹9,63,800cr
TCS - ₹6,77,400cr
ICICI Bank - ₹4,15,500 crore
Infosys - ₹3,61,800 crore
Bharti Airtel - ₹2,80,800 crore

Adani Power, Tube Investments and ICICI Bank. Reliance is ranked at No 10 on this list.

"During 2018-23, the top 100 wealth creators of India Inc created wealth of ₹70.5 lakh crore, lower than (Rs 92.2 lakh crore) in the previous 5-year period 2017-22. Pace of wealth creation at 21 per cent CAGR is also lower than (28 per cent) in the previous 5-year period, but well higher than the BSE Sensex return of 12 per cent," the study said.

"HDFC Bank does not feature in the top 10 list of wealth creators for the first time in sev-

eral years," the report said.

The technology sector has emerged as the largest wealth creating sector for the second year in a row, ahead of consumer and retail and financials. Technology has also gained a significant share of wealth creation - 20 per cent versus 9 per cent five years ago. Like last year, the new kid on the block is chemicals/fertilizers with 3 per cent share. The biggest losers are rate sensitive financials and auto.

PSUs' (public sector undertakings) wealth creation performance during 2018-23 is a significant improvement over the last two studies: 7 PSUs account for 6 per cent of wealth created.

"Two key factors have driven PSU wealth creation, turnaround by two banks (SBI and Bank of Maharashtra) and growth in the defense sector (Bharat Dynamics, Bharat Electronics and Hindustan Aeronautics)," it added.

## AM/NS once again backs Odisha Juggernauts

**Bhubaneswar:** ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) - a joint venture between ArcelorMittal and Nippon Steel, two of the world's leading steelmakers - today announced an agreement with Odisha Sports Development and Promotion Company (OSDPC), a state government body, to become the Principal Team Sponsor of the state's Kho Kho franchise, the Odisha Juggernauts, for the second edition of Ultimate Kho Kho League. Earlier in 2022, AM/NS India had partnered as the principal team sponsor of the team, which clinched the title of the inaugural edition of Ultimate Kho Kho. The continued sponsorship stems from the company's belief in the team and is also an extension of its support and commitment to advance sporting excellence in the state and the country. The defending champions, Odisha Juggernauts, will participate in the national tournament that commences December 24 and will be played at Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, Cuttack. The agreement was signed by Keiji Kubota, Deputy Director, HR & Administration, AM/NS India; and Ranjit Parida, Joint Secretary, Department of Sports, Government of Odisha, as well as Director of OSDPC. On the partnership R Vineel Krishna, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Sports and Youth Services Division, Government of Odisha and Chairman OSDPC, said, "Our team Odisha Juggernauts' winning performance in the first edition of the Ultimate Kho Kho was highly inspiring. We are glad to again have AM/NS India as our partner for the second edition. This year the league is taking place in Odisha and people of our state can witness in person the speed, agility and thrill of this unique ancient sport of India. Wishing our team Odisha Juggernauts the very best."



# Indian pacers annihilate SA

# Sathish, Okuhara emerge champs

TANISHA, KAPILA BAG MIX DOUBLES CROWN WITH THRILLING WIN OVER SINGAPORE PAIR



DREAM SPELL: India pace bowler Arshdeep Singh successfully appeals for a leg before decision against a South African batter at Johannesburg, Sunday

**Johannesburg, Dec 17:** Pacers Arshdeep Singh (5/37) and Avesh Khan (4/27) bowled dream spells as India completely annihilated South Africa by eight wickets in the opening ODI here Sunday. India now lead the three-match series 1-0. For Arshdeep, who was nominated man of the match, this was his maiden five-wicket haul in ODIs. South Africa collapsed to 116 all out and India reached 117 for two in a jiffy

and-a-half which spelt doom for the home side. In their last encounter at Kolkata's Eden Gardens, the Proteas were bowled out for 83 under lights on a slow deck but never would have Aiden Markram thought that he and his men would be bullied at the 'Bull Ring' which has been a safe haven for them in white ball cricket.

Only three players who played the World Cup final – skipper KL Rahul, wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav (1/3) and Iyer – were a part of the current XI that played this game. Even that did not pose a problem for India as Arshdeep and Avesh ran riot.

The two Indian pacers pitched the ball up and ensured that most of the South African batters stayed rooted to the crease. In fact, both were on hat-tricks with dismissals off successive deliveries. Arshdeep would get more credit as he blew away the South African top-order within the first power play with four wickets and then left it to Avesh, who bowled fast and full, hurrying the batters for pace.

In fact had it not been Andile Phehlukwayo (33) and Tony de Zorzi (28), South Africa would not have gone past the 100-run mark. At 73 for the loss of eight wickets, it looked indeed very bad for the hosts before they managed to reach 116.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
South Africa 116 all out in 27.3 overs (Arshdeep Singh 5/37, Avesh Khan 4/27) lost to India 117 for 2 in 16.4 overs (B Sai Sudharsan 55 n o, Shreyas Iyer 52) by eight wickets.



Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Castro are all smiles as they pose with their medals after winning the mixed doubles title Sunday at Cuttack

**Cuttack, Dec 17:** Sathish Kumar Karunakaran of India and former World Champion Nozomi Okuhara of Japan bagged the men's and women's singles titles at the BWF Super 100 Odisha Masters badminton tournament which concluded at the JN Stadium here Sunday.

In the men's singles final, Sathish bagged his maiden BWF Super 100 title after outwitting World junior bronze medallist Ayush Shetty in an all Indian men's singles final. Sathish won 21-18, 19-21, 21-14.

"I am really happy to win this title. I had prepared well for the last three events in India and one of the targets was to win at home and I am happy I could achieve it," Sathish said after the match. "I was nervous today as it was my first Super 100 final," he added.

In the women's final, Okuhara defeated Lo Sin Yan 21-7, 21-23, 22-20 in an exciting match that had spectators fully engrossed.

Indian pair of Tanisha Crasto and Dhruv Kapila also stood at the podium after winning the mixed doubles title following a thrilling three-game win over Singapore's Hee Yong Kai Terry and Tan Wei Han Jessica in a pulsating final. Tanisha, 20, and 23-year-old Dhruv dished out a gallant fight to rally their way to outwit Hee and Tan 17-21, 21-19, 23-21 in an hour and 14 minutes.

Tanisha was also in action in the women's doubles final with partner Ashwini Ponnappa but the Indian pair couldn't go the distance this time, losing tamerly 14-21, 17-21 to the

Indonesian combination of Meilysa Trias Puspitasari and Rachel Allessya Rose.

Sixth-seeded Indian men's doubles pair of Krishna Prasad Garaga and Sai Pratheek K also finished second best after going down 22-20, 18-21, 17-21 to seventh-seeded Lin Bing-Wei and Su Ching Heng of Chinese Taipei in a thrilling final.

Sathish had come into the men's final, having beaten Ayush at the Chhattisgarh India International Challenge this season. However, there was hardly anything to separate the two Indians though Sathish showed better control and won the vital points to win the match.

## SHORT TAKES

### Indian eves suffer 2nd successive loss

**Valencia:** The Indian women's hockey team suffered their second consecutive defeat by going down 1-2 to Belgium in the 5 Nations Tournament here Sunday. Belgium won the match riding on goals from Ambre Ballenghien (22nd) and Louise Versavel (37th). The lone goal for India was scored by Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke (56th). India had lost 2-3 to Spain in the opener. It was an intense match with both the sides at their attacking best. The Belgians however, had more of ball possession and created better opportunities. However, the Indian eves gave it their very best.

### Ebenyo, Kebede bag Kolkata 25K titles

**Kolkata:** Kenya's Daniel Simiu Ebenyo and Ethiopian Suture Asefa Kebede set new meet records in the men's and women's categories respectively to win the Tata Steel Kolkata 25K race here Sunday. Ebenyo stopped the clock at one hour 11 minutes and 13 seconds to better fellow Kenyan athlete Leonard Barsoton's record of 1:12:49s. In the women's segment, Kebede remained in the lead together with her compatriot Yalemzerf Yehualaw until the waning stages of the race and applied pressure at the last kilometre to win in 1:18:47s. Sawan Barwal and Reshma Kevate topped among the Indians with a timing of 1:17:49s and 1:30:38s in the men's and women's categories respectively.

### Gunners grab easy win over Brighton

**London:** Two second half goals helped Arsenal beat Brighton in the Premier League game Sunday. Goals from Gabriel Jesus (53rd) and Kai Havertz (87th) helped the Gunners go atop the points table. Jesus headed the opener from a corner soon after half time and Havertz added a breakaway second from substitute Eddie Nketiah's pass in the closing stages. Such was Arsenal's dominance that they had 26 shots on the opposition goal. Brighton, on the other hand, had only six shots at the Arsenal goal and three of them were off target. It was Arsenal's 12th win in 17 games and took the points tally to 39.

# LYON JOINS 500-WICKET CLUB

AUSTRALIA HAMMER PAKISTAN BY 360 RUNS IN FIRST TEST WITH MORE THAN A DAY TO SPARE

**Perth, Dec 17:** Australia skittled Pakistan on a treacherous Perth pitch to record a thumping 360-run victory in the first Test inside four days with Nathan Lyon (2/14) achieving the elusive landmark of 500 Test wickets Sunday. Pakistan were blown away for 89 all out in 30.2 overs in the final session on day 4 for their 15th consecutive Test defeat in Australia after the home team set up a daunting 450-run target. Earlier in the day, Australia had declared their second innings at 233 for five wickets.

"Great start to the summer, everything fell into place," Australia captain Pat Cummins said at the presentation ceremony. "We've played a lot of cricket, so the build-up was very chilled and relaxed. No hiccups this week, it's all gone to the plan," added a satisfied Cummins.

Pakistan's top-order batters crumbled against the relentless pace of Mitchell Starc (3/31), Josh Hazlewood (3/13) and Cummins (1/11) on a wicket that had variable bounce with plenty of batters taking body blows.



MOMENT TO CHERISH: Nathan Lyon holds aloft the red cherry after reaching the 500 wickets landmark Sunday

Lyon reached the 500-wicket landmark when he successfully went for a leg before wicket referral against Faheem Ashraf and was embraced by his teammates. The off-spinner raised the ball to the applause of the Perth crowd as he became the third Australian bowler after the late Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath to join the exclusive club of eight players.

"I was pretty confident about

it," Lyon said of the referral. "Everyone said the height was okay, it was just whether it was sliding down leg. Thankfully it was three reds."

Lyon said the match victory doubled his delight at reaching the landmark. "It's something I'm pretty proud of," he said. "As a young kid growing up in New South Wales, 500 wickets is a long way away. A lot of hard work but something I'm very proud about," the veteran spinner added.

**Brief scores:** Australia 487 and 233 for 5 decl (Usman Khawaja 90, Mitchell Marsh 63 n o) beat Pakistan 271 and 89 (Josh Hazlewood 3/13, Mitchell Starc 3/31) by 360 runs.

THE 500 WICKETS CLUB		
NAME	COUNTRY	WICKETS
Muttiah Muralitharan	Sri Lanka	800
Shane Warne	Australia	708
James Anderson	England	690
Anil Kumble	India	619
Stuart Broad	England	604
Glenn McGrath	Australia	563
Courtney Walsh	West Indies	519
Nathan Lyon	Australia	501

# India may travel to Pak for crucial Davis Cup tie

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** Ramkumar Ramanathan was Sunday named in a five-member squad for the grass court challenge against Pakistan – a clear sign that the Indian Davis Cup side are preparing to play on Pakistan soil for the first time in 60 years even as AITA awaits ITF tribunal's decision on its appeal against travelling to the neighbouring nation on security concerns.

India last travelled to Pakistan way back in 1964 when they beat the hosts 4-0. India have never lost to Pakistan in the Davis Cup competition in eight ties against each other.

Ramkumar, whose serve and volley style suits the grass surface, will lead the squad that have N Sriram Balaji, Yuki Bhambri, Niki Poonacha and Saketh Myneni for the tie that is scheduled to be played February 3 and 4, next year.

The team have only Ramkumar and the 2019 national champion as the singles players while the three others now play only doubles on the ATP Tour.



India's top players Sumit Nagal and Sasikumar Mukund have pulled out of the tie due to security reasons. The winner of the tie will ensure their stay in World Group I for the rest of the 2024 season.

India had requested ITF to relocate the tie to a neutral venue but the ITF Davis Cup committee had rejected the appeal. "We have appealed against the Davis Cup committee's decision and a final call will be taken by the ITF tribunal December 19. If the

# OFC cruise past Hyderabad

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** Odisha FC registered a comfortable 3-0 victory against Hyderabad FC in their encounter at the Kalinga Stadium here Sunday. Roy Krishna (35th) and (90th+5) and Mourtada Fall (40th) scored for the hosts. The win helped Odisha FC maintain their unbeaten streak in five successive matches.

The home side dominated proceedings right from the start. Had they converted all the chances that came their way, OFC could have won by a much bigger margin.

Krishna gave OFC the lead after Isak Ralte had done the



OFC players celebrate after the second goal against Hyderabad FC

# BCCI names Bharat as Kishan's replacement

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** Left-handed wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan has withdrawn from the India's Test squad for South Africa series due to personal reasons. In his absence, KS Bharat has been named as the replacement in the squad.

"Ishan Kishan has requested the BCCI to be released from the upcoming Test series against South Africa citing personal reasons. The wicket-keeper has subsequently been withdrawn from the Test squad. The men's selection committee has named KS Bharat as a replacement," said the BCCI in a statement.

Kishan had made his Test debut earlier this year in July on the tour of West Indies, where he amassed 78 runs in two matches, including 52 not out in the second innings of the second game at Port of Spain in Trinidad and took five catches as a wicket-keeper.

Bharat, on the other hand, has played in five Tests and amassed 129 runs after making his debut in this year's Border-Gavaskar Trophy series against Australia at Nagpur in February, this year.

# 5T Chairman launches scathing attack on Oppn

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** Launching a scathing attack on the Opposition, 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian Sunday said those who can't see the transformation Odisha is going through should open their eyes to all the developments happening around.

Addressing people during the second day of his visit to Ganjam, the 5T Chairman said Odisha, under the leadership of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, has witnessed a massive transformation across all sectors.

Pandian said schools and colleges have undergone a massive upgradation with facilities like smart classrooms and e-libraries. The Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana has been a boon for the poor: "Our increased number of medical colleges has helped make Odisha a doctor surplus state," he said.

Srimandir, Samalei, Gupteswar and Akhandalamani are among the major shrines which have been transformed, giving a boost to tourism and local economy. Initiatives like Mission Shakti,



Location Accessible Multimodal Initiative (LAcMI) and Ama Bank have revolutionised lives, Pandian said. "However, some people can't see development and tolerate the transformation Odisha is going through. Opening eyes will help them see a developed and transformed Odisha," the 5T Chairman said.

Following directions of the CM, the 5T Chairman took a ground review of various developmental works in Ganjam beginning Saturday.

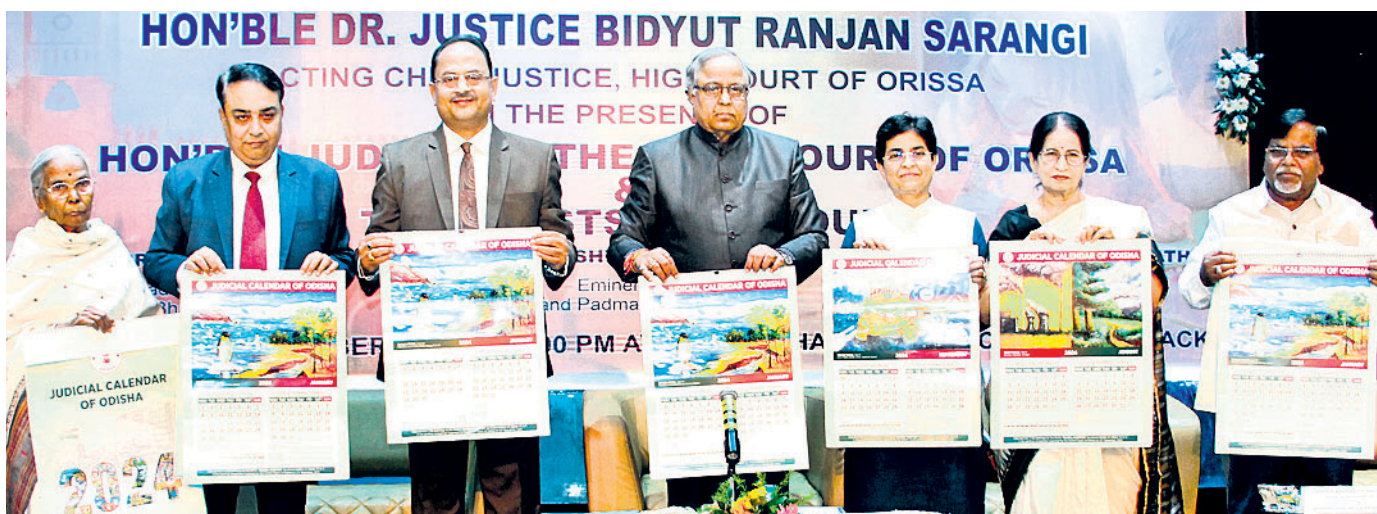
On the first day of his visit, Pandian met students of Khambeya Dora Junior Science

College in Hinjilicut block where the college transformation work is being carried out at an expenditure of ₹1.71 crore. Pandian then interacted with students at Hinjilicut mini stadium. He also visited the Rural Industrial Park of Sheragada and interacted with Mission Shakti SHG members there.

On the second day, the 5T Chairman visited MKCG Medical College and Hospital at 5:30 am and interacted with the medics there. He also reviewed various developmental works at the healthcare facility.

Pandian took stock of the upcoming cancer care facility. During interactions, house surgeons thanked the CM and the 5T Chairman for increasing their stipend from ₹28,000 to ₹40,000 per month. Later, Pandian reviewed the ongoing ring road work at Kukudakhandi.

BJD Organisational Secretary Pranab Prakash Das, MP Manas Ranjan Mangaraj - who is the party's observer for Berhampur parliamentary constituency - and many MLAs accompanied Pandian during the visit.



**CALENDAR LAUNCH:** Dignitaries, including acting Chief Justice of Orissa High Court Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, Judicial Calendar Committee chairman Sangram Sahoo, Justice Savitri Ratho, writer Pratibha Ray, vocalist Shyamamani Devi and sculptor Rabi Rath, unveil third edition of the Judicial Calendar of Odisha at the Odisha Judicial Academy auditorium in Cutack, Sunday

## Capacity building training programme for teachers

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** With an aim to sensitize and empower teachers to address the learning needs of children with disabilities and children belonging to disadvantaged groups, a regional level capacity building training programme will be organized at Regional Institute of Education (RIE), NCERT, Bhubaneswar from December 18 to 22.

The programme has been launched by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with Rehabilitation Council of India and National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi. Key resource persons from Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and Andaman and Nicobar Islands are participating in the programme. They will serve as master trainers in their respective



states/UTs to train teachers at district levels on equitable and

inclusive education for children with disabilities.

The participating teachers will further organize similar capacity building programme, called "NISHTHA-Equitable and Inclusive Education" at state/district/block level organization. The follow-up capacity building programmes for school teachers and other school functionaries will be conducted by the respective states.

## KISS holds mega guardians' meet

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** The Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) organised a mega Guardians' meet here, Sunday with a huge turnout of guardians from as many as 15 states.

Addressing the gathering, KIIT-KISS founder Achyuta Samanta expressed his gratitude to them for their support and affection. Samanta drew the attention of the guardians to the recent discussions in Parliament where MPs cutting across party lines praised KISS for the pioneering role it was playing for tribal education.

He was overwhelmed with the appreciation and stated that he accepted the adulation with a written message that he was only a "medium" in providing free education to the tribal children. On the occasion, Samanta introduced the KISS Rugby team before the guardians. The proud players have not only won cash prizes but have also been provided jobs by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for winning medals and bringing laurels to the country.

Hupi Majhi, who is the captain of the Rugby team, received a cash prize of ₹27 lakh from the state government. She along with her teammates shared their success stories with the crowd telling how KISS has changed their lives. Samanta said that



KISS provides holistic development of the students, not only in studies but also in sports and nurtures their creative talent.

The Guardians' meet gave a perfect occasion for the parents to meet their children, and staff and be apprised about the latest developments in the campus.

They carried back home the New Year calendar that was released on the occasion by the Founder.

Rajya Sabha MP Niranjan Bishi said Samanta is an inspiration for all who could realise at an early age the need to empower the tribal community. He also referred to the appreciation that KISS received in Parliament and said that Dr Samanta is the "pride of India and Odisha".

KISS Secretary RN Dash said Samanta has dedicated his life to building KISS into a hallowed institute while the KISS vice president Umapada Bose described Samanta as the "creator" who has ensured food and livelihood for lakhs of tribal families.

## BMC holding tax collection dismal

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has managed collecting only a little over 22 per cent of holding tax in the last eight months of the current financial year.

Holding tax - commercial and residential - is a major revenue component of the civic body besides other heads such as trade licence, advertisement licence, parking fee, user fee and kalyan mandap rent, it was learnt.

BMC had set a target of collecting around ₹500 crore by way of revenue from various heads, including holding tax, in FY 2023-24. However, it has realised only ₹70 crore in the last eight months of the current financial year.

Similarly, the civic body has realised ₹26 crore by way of holding tax against a target of ₹115 crore till November of FY 2023-24, recording a 22.60 per cent collection, an official said.

BMC had been lagging behind in collection of holding tax in the last financial year as well. It had collected ₹72 crore towards holding tax against the target of ₹105 crore, registering a 68.57 per cent realisation in 2022-23.

With a little over three months left for the current financial year to end, it is nearly impossible on part of the BMC to meet the target, it was learnt.



- BMC has collected ₹70 crore by way of revenue, including holding tax, in the last eight months of the current financial year against a target of ₹500 crore
- BMC north zone has a majority of holding tax defaulters
- The civic body has constituted special squads for each zone to expedite revenue collection process

BMC north zone has a majority of holding tax defaulters. "Most government establishments and shopping malls under BMC north zone have years of holding tax arrears and dues from the fresh assessment as well," the official said.

In order to expedite the revenue collection process, the civic body has constituted special squads for each zone. "Each squad, comprising four ward officers among other officials, will directly approach the defaulters to collect dues. As pension disbursement process is underway in wards, the squads will swing into action after its completion," said an official.

This apart, BMC will hold spe-

cial ward-level camps in March for revenue collection. The civic body will register certificate cases against habitual tax defaulters. Staff crunch and transfer of ward officers are mostly being blamed for the dismal revenue collection. BMC sources said as many as 23 ward officers had been reshuffled on zone level May 24 this year following allegations of dereliction of duty. "Ward officers are facing a tough time identifying the defaulters in the newly-deployed wards, leading to poor revenue collection," said an official.

There are 34 ward officers for 67 wards under BMC. The official said, "Each ward officer has to look after 2-3 wards' affairs - inspecting status of ground-level sanitation, streetlights and other enforcement works. Engagement of ward officers in a host of issues has also been hindering revenue collection."

Earlier in the year, the civic body had launched a special campaign - Revenue Day - across all 67 municipal wards to raise awareness among citizens about the importance of paying taxes. As part of the campaign, a group of municipal officials, led by a senior finance officer from BMC, and local corporators visited the wards Saturdays and held meetings with the locals, volunteers and the ward members on the matter. The campaign, however, failed to achieve its goal.

## Development of 233km NW-5 underway: Min

ATRI PRASAD ROUT, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** To facilitate shipping and navigation through inland waterways, the Union government has taken up development work of 20 National Waterways (NWs) across the country in the first phase including the 233km NW-5 of Odisha, Dhamra-Paradip via Mangalagadi to Pankapal, informed the Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal in a written reply in Lok Sabha recently.

Replying to queries by Jajpur MP Sarmistha Sethi, the minister also said that to ensure movement of people and goods through inland waterways, the government has formulated action plans for development of 26 'most viable' National Waterways from the 111 such declared NWs across the country. In case of NW-5, for monitoring on a monthly basis, Thalweg survey is being conducted by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) in the first phase of the development work for identification of 'least available depth' in the navigation channel, informed the minister.

Additionally, the IWAI has prepared detailed project reports for construction of weirs,



barrages and modification of bridges for both NW-5 and NW-64, which connects Paradip to Sambalpur.

Furthermore, the state government has been delegated the task of raising the height of high-tension power lines to make navigation in these waterways safe for vessels, informed the minister.

For movement of minerals through these waterways, while the option of forming a special purpose vehicle is being explored for coal, gypsum movement from the IFFCO plant to the Paradip Port has already started from April 25, 2022.

So far, a total of 8,06,053 MT of gypsum and 19,99,362 MT of other commodities have been moved through NW-5, NW-64 and NW-23, the minister informed.

Notably, Sethi had asked the Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister about steps the Union government has taken for development of inland waterways in Odisha to promote water-based transport.

## NZP takes measures to fight winter chill

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 17:** In response to the decreasing temperatures in the state,

### CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I Moharjan Bibi, W/o-Sheik Latif Ali, resident of Goutam Nagar 6th lane, Koraput, P.O./P.S. Koraput and Dist.- Koraput, PIN-764020, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.-4189, dtd. 16.12.2023 that now onwards, I shall be known as Meherajan Bibi for all future purposes.

Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) authorities have implemented special measures to safeguard animals and birds from the cold weather. Chimpanzees, hoolock gibbons, marmosets, tamarins, and various monkey species' enclosures are now equipped with room heaters to ensure warmth during the night.

For reptiles like anacondas, Iguana, pythons, Burmese pythons, king cobras, and cobras, the zoo has introduced blankets, straw-made mattresses, plywood rooms and electric bulbs in their enclosures to counter the impact of the dropping night temperatures.

To combat the prevailing cold climate, zoo employees are diligently covering bird enclosures with thick nylon nets during the night.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** As many as three vital inter-state disputes between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh pertaining to land and water, a couple of them pending for over a decade, were not adjudicated by the Supreme Court in 2023.

While the suit challenging Polavaram project being constructed by Andhra Pradesh couldn't see the light of the day in 2023, petitions over Kotia border dispute and Vamsadhara river dispute made their ways to the courtrooms of the Supreme Court but ended without conclusion.

The boundary dispute pertaining to Kotia group of villages reached Supreme Court in February 2021 through a contempt petition filed by Odisha against Andhra Pradesh for violating an apex court judgment of 2006 in respect to Kotia vil-

lages dispute. The apex court had asked both states to maintain status quo with respect to Kotia group of villages in 2006. In the plea, Odisha sought stay on the notification issued by Andhra Pradesh for holding elections in three villages of the Kotiya Panchayat in Koraput district and also initiating contempt proceedings against it. In 2022, the state filed an Original suit in the Supreme Court praying the top court to declare the Kotia group of villages as part and parcel and within the territory of Odisha. The matter was last heard in November this year. The counsel for Odisha had sought time to rectify the defects in the suit and for taking out summons.

Among the three issues, the suit against Polavaram project being constructed by Andhra Pradesh on Godavari river has been pending in the Supreme Court since 2007. The

### ODISHA IN SUPREME COURT



case was listed twice for hearing in 2023 but the apex court didn't take it up due to either unavailability of judge or paucity of time. The top court had heard the case in length in 2022 and had asked the Union government to play a pioneering role to resolve the dispute. The court had also asked the Centre to convene a meeting of the chief ministers of the concerned states for amicable settlement. The Centre had

held several meetings with officials of all the party states but the matter couldn't be resolved. Three suits, each by Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Telangana, have been filed against the Polavaram project in the Supreme Court raising environmental concerns.

Odisha, in 2018 also filed an interim application against the Union government for keeping the "stop work order" dated February 2011 in abeyance year-on-year and seeking directions that the project be stopped until a fresh environment impact assessment is carried out, including public hearing as mandated by various EIA notifications.

The Vamsadhara river water dispute between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, which has been pending for over 15 years before various institutions, came up for hearing only twice this year, in August and November. The

apex court couldn't hear the case due to paucity of time and gave dates. The court will take up the case in January 23 next year.

In September 2021, the Supreme Court had asked both the states to prepare a common compilation, bookmarked with the entire relevant documentary. The apex court had also observed that such inter-state disputes should be disposed of earliest. However, the dispute is pending at the corridors of Supreme Court.

Significantly, Odisha had filed three petitions in the Supreme Court challenging the order of Vamsadhara Water Dispute Tribunal and also opposed the joint survey of the Neradi barrage as directed by the tribunal.

Odisha government had approached the Supreme Court in 2006 against Andhra Pradesh's decision to construct a canal taking off from the Vansadhara river.

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# Ganjam tops list in road mishap deaths

320 persons dead in 555 road accidents between Jan to Sept this year in district



REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhatrapur, Dec 17:** Ganjam district has registered the highest road accident deaths in the state this year. Sources said Sunday that there has been a sharp rise in road mishap deaths. The state Transport department has sent a letter to the district administration on this issue. It has sparked concern among the inhabitants of the district.

The report further states that 320 lives have been lost and 430 persons sustained critical injuries in 555 road accidents which took place January to September, this year. For the same period last year, 306 lives were lost and 501 persons suffered serious injuries in 641 road accidents. It is this fatality rate which is worrying the district administration, sources said.

The report also states that 414 persons were killed in 831 road accidents in 2022 while 377 per-

sons killed in 734 accidents in 2021. Similarly, 363 persons lost their lives in 616 road accidents in the year 2020. The figures show that the toll has been increasing steadily over the years. The accidents and subsequent casualties have not gone down despite the district Road Protection Committee holding meetings every month and issuing directions to prevent and reduce accidents. Several preventive measures have been taken including the formation of road patrolling committees. However, these measures have not helped to reduce road mishaps.

The National Highway-16 passing through the district has turned into a death trap for the commuters. The secretary of the Supreme Court Road Protection Committee has also expressed concern and visited Ganjam district recently. He took stock of the situation and expressed his displeasure at the NHA officials for the increasing number of road accidents and death toll. However, his visit hardly had any impact on rash drivers. In fact many pointed out that unless rash driving is controlled, accidents will continue to happen and more and more people will die.

number of road accidents for the period January to September in comparison to the same time-frame last year, the deaths have increased by 4.58 per cent. This development has sparked concern among various stakeholders as well as commuters. The report further states that 320 lives have been lost and 430 persons sustained critical injuries in 555 road accidents which took place January to September, this year. For the same period last year, 306 lives were lost and 501 persons suffered serious injuries in 641 road accidents. It is this fatality rate which is worrying the district administration, sources said.

The letter states that despite a 13.42 per cent decline in the



**MATTER OF PRIDE:** Artists of Tribal Folk and Art Centre rehearsing a Sambalpur dance routine on Kacheri Road in Sambalpur, Sunday before leaving for New Delhi to perform on Kartavya Path during the Republic Day

OP PHOTO

## Youth gets 20-yr RI in POCSO case

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Phulbani, Dec 17:** Phulbani fast track court Judge Anita Sahu convicted Saturday a youth for raping a minor girl and sentenced him to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI). The judge also slapped a fine of ₹25,000 on the convict. In default the convict has to undergo an additional nine months in prison, the judge ordered.

The convict was identified as Nagarjuna Bisoi, 27, a resident of Kutunipada village under

Sadar police limits in this district.

As per the case diary, Nagarjuna committed the crime May 19, 2022. The 14-year old victim was going to school when Nagarjuna lured her and brought her to his town on his bike. After visiting many places here, he started on the way back home. On the way, he dragged the minor girl to a hill near a Hanuman temple and raped her multiple times. He later dropped the girl at her place at 4.30am May

20. He threatened the girl with dire consequences if she disclosed the incident to anyone. The victim's mother after getting the information from her daughter lodged a written complaint at Sadar police station. Police then registered a case (No-77/22) and arrested the accused.

The judge pronounced the judgement after hearing 13 witnesses and going through the medical and forensic reports, informed POCSO court special public prosecutor Banamali Behera, who was pleading the case from the government's side.

## Tuskers kill 3 in different districts

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bargarh/Baisinga, Dec 17:** Three persons were trampled to death Sunday by a wild elephant in Bargarh district. This is another example of the ongoing conflict between human beings and elephants in the district. The deceased have been identified as Sibal Suna, of Kathaamal village in Gaisalet locality and Balaram Sahoo of Deshbhatli area.

Sibal (55), a daily wager, used to work as a labourer in a canal construction work at Jharpali locality of this district. He came across the tusker while answering nature's call Sunday morning. The tusker attacked Sibal and trampled him to death on the spot.

In the second incident, Balaram (25) was harvesting paddy when the same tusker attacked him near his village. The deceased failed to see the tusker approaching him due to the dense fog in the morning.

Forest department officials visited both the villages and told the families of the deceased that they would get compensation as per rules. They added that the elephant had strayed into the area after crossing the Mahanadi river.

In a separate incident, a 32-year old youth was killed due to an elephant attack at Purunia village under Betanoti forest range under Baisinga police limits in Mayurbhanj district Sunday. The deceased has been identified as Krushna, son of Milaka Singh a resident of Kesura village.

## Land sharks have a field day in Rourkela



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Dec 17:** The southern part of this town has become a happy hunting ground for the land mafia. They are forcibly occupying land giving scant respect to the law. There have been several cases where such illegal land grabbing has come to the fore. Initially the authorities were not keen to take preventive measures. However, because of severe opposition from the local villagers, the administration has asked the revenue inspector (RI) to provide a report on illegal land grabbing.

The villagers meanwhile pointed out that despite informing sub-collector Bijaya Nayak on this issue, no steps were taken. In fact they had written a letter (copy with Orissa POST) to the sub-collector two months back, but even now land grabbing continues. Attempts to contact Nayak over the phone failed as repeated calls went unanswered.

Sources informed Sunday that the 'anawadi' plots are being grabbed. Then the land is plotted for construction of houses

and sold to parties for anything between rupees one lakh to ₹1.5 lakh. Sources informed that a person by the name of Indrajit Sahu is the kingpin among the land-grabbers. He has a relative working at the local tehsil office. The latter informs Sahu about the 'anawadi' land helping the former to occupy the land illegally.

The matter came to light Saturday when a group of people belonging to a gang went to measure an 'anawadi' land. The villagers prevented them from doing so and lodged a complaint at the Tangarpalli police station, informed a local. "We had complained about these illegal activities to the police earlier also. However, preventive steps have not been taken," the villagers said. Attempts to reach the second officer of Tangarpalli failed as his phone was out of network area.

Initially, Rourkela tehsildar Nibedita Pradhan, refused to talk on this issue. However, later on she said, "I have asked the RI to investigate and file a report. Till the report comes, I will not be in a position to say anything."

## GNM exams postponed over question paper leak

BJP demands Vigilance inquiry and stringent action against wrongdoers

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Hatadihi, Dec 17:** The Odisha Nurses and Midwives Examination Board (ONMEB), Bhubaneswar has postponed the annual tests for the ANM and GNM courses scheduled for December 18 and 19 over alleged leak of question papers till further orders, sources said Sunday.

ONMEB had earlier announced that it will conduct the examination for auxiliary nursing midwives (ANM) and general nursing midwives (GNM) from December 11 till December 19, this year. It had published the



routine August 18, 2023.

However, taking all by surprise Sunday the board issued a notice (No-947/NEB-3/2023) announcing the postponement of examinations scheduled for December 18 and December 19.

Exams were to be held for first, second and third years GNM students. The sudden postponement of the examinations sparked concern among the students.

When contacted, ONMEB sec-

retary Basanti Behera confirmed the development. She said that the examination has been postponed due to question paper leaks. The matter came to the fore after a staff of a nursing college informed her.

The staff had received the sample question paper in his WhatsApp and promptly informed Behera. The matter was reviewed and a decision was taken to issue the notice for postponement of the exams. A meeting of ONMEB committee will be held Monday, and decision will be taken on the further course of action.

Behera said that the question papers are in the custody of 35 sub-collectors offices in the state. She said that a decision will be taken to hold the examinations as soon as possible in view of the future

of the students. BJP state executive member Alok Sethy said that the question paper leak has exposed the inefficiency of the department officials. He alleged the involvement of a big racket in the question paper leak. Sethy said many persons are minting money by playing with the future of the students.

Sethy raised doubts on the claim of ONMEB officials about the leak of only two question papers. He alleged that the leak has taken place in all subjects of ANM and GNM examinations and demanded an inquiry by the state Vigilance department to unravel the truth. He asserted that stringent action must be taken against the persons involved in the wrongdoing.

## Crimes on the rise in Rourkela

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Dec 17:** Burglars are having a field day in this town. Burgling of houses and stealing of vehicles are now taking place virtually on a daily basis. Police are yet to find out the gangs involved in burglary and car lifting.

The miscreants were active Saturday night also. They tried to break into four-five shops located on the main road starting from Birsu Munda Chowk. This locality always remains a very busy place due to the presence of a bus terminus close by. Attempting to break into shops on such a busy road just goes to show the audacity of the miscreants, locals pointed out.

Plant Site police station inspector in-charge Simon Lakra



informed Sunday that efforts are on to identify the miscreants. "No official complaint has been filed by the shop owners. Even then, we are trying to ascertain the identity of the miscreants by checking the CCTV footage," Lakra said. He however, added that police have proof that three shops have been burgled. "We are trying to

find out about the two other shops that have supposedly been broken into," Lakra added.

A journalist had visited Sunday morning the Rourkela Government Hospital. While speaking to an official he saw someone else driving away his two-wheeler. He raised an alarm, but the miscreant sped away. Police are yet to trace his two-wheeler.

Only two days back Santosh Sethi, a resident of Sector-2 found his Maruti WagonR, which he had parked in front of his house missing. The incident happened Friday evening. He has lodged a complaint, but the police are yet to trace the vehicle. Prior to this incident, a mobile shop had been burgled with the thieves decamping with more than 50 handsets.

## Kalinganagar plant expansion by Dec 2024, says Tata Steel



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kalinganagar, Dec 17:** Tata Steel aims to complete expansion of its Kalinganagar project by December next year, a company official said Sunday. The company had commenced the second phase of expansion of its Kalinganagar project in November 2018 to reach the production capacity of eight million tonne per annum, from three MTPA, at an investment of ₹23,500 crore.

"We are aiming to complete the project and make it operational by December end next year," Rajiv Kumar, vice-president, Operations, Tata Steel Kalinganagar (TSK), told this agency in an interaction.

The project includes raw material capacity expansion, upstream and mid-stream facilities, infrastructure and downstream facilities including a cold rolling mill complex, Kumar said. He added that the new blast furnace being installed is India's largest with 5,870 cubic metres of inner volume.

The Phase 2 expansion will

increase the production of flat steel at the plant to meet the growing requirements of automotive, general engineering, oil and gas, lifting and excavation and other value-added segments in India, Kumar informed.

On the status of the expansion project, the vice-president said around 80 per cent work stands completed as on date and the remaining 20 per cent is progressing well.

Along with its 8MT of annual production capacity at Kalinganagar, the total output capacity of Tata Steel's India operations will reach 26.6 MTPA.

The company has an output capacity of 12MTPA at its plant in Jamshedpur (including 1 MTPA acquired from Usha Martin), 5.6 MTPA at Tata Steel Meramandali (erstwhile Tata Steel BSL) in Dhenkanal and 1 MTPA of NINL at Kalinganagar.

When asked about the significance of the expansion project, Kumar said with advanced technologies being installed, Kalinganagar plant will become one of the lowest-cost producers of steel in the world.



**RALLY AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE:** Students of Baba Saheb Ambedkar Higher Secondary School taking out an awareness rally demanding abolition of child marriages at Khajuripada under Nuagad block in Gajapati district as part of Nua-O Yuba Odisha, Nabin Odisha programme of state government, Sunday



FOCUS TRADE

# SHUN PROTECTIONISM



The rapid growth of China, India, Bangladesh, and Vietnam since the WTO was established underscores the benefits of open trade – and how recent disruptions to the multilateral trading system could jeopardise many developing countries' economic prospects

Instead of lifting Trump's tariffs, US President Joe Biden has erected additional trade barriers by adopting industrial policies that include \$1 trillion in production subsidies for semiconductors, electric vehicles, and offshore wind power. Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, which resulted in massive Western economic sanctions against Russia, has further complicated an already uncertain outlook for global trade. Moreover, Trump has vowed to impose a universal tariff of 10 per cent on most imports should he return to the White House in 2025. So far, these developments have not significantly slowed international trade. Global merchandise exports have rebounded impressively from the COVID-19 pandemic, climbing to \$25 trillion in 2022 from \$22 trillion in 2021 and \$19.5 trillion in 2018. The economic impact of US tariffs and the retaliatory measures imposed by America's trading partners has

been relatively minor. While importers of steel, aluminum, and Chinese goods have suffered, US merchandise trade – even with China – has remained robust. Most importantly, the US economy has continued to grow rapidly, owing to its huge and highly competitive domestic market. The same cannot be said of most developing countries. Barring a few exceptions, such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, the developing world embraced trade openness only after the WTO's establishment. Consequently, domestic support for outward-oriented policies in those countries remains fragile. Under these circumstances, America's shift toward protectionism undermines open trade in two significant ways. First, it nurtures a protectionist mindset. When the US, the world's leading proponent of trade liberalisation, adopts protectionist measures, it signals to other countries that they might also gain from such an approach

and could encourage them to revert to development strategies centered on import-substitution industrialisation. Second, leaders in developing countries often face political pressures to respond to US tariffs that are viewed as detrimental to their exports. India, for example, retaliated against Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs by imposing its own tariffs on US imports. The fact that even a major economy like India lacks the market power to damage the US economy, or that the costs of such retaliatory tariffs will fall mostly on its citizens, appears to matter little. Given that developing countries' domestic markets are much smaller than that of the US, liberal trade policies play a larger role in driving their economic growth. The rapid growth of China, India, Bangladesh, and Vietnam since the WTO was established underscores the benefits of open trade – and how recent disruptions to the multilateral trading system could jeopardise many developing countries' economic prospects. While there are potential solutions to the fragmentation of global trade, geopolitical dynamics and the self-serving agendas of major powers present significant challenges. Nevertheless, in the face of a fracturing global economy, countries that manage to keep their markets open and forge free-trade agreements with as many partners as possible stand a better chance of weathering the current storm.

*The writer, a former vice chairman of the National Institution for Transforming India and a former chief economist of the Asia Development Bank, is Professor of Economics at Columbia University.*

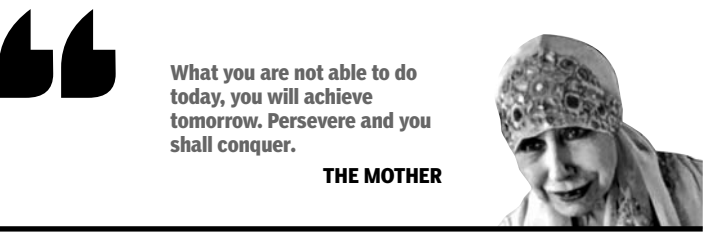
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Arvind Panagariya

**LEADERS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OFTEN FACE POLITICAL PRESSURES TO RESPOND TO US TARIFFS THAT ARE VIEWED AS DETRIMENTAL TO THEIR EXPORTS**

For nearly 50 years after the end of World War II, the United States led the effort to liberalise global trade through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). In 1994, the US rallied 123 countries to sign a multilateral treaty establishing the World Trade Organisation, which subsumed GATT while expanding its scope to cover services trade and intellectual property. Paradoxically, America's current industrial policy poses an existential threat to the multilateral trading system it worked so hard to build. In Washington, there is now a bipartisan consensus that the WTO has failed to defend America's vital economic interests and inadvertently created a formidable geopolitical rival by allowing China to take advantage of the system. This realisation has led both Democratic and Republican administrations to take steps that have shaken the foundations of the institution the US helped found. Since 2016, the US has refused to approve new judges to the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) and blocked the reappointment of those whose terms have expired. By December 2019, the DSB was reduced to a single member, below the minimum of three required to adjudicate cases. Consequently, there is currently no effective mechanism to resolve trade disputes among WTO members, significantly increasing the likelihood that member countries will adopt policies that violate their legal obligations. Unsurprisingly, the US itself is a serial violator. In 2018, as the DSB effectively stopped functioning, then-President Donald Trump imposed tariffs on imported washing machines and solar panels. Shortly thereafter, the Trump administration announced additional tariffs on aluminum, steel, and a wide range of Chinese goods.



What you are not able to do today, you will achieve tomorrow. Persevere and you shall conquer.

THE MOTHER

## Half Measures

From the very outset, the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai was doomed to fail, largely due to its setup – hosted by a petrostate, presided by the CEO of that state's biggest oil company and amid stiff opposition from the world's most powerful oil cartel. Nevertheless, about 200 countries agreed to move away from fossil fuels while climate activists argued the deal had enough loopholes to sustain oil, gas and coal industries despite the hazards they have brought to the planet. At the end of the summit, climate negotiators reached a consensus calling for 'transitioning' away from fossil fuels, a first such deal in the 28-year history of the UN climate conferences. However, it didn't call for a complete 'phasing out' of fossil fuels, something that climate activists the world over have wanted and more than 100 countries including small island states and European nations have pleaded for. The deal instead allowed enough room for countries for "transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade." While COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber called the agreement a "historic package to accelerate climate action," many experts exposed it as a "litany of loopholes." The accord calls for tripling the use of renewable energy and doubling energy efficiency. According to the statement, the transition would be implemented in a way that achieves net zero global emissions by 2050 and a peak in carbon pollution by 2025. At the same time it gives enough wiggle room to countries like China, one of the world's major polluters, to peak later. According to experts, the final document's inclusion of technology like carbon capture and sequestration – which prevent greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere – seemed to be an attempt to placate Saudi Arabia and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which had long advocated that emissions could be trimmed without targeting specific fuels. The agreement acknowledges the goal of limiting emissions to keep warming to 1.5 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels, though there is no mention of how that would be achieved. As matters stand, the world is not on pace to limit warming. Global greenhouse gas emissions increased by 1.2 per cent from 2021 to 2022 to reach a new record last year, according to the UN's Emissions Gap Report 2023. According to that report, the world is on its path to warm by as much as 2.9 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels by the end of this century – nearly double the international target set in the Paris Agreement. As shown in the provisional State of the Global Climate report by the World Meteorological Organization, 2023 is set to be the warmest year on record. Data until the end of October show that the year was about 1.4 degree Celsius above the pre-industrial level. Amid all these scary reports, it was expected that the world's climate negotiators would find concrete solutions to this existential crisis, but what we have got is only piecemeal and half measures. As former US Vice President and Nobel Prize winning climate activist Al Gore summed it up: "The decision at COP28 to finally recognize that the climate crisis is, at its heart, a fossil fuel crisis is an important milestone. But it is also the bare minimum we need and is long overdue. The influence of petrostates is still evident in the half measures and loopholes included in the final agreement."

### WISDOM CORNER

- March on. Do not tarry. To go forward is to move toward perfection. March on, and fear not the thorns, or the sharp stones on life's path. **KAHLIL GIBRAN**
- The wise have always said the same things, and fools, who are the majority have always done just the opposite. **ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER**
- The optimist thinks this is the best of all possible worlds. The pessimist fears it is true. **J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER**

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1865:** The US abolishes slavery. The US secretary of state proclaimed the adoption of the 13th Amendment, officially bringing it into force. The first of the 3 Reconstruction Amendments, the 13th Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude. The other two Reconstruction Amendments – the 14th and the 15th Amendments – extended citizenship rights, equal protection of the law, and the right to vote to all Americans irrespective of their "race, color, or previous condition of servitude."
- 1912:** The announcement by British archaeologist Charles Dawson at a conference of the Geological Society of London was received with very little skepticism in the field of paleoanthropology. The discovery of fossilised remains of an unidentified human ancestor in Piltdown, East Sussex, England, was thought to have provided valuable clues about human evolution. It wasn't until 1953 that the Piltdown Man was discovered to be a hoax - with the skull consisting of the jawbones of an orangutan and the cranium of an adult human being.
- 1958:** World's first communication satellite launched. A product of a highly secretive project, SCORE (Signal Communications by Orbiting Relay Equipment) was launched aboard the Atlas rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida. Once in orbit, it relayed the first message sent to Earth from space - a short statement by American President Dwight D. Eisenhower.
- 1966:** Saturn's moon, Epimetheus, discovered. One of Saturn's 150 natural satellites or moons, Epimetheus shares its orbit with another moon, Janus. Saturn's largest moon is Titan, which is the only natural satellite in the Solar System with an atmosphere.

### SPECTRUM ENERGY

## Revitalising biogas development



SN Tripathy

**INDIA'S JOURNEY TOWARDS EMBRACING CBG AS A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SOLUTION HINGES ON STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND FOCUSED EFFORTS**

India's rural energy demands pose a critical challenge, with millions needing more reliable access. The government is implementing diverse initiatives to address this, including promoting renewable sources like solar power, decentralised microgrids, and biogas projects. These efforts aim to enhance energy access, powering agriculture, households, and rural enterprises. The focus is on innovative solutions that consider the unique challenges of rural areas, fostering sustainability and reducing dependence on traditional, non-renewable sources. As India advances, the quest for inclusive, affordable, and environmentally conscious energy solutions remains paramount to uplift rural communities and drive socio-economic development. The Indian government's commitment to promoting compressed biogas (CBG) production in the transportation sector is evident through various initiatives announced in the Budget 2023-24 statement. Despite commendable efforts, operational challenges, and underutilisation of existing CBG plants necessitate a strategic overhaul. This article proposes comprehensive measures to revitalise

Biogas Development and Training Centres (BDTCs) and address critical issues hindering the success of CBG initiatives. The government's recent initiatives include: i) A special fund for partial guarantee, ii) A waste processing subsidiary under Engineers India Ltd., and iii) The introduction of a 5 per cent CBG blending obligation. However, over 90 per cent of operational plants are functioning below capacity due to inadequate planning, a shortage of skilled personnel, and a limited supply chain and technology understanding. The goal of establishing 5,000 CBG plants under the Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation scheme demands urgent attention to overcome these challenges. The existing eight BDTCs, initially designed for traditional biomass energy, need transformation into Compressed Biogas Development and Training Centres. These centres are crucial in offering technical support, training, and conducting research within biogas technology. To meet the demands of modern bioenergy like CBG, the technical expertise and research infrastructure of BDTCs need enhancement. CBG plants face challenges in testing biomethane

potential and assessing nutrient content in organic manure. Allocating funds for advanced scientific instruments and establishing a reasonable analysis fee is vital. Moreover, the number of BDTCs should be expanded, particularly in states with high CBG potential. Strengthening the skilled workforce at BDTCs is imperative, with revised wages to attract individuals with strong technical knowledge. Introducing a one-year diploma course specific to CBG under BDTCs can help prepare a workforce for increasing CBG plants. Increasing the frequency of onsite and online training with updated content is essential for staying relevant in the evolving CBG landscape. The government's commitment to these initiatives will meet rural energy needs and contribute significantly to India's sustainable and eco-friendly transportation solutions. The need for more awareness about BDTCs due to poor online presence requires immediate attention. Establishing a centralised website for BDTCs with clear information on contacts, charges, and timelines is crucial. Monthly webinars can be conducted to keep stakeholders informed about technical aspects, policy updates, and suc-

cessful practices. India's journey towards embracing CBG as a sustainable energy solution hinges on strategic initiatives and focused efforts. Governmental support and investment in BDTCs will play a pivotal role in fostering innovation and efficiency within the bioenergy sector. Furthermore, a comprehensive approach to addressing challenges in skilled workforce, testing procedures, and awareness campaigns will pave the way for a seamless transition to modern bioenergy. As India charts its course towards a greener future, it is essential to recognise the interconnectedness of these efforts. A harmonised strategy that combines education, infrastructure development, and awareness campaigns will be instrumental in achieving the goal of a sustainable and environment-friendly energy landscape. The successful integration of CBG into India's energy matrix relies on a collaborative approach, where government, industry, and society work hand in hand to shape a cleaner, more sustainable future.

*The writer is a former Professor of Economics at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune.*

### LOL GOLF GAME

A pastor, a doctor and an engineer were waiting one morning for a particularly slow group of golfers. Engineer: What's with these guys? We must have been waiting for 15 minutes! Doctor: I don't know, but I've never seen such ineptitude! Pastor: Hey, here comes the greens keeper. Let's have a word with him. [dramatic pause] Hi George. Say, what's with that group ahead of us? They're rather slow, aren't they? George: Oh, yes, that's a group of blind fire fighters. They lost their sight saving our clubhouse from a fire last year, so we always let them play for free anytime. The group was silent for a moment. Pastor: That's so sad. I think I will say a special prayer for them tonight. Doctor: Good idea. And I'm going to contact my ophthalmologist buddy and see if there's anything he can do for them. Engineer: Why can't these guys play at night?



## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Improve road safety

Sir, It pains to note that according to the Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023, India has registered a 15% increase in road fatalities in 2021, while road traffic deaths fell by 5% worldwide between 2010 and 2021. Over-speeding is the major reason for all the common causes of road accidents. Studies reveal that 80% of the accidents are happening due to the fault of drivers, most of them with valid driving licences. It is difficult to ensure proper safety awareness for drivers and monitor issuance of licences. New drivers need more comprehensive training and rigorous test levels on safety awareness. Education and enforcement can together bring about a shift in the mind-set of drivers. Better road sense, the ability of a driver to comprehend road signs, paying heed to speed restrictions are some of the driving etiquettes that will ease the pressure on traffic police. Frequent camps on road safety with catchy slogans like, "alert today – alive tomorrow," "a text or call can wreck it all," and "fast drive could be the last drive" will go a long way in preventing accidents. There is an urgent need to stress more on road safety awareness.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

### Fading into oblivion

Sir, "Behenji" seems to have given a go-by to her political ambitions if the appointment of nephew Akash Anand as her political heir is any indication. Despite keeping to herself of late, in Uttar Pradesh politics one could ignore Mayawati only at their own peril. Politics is about perception, and people are here to judge their leaders by the latter's approach and attitude more than anything else. Admittedly, she has not been her usual self in electoral politics over the last half decade. But who has not experienced topsy-turvy at a point in their political careers? Despite allegations of massive corruption during her chief ministerial tenures, the 67-year-old BSP chief has always been admired for her efficient administration and social engineering. The fighter that she is, Mayawati would know that no leader other than her would do full justice to her votebank. But, by the look of things, she appears to have chosen to fade into oblivion.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

# Top court recalls exodus of KPs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** After repeated rejections of various pleas by different Kashmiri Pandit outfits and individuals concerning the forced exodus from the valley, the Supreme Court finally made a mention of their plight.

The mention, however, falls short on extending justice to the community which has been waiting for justice and closure for the past 34 years.

Political and administrative support had become non-existent. The then J&K government under Farooq Abdullah failed to safeguard the minorities, especially the Kashmiri Pandits. And finally, the community was forced to leave their homes and hearth, with the first mass migration taking place in the intervening night of January 19-January 20, 1990.

Over seven lakh members of the community suddenly became refugees in their own country and were forced to live in tents and pitiable conditions in Jammu, Delhi and other parts of India.

Their plight did not end with this. FIRs of the crimes against them were hardly registered. Many of their abandoned prop-



THE COMMUNITY, WHICH IS IN A MINORITY IN THE VALLEY, BECAME THE FIRST TARGET OF THE PAKISTAN-SPONSORED TERROR NETWORK

SEEN AS PRO-INDIA, THE MINORITY WAS ALSO TARGETED FOR THEIR RELIGION

erties were looted and usurped.

The community leaders have been demanding a commission of inquiry or an SIT to probe the crimes and the exodus for the past three decades. But, none

of the political dispensation at the Centre or state paid any heed. Except for a few doles, the community was left to fend for itself.

The December 11 judgement

on Article 370 makes a mention of the mass exodus. "There was a mass exodus of the Kashmiri Pandit community, threatened for their life and property changing the very cultural ethos of Kashmir. There has been little turn-back despite three decades on this issue."

Supreme Court judge Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul in the judgement says under the headline - 1989-1990 onwards: The other troubled time - "God and nature have been very kind to the Kashmir Valley. Unfortunately, the human species has not been so considerate. The 1980s saw some troubled times culminating in the 1987 elections, which saw allegations and counter-allegations. There was a growth of fundamentalism fuelled from across the border. The 1971 creation of Bangladesh was not forgotten.

"Unemployed and frustrated youth were trained as militia and were sent back into Kashmir to create chaos. It was a major change for people who, irrespective of faith, were known for peace and tolerance. The Kashmiri Shaivism and Islamic Sufism were taken over by such militant tendencies."

He also writes about the im-

pact of the terrorism on the co-existence of the majority with the minorities. "The bottom-line is that today's generation aged 35 years or younger have not seen the cultural milieu of different communities, which formed the very basis of the society in Kashmir."

In the epilogue of his judgement, Justice Kaul says, "...There was a troubled situation at the ground level, which was apparently not redressed. It culminated in the migration of one part of the population of the State 1989-90. It is something that our country has had to live with and without any redressal for the people who had to leave their home and hearth. It was not a voluntary migration."

Although, the apex court says that there has been no redressal for the people forced to flee, it does not order any probe to uncover the plot and the faces involved and neither does it ask the government to take a meaningful decision on their rehabilitation in the valley.

The Supreme Court stresses on restoring the cultural milieu between the communities in the valley and suggests the setting up of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

# J&K: Security concerns to determine rollout of election time-table



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Srinagar, Dec 17:** The historic Supreme Court verdict on Article 370 has finally set at rest all speculation about the special status of J&K.

At the same time, the apex court has directed restoration of statehood to J&K as soon as possible. The court also held that the assembly elections in J&K should be held by September 2024. The court has clearly said that the restoration of statehood to J&K would not affect the status of Ladakh, which will continue to be a Union Territory.

Whether or not the Valley centric politicians of the National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party accept the decision of the country's highest court without a frown, the fact remains that the debate about the restoration of Article 370 is dried and dusted.

Union home minister Amit Shah had already said in Parliament while moving the motion for abrogation of Article 370 and downgrading of J&K into two Union Territories in August 2019 that statehood would be restored to J&K when the situation becomes normal there. There have been an unprecedented 2 crore tourists who visited J&K during the last two years.

Academic activities have been going on without any hiccup for the last 3 years and not a single day of business activity was lost during this period to any separatist called shutdown or protest. Stone pelting has completely stopped and people have been staying out of their homes for long hours during the evenings. Feasting and celebrations have been held without any threat of disruption from the separatists.

A general sense of security has returned to J&K together

with the fear of law returning to those who benefitted by breaking it during the last over 3 decades.

Government offices and courts have functioned normally and the kidnapping and threatening of public servants seems to be a thing of the past. The rule of law has been re-established together with respect for the orders passed by the courts.

Many government servants used to treat public service as a part time job and engaged in business activities and even acted like government contractors during the last 3 decades without fear of being punished. Things have completely changed on this front as well. Biometric attendance, closer supervision and accountability has returned to public service. This has definitely helped the developmental projects of the government.

The results of government run schools have shown improvement and non-performers are being gradually weeded out from government service now.

This is the rosy side of the picture that would normally favour holding of the J&K assembly elections simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections early next year.

An argument advanced for holding the two elections together is that if the voters can come out freely for voting for the Lok Sabha why can't they do so for the assembly elections as well.

The same polling booth could be used for casting both the votes. Politicians have been regularly engaging in public activities, holding meetings and public rallies across Kashmir. People have been participating in political activities without fear of reprisal from the separatists.

# Weather improves in J&K and Ladakh



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Srinagar, Dec 17:** Nightlong cloud cover pulled up minimum temperatures across Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh regions on Sunday as Srinagar city recorded minus 0.5 degrees Celsius as the minimum temperature.

MeT department officials said that the minimum temperature was minus 0.5 degrees Celsius in Srinagar Sunday.

"Minimum temperatures have improved appreciably due to nightlong cloud cover."

"Gulmarg witnessed minus 6

and Pahalgam minus 1.5 as the minimum temperature Sunday.

"Leh town in Ladakh region saw minus 4.6, Kargil minus 4.9 and Drass town minus 8.9 as the minimum.

"Jammu city registered 7.1 degree Celsius, Katra 6.6, Batote 2, Bhaderwah 0.4 and Banihal minus 0.2 degree C as the minimum temperature," the MeT statement said.

40-day long period of harsh winter cold known locally as the 'Chillai Kalan' starts each year December 21 and ends January 30.

# BJP winning polls due to misuse of EVMs: Maurya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ballia (UP), Dec 17:** Samajwadi Party leader Swami Prasad Maurya Sunday alleged that the BJP won the recent state elections and in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly polls due to the "misuse" of electronic voting machines (EVMs)

Maurya, who quit the BJP in January last year and is now the SP's national general secretary, was talking to reporters on the sidelines of the Buddhist conference in the Rasra area of the district.

"I say with certainty that the BJP is winning elections by misusing EVMs. This victory is not of (Prime Minister) Modi or Modi's charisma, but of the misuse of EVMs," he said on the assembly poll results in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

"Had EVM not been misused in UP assembly polls in 2022, BJP would have been wiped out from the state," he claimed.

Replying to another query, Maurya said, "The people who



Attacking the ruling party, Swami Prasad Maurya said that the people "who beat the drum of Sanatan Dharma do not understand the meaning of the word and are anti-Sanatan"

beat the drum of Sanatan Dharma do not understand the meaning of the word. Sanatan Dharma is a word coming from the mouth of Lord Buddha.

"While giving the message to his disciples, at the end he told them that whatever he was saying is Sanatan Dharma..."

"They (those who talk of Sanatan) just copy. There is a lot of difference between their Sanatan and the real Sanatan," he said. "The sun gives light to everyone. It does not discriminate between Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians in giving its light and does not discriminate be-

tween Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra."

On the disputes in Kashi and Mathura, Maurya alleged that some religious organisations were trying to vitiate the atmosphere by raising these issues.

Asked about the role of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in Uttar Pradesh, the SP leader said that Kumar is the architect of opposition unity.

When asked about BSP chief Mayawati joining the 'INDIA' bloc, he said, "Mayawati herself will decide about joining the alliance."

# Construction of proposed mosque in Ayodhya likely to begin in May

THE INDO-ISLAMIC CULTURAL FOUNDATION TRUST, WHICH IS TASKED WITH BUILDING THE MOSQUE IN AYODHYA'S DHANNIPUR, ALSO INTENDS TO APPOINT IN-CHARGES IN DIFFERENT STATES STARTING IN FEBRUARY TO RAISE FUNDS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Dec 17:** Construction of a proposed mosque in Ayodhya mandated by the Supreme Court in its Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case verdict is expected to begin in May, people associated with the project have said.

Chief trustee of the Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation Zufar Farooqui said, "The final design of the mosque is likely to be ready by mid-February and it will then go for administrative approval. The site office will be set up in the complex in February."

"It is expected that we will be in a position to start construction of the mosque in May next year," Farooqui, who is also the chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board, told PTI. Farooqui said the construction



of the Mohammad Bin Abdullah Ayodhya Mosque is getting delayed due to the fresh formalities after "drastic" changes were made in the design of the mosque and financial constraints.

The initial design of the mosque was based on those built in India. However, it was rejected and a new design was prepared. The mosque will be built on 40,000 square feet instead of the earlier 15,000 square feet, he said.

The IICF had earlier decided to shift to a "grand" design for the mosque similar to the one adopted in the Middle Eastern countries. Asked about the possibility of a crowdfunding campaign to overcome the financial constraints, Farooqui said the trust will take a call on it by February. "Crowdfunding is a huge task and very difficult to handle. What we are trying to do

is to give responsibility to our people in different states to raise funds for the project," he said. "We will work in a manner to ensure both transparency and accountability," he added.

Currently, the Mumbai team associated with the trust is working on this and it is expected that within one-and-a-half

months, we will have sufficient funds, Farooqui said. However, Farooqui did not completely rule out the possibility of crowd-funding and said that if needed, online donations would be sought from the people willing to donate.

He also asserted that the construction of the mosque was getting delayed more so due to the changes in the design.

IICF Secretary Athar Hussain said that the trust will build a hospital, library, community kitchen and a museum along with the mosque on the land given by the government.

Talks have been held with a group from Mumbai and they have been made in-charge of the construction committee. Asked when the construction will be completed, Hussain said it will depend on the availability of funds. On the orders of the Supreme Court, the government had given five acres of land in Dhannipur, Ayodhya to the Sunni Central Waqf Board Uttar Pradesh to construct the mosque.

The board then formed the IICF for the construction of the mosque and other facilities like a community kitchen, a research institute, a hospital and a museum. A map of the proposed mosque and other buildings was submitted to the Ayodhya Development Authority in 2021. It was approved in March this year.



Tourists walk on a snow-covered road after a fresh snowfall in Tangmarg, Jammu and Kashmir

# HC refuses to quash FIR against SHUATS officials

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Prayagraj (UP), Dec 17:** The Allahabad High Court has refused to quash a FIR lodged against the vice-chancellor and other higher officials of the Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture Technology and Science (SHUATS), who were accused of persuading a woman to adopt Christianity by offering her a job and other allurements.

Disposing of a writ petition filed by SHUATS V-C Rajendra Bihari Lal, director Vinod Bihari Lal and four others, a division bench of Justice Rahul Chaturvedi and Justice Mohd Azhar Husain Idrisi said: "No God or true church or temple



or mosque would approve such types of malpractices. If someone has chosen to get himself converted to a different religion, then it is totally another aspect of the issue. In the instant case prevailing upon the tender mind of a young girl providing gifts, clothing and other physical amenities and then asking her to get her baptised is an unpardonable sin."

In an FIR dated November 4, 2023 lodged under section 376D

(gang rape) and other IPC sections, and relevant sections of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021 and Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1956 in Hamirpur's Bewar, the woman alleged that she belonged to a lower middle-class family and was trapped by another woman who took her regularly to a church.

In the FIR, she also alleged that she was regularly subjected to sexual exploitation by the accused-petitioners including RB Lal, the accused petitioner no 1, who is the V-C of SHUATS, and she was pressurised to bring other women for conversion and other illegal works.

# TURKEY, SYRIA

# UNDER RUBBLE

On 6 February 2023, a devastating 7.8 earthquake struck southern and central Turkey and northern and western Syria causing widespread damage and tens of thousands of fatalities.

The earthquake was the largest in Turkey since the 1939 Erzincan earthquake of the same magnitude, and jointly the second-largest in the country, after larger estimates for the 1668 North Anatolia earthquake. It is also one of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded in the Levant. It was felt as far as Egypt and the Black Sea coast of Turkey. There were more than 30,000 aftershocks in the three months that followed.

There was widespread damage in an area of about 350,000 km<sup>2</sup>, about the size of Germany. An estimated 14 million people, or 16 percent of Turkey's population, were affected. Development experts from the United Nations estimated that about 1.5 million people were left homeless.

Across 11 of the 17 affected provinces of Turkey, there were 50,783 deaths, 297 missing and 107,204 injured. At least 15.73 million people and 4 million

## FIFTH-DEADLIEST EARTHQUAKE OF THE 21ST CENTURY; DEADLIEST WORLDWIDE SINCE THE 2010 HAITI QUAKE

buildings were affected. About 345,000 apartments were destroyed. It is the deadliest earthquake in what is now present-day Turkey since the 526 Antioch earthquake and the deadliest natural disaster in its modern history.

The earthquake was also the deadliest in present-day Syria since the 1822 Aleppo quake. At least 8,476 people died and over 14,500 were injured in Syria.

Among the dead included 2,153 children and 1,524 women. The Syrian Ministry of Health recorded more than 2,248

earthquake-related deaths and 2,950 injuries in government held areas, most of which were in the governorates of Aleppo and Latakia. In rebel-held areas, at least 4,547 people died and 2,200 others were injured.

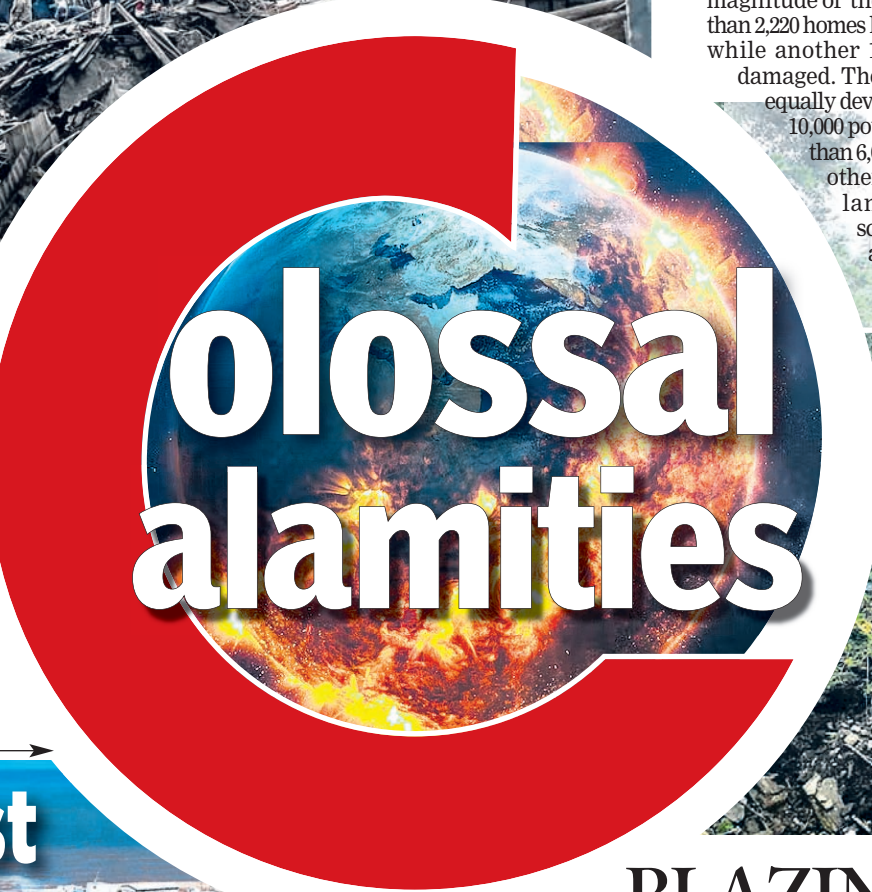
Damages were estimated at \$148.8 billion in Turkey, or 9% of the country's GDP, and \$14.8 billion in Syria.

Turkey and Syria are affected by the interaction between three tectonic plates; the African Plate, Arabian Plate and Anatolian Plate which is the reason behind such extreme calamities.

EARTHQUAKE MAGNITUDE <b>7.8</b>	
<b>TURKEY</b>	<b>SYRIA</b>
50,783 DEAD, 107,204 HURT	8,476 DEAD, 14,500 INJURED



Climate crisis has been hard at work throughout 2023, with extreme weather events hitting headlines, costing lives and livelihoods all around the globe. The world witnessed a record-breaking cyclone in south-eastern Africa, wildfires in the Americas, unbearable heatwaves across Asia, devastating earthquakes, floods and a lot more, highlighting what we all already know to be true: climate change is happening here and now. Orissa POST takes a look at the calamities of the outgoing year



# Century's Deadliest DELUGE



On Sunday 10 September 2023, Tropical Storm Daniel caused Libya's deadliest flooding for over a century. Affected areas experienced strong winds and heavy rainfall, leading to the collapse of two dams and subsequent catastrophic flooding, which destroyed homes, hospitals, roads and power lines. The collapse of the dams sent nearly 7.9 billion gallons of water into already inundated areas.

The eastern city of Derna, home to less than 10,000 people, was hit worst, with 25% of the city disappearing.

The death toll remains unknown, with many bodies believed to have been washed out to sea. Over 4,300 people have been confirmed dead and another 10,000 reported missing in a town with a population of about 90,000. Thousands more families have been affected due to the impact on essential services such as health, schooling and safe water supply.

A number of meteorologists and climate scientists noted that climate change very likely played a significant role in increasing Daniel's intensity.

A study by the World Weather Attribution group in the days that followed examined factors affecting the storm and determined that such a rainfall event occurring in eastern Libya would be expected to happen only once every 300 to 600 years. It suggested that factors related to climate change, such as the global average temperature being 1.2°C warmer than that of pre-industrial times (that is, before 1750), made the Libyan rainfall event 50 percent more intense and 50 times more likely to occur and the rainfall events in Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey 40 percent more intense and 10 times more likely to occur.

Cloud bursts, Sikkim drowns



Sadly, this is the latest in a series of deadly flash floods that ricocheted across the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region this monsoon, bringing the reality of this region's extreme vulnerability to climate change all too vividly alive

PEMA GYAMTSHO | DIRECTOR GENERAL, INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR INTEGRATED MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT

# LANDSLIDES SWALLOW HIMACHAL

Himachal Pradesh has always been highly vulnerable to landslides during the monsoon. Over the years, the vulnerability of the steeply sloping, geologically young and unstable Himalayan ranges has been greatly exacerbated by human activity such as deforestation, road-building, terracing, and changes in agriculture patterns that require more intense watering.

Weeks of heavy rainfall affected thousands of people across Himachal Pradesh and the neighbouring state of Uttarakhand, causing widespread destruction of life and property. The state was hit by landslides August 14 and 15 followed by another major landslide in Kullu district August 24. State government reports reveal at least 348 people have died due to rain-related incidents such as landslides and flash floods since June. With nearly 80 deaths, Shimla, the capital of Himachal Pradesh, was hit particularly hard. Chief Minister Sukhinder Sukhu said the state's loss exceeded Rs 100 billion, underscoring the magnitude of the destruction. More than 2,220 homes have been obliterated while another 10,000 lie partially damaged. The toll on livestock is equally devastating, with nearly 10,000 poultry birds and more than 6,000 cattle and various other animals dead. The landscape bears the scars of 131 landslides and 60 flash floods, eventually altering its topography.



## WHY IT HAPPENED

Experts have said that there are several human-made reasons behind landslides in Himachal, such as unscientific constructions in the ecologically fragile Himalayas, depleting forest cover, and structures near streams blocking the flow of water. As policymakers and experts look for reasons for the ongoing devastation in Himachal Pradesh, it has emerged that a report by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) had flagged poor planning in hill states, population pressure, and lack of enforcement of norms in the hill states in a report in 2019. The NDMA's report, titled National Landslide Risk Management Strategy, flagged Shimla and said that the city was built for a population of around 25,000 but now houses around 3,00,000 people.

## UNSTABLE UTTARAKHAND

DEHRADUN: Nearly 100 people have been killed and over a dozen remain missing in natural disasters during the three months of the monsoon season in Uttarakhand. According to data by the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC), landslides are behind most of these deaths. As many as 48 people have died since June 15 in the Himalayan state in landslide-related

incidents. Flash floods and cloudbursts have led to the death of 44 people, the SEOC data revealed. With over three months still left for this year to end, the number of landslide deaths is already the highest in the past eight years. Historically, landslides have always taken many lives - close to 300 people have been killed by crumbling mountains in Uttarakhand in the eight-year span between 2015 and 2023. This year though has been especially bad. Over 1,100 landslide incidents occurred this year in Uttarakhand compared to 245 in 2022 and 354 in 2021. Thirty-nine people had perished in landslide incidents in 2022, 48 in 2021, and 25 each in 2020, 2019, and 2018, as per data from the disaster management department.

# BLAZING INFERNO ENGULFS CANADA

The 2023 wildfire season in Canada was the worst on record - largely due to an extreme dry period followed by a heatwave - with reports that the impacts of the fires could be seen as far as Norway, while thousands of people in Canada were displaced from their homes.

According to the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre, the flames of 6,669 fires destroyed 18.5 million hectares, an area larger than Florida. More than 2,00,000 people had to be evacuated because of the flames and smoke.

What's more, where there's fire, there's smoke. As a result,

## CHILE CHARRED

Chile experienced a decade's worth of extreme dry weather, which has led to what experts have called a "mega drought". Record summer temperatures topping 40 degrees Celsius (104F), accompanied by strong winds, sparked one of the deadliest wildfires in the country's history in February this year. The flames devoured an estimated 270,000 hectares of land, destroyed hundreds of homes, killed 24 people, and prompted a state of emergency being declared in three regions.

Human-induced climate change is the major cause of the growing number and ferocity of heatwaves we're seeing across Asia. These signal to the fact that the climate emergency is here for this region

DEEPSHIKHA SHARMA | A CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT SPECIALIST, ICIMOD

## Wildfires fuelled by record heat

Scorching heat has gripped parts of Europe, Asia, and North America this summer, bringing with it record-breaking temperatures, wildfires, and health warnings and evacuations. According to the European Space Agency, Italy's islands of Sicily and Sardinia were facing their hottest-ever temperature, with a predicted high of 48 degrees Celsius (118F) - potentially the hottest temperature ever recorded in Europe. Meanwhile, the US National Weather Service issued warnings of a "widespread and oppressive" heat wave in southern and western states, affecting more than 80 million people. California's Death Valley reached a near-record temperature of 52 degrees Celsius July 16, while Southern California faced numerous wildfires. Over in East Asia, Japan issued heatstroke alerts impacting tens of millions of people as near-record high temperatures hit several parts of the country.



of the day **QUOTE**

Removal of Article 370 ensures equal rights and duties for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Now, people from across the country can go to Kashmir and buy land



CP RADHAKRISHNAN | JHARKHAND GOVERNOR

BJP's victory in three states - Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh - is a major boost for the party ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The defeat of the Congress in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan was unexpected. The results are worrying and I believe the party's leadership will address the weaknesses



P CHIDAMBARAM | CONGRESS LEADER

All the parties are upset and they have turned against us. They came together and approached the Centre, asking it to do something to stop our work. (They told the Centre) do not allow them (AAP) to work. If they (AAP) do so much work, then we (rival parties) will be doomed



ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM

**SHORT TAKES**

**335 fresh COVID cases in India**

**New Delhi:** India Sunday logged 335 new COVID-19 infections while the number of active cases increased to 1,701, according to the Union health ministry. India's COVID-19 caseload stands at 4.50 crore (4,50,04,816). The death toll climbed to 5,33,316 as five more people -- four in Kerala and one in Uttar Pradesh -- succumbed to the viral disease, the data updated at 8 am stated. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease has increased to 4,44,69,799. The national recovery rate stands at 98.81 per cent, according to the health ministry's website.

**SIT formed**

**Thane:** A special investigation team (SIT) has been formed to probe the incident in which a woman was injured after her boyfriend, who is a senior bureaucrat's son, allegedly tried to mow her down with his car in Thane city, police said Sunday. A case has been registered against the accused, Ashwajot Gaikwad, and two others under sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 279 (rash driving) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code, Thane police commissioner Jai Jeet Singh said. According to the police, the incident took place around 4:30 am on December 11 near a hotel on Ghodbunder Road, where the 26-year-old woman had gone to meet Gaikwad.

**Principal arrested**

**Itanagar:** The principal of a school in Arunachal Pradesh's Pakke Kessang district was arrested for allegedly beating up students who failed to recite the prayer properly and lacked proficiency in Sanskrit, police said Sunday. The school was operated by the Patanjali Yogpeeth Trust, which terminated the services of the principal after the allegations surfaced, they said. The principal was arrested from Fatehpur district in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, Pakke Kessang's Superintendent of Police (SP) Tasi Darang said.

**Boy sodomised**

**Saharanpur (UP):** An 11-year-old boy was allegedly sodomised by his tuition teacher here, police said Sunday. The incident took place Saturday when the child went to take tuition from accused Dev Kumar, ASP (City) Abhimanyu Manglik said. An FIR in this regard was registered by the boy's father under relevant sections of the IPC and POCSO act, he said.



**The Parliament security breach is a serious matter. There was a great lapse. The Union Home Minister has already admitted that. Let them investigate it**  
**MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM**

**PRESIDENT TO VISIT WB, TELANGANA, RAJASTHAN**

President Droupadi Murmu will visit West Bengal, Telangana and Rajasthan from December 18 to 23 to attend different programmes, a Rashtrapati Bhavan statement said Sunday



## Tension in Bihar after body of temple staff surfaces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gopalganj (Bihar), Dec 17:** Tension erupted in Gopalganj district of Bihar Sunday after the body of a local temple staff, who went missing a week ago, was found in a mutilated condition on the outskirts of a village, police said.

The deceased, Manoj Kumar Sah, was last seen venturing out of the temple in Manjha village in Danapur area Monday and his body was found Saturday, Gopalganj Superintendent of Police Swarn Prabhat said.

"A rumour is being spread that he was the priest of the temple. He was a caretaker who used to sleep inside the temple premises. Locals say they had last seen him locking the temple's gate on Monday night and going out. Further details will be known after an investigation," Prabhat said.

Asked about reports of bullet injuries found on the body, eyes missing and cuts on private parts, the SP said, "We must await the post-mortem report before addressing these queries." On the possible motive behind the murder, Prabhat said the temple was embroiled in a land dispute. "The case is being probed from all angles and the culprits will be brought to book at the earliest," he added.



Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Pranjali Tripathi, said a group of villagers had staged a demonstration on a highway in the morning in protest against the killing of a local resident

The deceased, Manoj Kumar Sah, was last seen venturing out of the temple in Manjha village in Danapur area Monday and his body was found Saturday, Gopalganj Superintendent of Police Swarn Prabhat said

Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Pranjali Tripathi, said a group of villagers had staged a demonstration on a highway in the morning in protest against the killing of a local resident.

A police party that went to the spot was attacked and its vehicle was vandalised, Tripathi said. "But, the situation was brought under control soon and

an FIR is being lodged in connection with the incident. Those who were involved in the attack on policemen will be identified and caught," he said.

Meanwhile, the opposition BJP lashed out at the Nitish Kumar government, alleging that the murder was proof of "jungle raj" in Bihar. Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai, a former Bihar BJP president, alleged in a statement, "Criminals are roaming around without fear because of the patronage they receive from Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav".

The BJP stands with the bereaved family members and will fight to ensure that justice is done, it said. "The people of Bihar will punish the government in the next elections," Rai said in the statement.

## CRPF officer killed in Maoist attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Raipur, Dec 17:** A sub-inspector of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was killed and a constable injured in an encounter between security personnel and Naxalites in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district Sunday, police said.

With this incident, three security personnel have been killed and seven others injured so far this month in different Naxal incidents in the state's Bastar division. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Sunday chaired a high-level meeting of officials concerned and directed to expedite the anti-Naxal operation in the state, a statement issued by the state public relations department said.

The state government will eliminate Naxalism with the Centre's help, the CM said.

The latest incident took place on Sunday morning under Jagagunda police station area when a team of the CRPF's 165th battalion was out on an anti-Naxal operation, a police official said.

The operation was launched at around 7 am from Bedre camp towards Ursangal village, he said.

During the operation, an exchange of fire broke out in which sub-inspector (SI) Sudhakar Reddy was killed and constable Ramu sustained bullet injuries, he said. After the exchange of fire stopped, four suspects were rounded up from the spot, he said.

## NINE DEAD IN NAGPUR BLAST



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Nagpur, Dec 17:** Nine people were killed and three others seriously injured in a blast at an explosives manufacturing factory in Chakdoh in Maharashtra's Nagpur district Sunday, police said.

In a statement, Ashish Srivastava, senior general manager of Solar Industries India Limited, said, "A tragic incident occurred at 9am in building number HR-CPCH-2 (Mixing, Melting and Casting) in which nine workers lost their lives."

He said the company was fully committed to providing all support and relief to the families of the deceased today and in the future. "We shall implement the recommendations of the inquiry committee as soon as they are received," he said in the statement.

Speaking to reporters earlier, Srivastava said the incident occurred in the building where boosters used in coal mines are produced. It took place when sealing work of the

A Kondhali police station official said 12 persons were present in the unit when the incident took place

The state government will provide an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh to the families of the deceased

product was going on, he added. "Nine people have died. The injured workers have been rushed to hospital. All the workers have been evacuated from the building," he added.

A Kondhali police station official said 12 persons were present in the unit when the incident took place. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in a post on X termed the incident as unfortunate and consoled the death of the nine people.

The state government will provide an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh to the families of the deceased and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has approved the decision, he said. Fadnavis said nine people, including six women, died in the blast at Solar Industries.

## Congress to hold CWC meet Dec 21 for LS polls



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 17:** The Congress has called a meeting of its working committee on December 21 to deliberate on the strategy for the 2024 general election and chalk out a plan for its poll campaign to take on the BJP, sources said.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has called the meeting, which will take place at the All India Congress Committee headquarters two days after the INDIA bloc meeting on December 19, to deliberate on the political situation in the country and the way forward, they said.

Seat sharing and campaign is likely to be top of the agenda, they added.

The meeting is also likely to discuss the possibility of a yatra

that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi could undertake before the 2024 polls with unemployment and price rise as its main planks, the sources said.

An east-to-west yatra in hybrid mode, including on-foot, is being mulled by the party and a final decision is expected to be taken soon, they said. Ahead of the Congress Working Committee meeting, the 4th meeting of the leaders of INDIA parties will be held at 3 pm on December 19 in New Delhi.

Evolving a "core positive agenda", seat sharing and a programme to hold joint rallies are among the main challenges before the opposition INDIA bloc that will be taken up at its next meeting. The parties intend to move forward with the unity theme -- "Main Nahin, Hum" (We, Not Me) -- as a counter to the prime minister at the meeting, a senior leader of the Congress said.

The CWC meeting will also analyse the recent assembly poll results in which it was defeated in the Hindi heartland states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan while winning and forming the government in Telangana.



Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services personnel rescue children from a flooded area after heavy rain in Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu

## How BSF will secure Sundarbans

*The Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest cover region is an archipelago of over 100 islands and a complex network of streams, rivers, tidal creeks and channels spread over an area of 9,630 sq km in India*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



proval and financial sanction from the Union Home Ministry in Delhi is awaited, official sources said.

The Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest cover region is an archipelago of over 100 islands and a complex network of streams, rivers, tidal creeks and channels spread over an area of 9,630 sq km in India. The rest falls in Bangladesh. It lies on the delta of the Ganga, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers in the Bay of Bengal.

"Sundarbans is a strategic and vital area along the India-Bangladesh international border. Its effective domination and security is the need of the hour as

there are inputs suggesting this tricky forest and riverine area could be used for cross-border infiltration of terrorists and criminals," a senior officer said.

The force has hence decided to raise an exclusive marine battalion of its personnel for this task, deploy sturdy drones that can undertake long-haul surveillance sorties and station some ATVs to access these areas for better patrolling, the officer said. Another officer said the new battalion will have more than 1,100 trained personnel and about 40 large drones and 12-14 ATVs will be deployed.

The plan will be set in motion once the proposal is approved

## Kerala Governor targets CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Malappuram (Kerala), Dec 17:** Incensed by an SFI banner outside the Calicut University guest house terming him a 'sanghi' and demanding he 'go back', Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan Sunday alleged that it was put up by the state police on the direction of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Hours after he decided to seek an explanation from the university's Vice Chancellor on how banners against the Chancellor were allowed to be put up by SFI in various parts of the varsity, the Raj Bhavan issued a press release blaming the CM and the police for the posters "defamatory to the Governor".

While Raj Bhavan issued the statement, dramatic scenes were witnessed at Calicut University where the Governor lashed out at the police for not removing the offending banner.

"How come this (banner) is here? I am asking you (police) if CM was staying here, would you allow this? You want to insult me? Enough is enough. You are try-

ing to make a mockery of law and order.

"If not now, in 3-4 months you will have to reply. This CM is not going to remain forever. Don't think you will go unaccountable. Don't be under that impression. You will not go unaccountable," an incensed Khan shouted at the police. When the police said -- "it is not like that", Khan responded "if it is not like that, what is this? How come this is here?"

He also threatened to leave the guest house immediately and demanded that his car be brought there. "I will go from here and no police person will follow me," he said. Khan called the police "shameless" and also said that the Students' Federation of India (SFI), the student wing of the CPI(M), appeared to be running the university.

"Shameless people. SFI is running the university. They will put the banners outside the guest house and you (police) will have them there?" he asked. Finally, the police pulled down the banner in question and Khan returned to the guest house.