



ODISHA
INDIA'S BEST KEPT SECRET.



DSPL-469



Shri Naveen Patnaik
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha

Nua-O Fest, Mayurbhanj

Place: Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo
University Ground, Baripada

Time : 10 AM onwards

19 December, 2023



OIPR-29001/13/10114/2324

leisure



JENNER, BAD BUNNY SPLIT AFTER A YEAR OF DATING

Kendall Jenner and Bad Bunny have reportedly split after almost a year of dating. The 28-year-old model and the Puerto Rican rapper, 29, were last seen together at the *Saturday Night Live* afterparty in October after the music star hosted and performed in an episode of the late-night sketch show.

RITA ON HER PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT OF 2023

British singer and songwriter Rita Ora is proud of herself for prioritising her mental health throughout 2023. This, the 33-year-old says, is the proudest achievement of the outgoing year. The *Anywhere* hitmaker is due to start work on her fourth studio album in January.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
You may want to tap your feet to a beat only you can hear. Life for you today is sunny. You're able to take quick decisions, while other major ones may be kept on hold. Dance your way home, if that's what pleases you, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
There is a fair chance that you will make heads turn at work today, forecasts Ganesh. It may not be an auspicious day for auction bids or tenders. Some of you may succeed in interviews and entrance tests this afternoon, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
Though you are always open to advice, you need to take your own, independent decision today. You may spend the afternoon putting things in order. In the evening, you will possibly have a romantic dinner with your sweetheart and may even want to propose marriage. Ganesh won't advise, as today, it's entirely your call.

CANCER
Your peers will be impressed by your professional efficiency today, forecasts Ganesh. You had better postpone auction bids or sealed tenders for some other day. You are likely to do well in interviews, says Ganesh.

LEO
It's an early thanksgiving for you today, says Ganesh. As you feel full of the spirit of joy and blessing. Academically, this might push you towards developing a penchant for subjects like philosophy and metaphysics. Culturally, this translates into a desire to learn and hone your creative skills.

VIRGO
Ganesh advises you not to lose your temper, or else it may rupture close associations. You can avoid legal problems by settling vexed issues out of the court. You may spend freely in the evening and indulge in all the activities that give you pleasure.

LIBRA
Ganesh says you need to enhance your knowledge and ability. To attain your final goal you will take the path of enhancing your personality. Toward noon there may be some issues that may trouble you but Ganesh says that these are petty things that happen in life and one should not focus too much on them.

SCORPIO
Once in a while, it's okay to enjoy the luxuries of life and pamper yourself. And if accompanied by your spouse, it adds a romantic touch to the entire experience. When it comes to work, people look up to you as an asset to the company. At times, even unknown people lend you a helping hand and contribute to your progress; appreciate them, says Ganeshji.

SAGITTARIUS
The bossy nature of your soul mate is likely to put you off. At work, you may find yourself helpless and left scratching your head. Ganesh advises and foresees you sitting together with your beloved and resolving all your differences.

CAPRICORN
You may have a good control over your temper, but Ganesh says you are very likely to lose it today, and most likely, at work. For this one day, think before you say anything and avoid getting into any sort of arguments or scuffle. Make sure you take measured steps, for it may not be a very good day, but you can do your bit to prevent it from getting worse.

AQUARIUS
Friends - the pillars of your life are going to be your constant companions for the day. Ganesh suggests you come out of your shell and tread new paths. Bring the vibrant side of your personality to the fore and see the difference you make in every one's life.

PISCES
You will be at your wit's end today, grappling with financial issues. You will decide to multiply your savings and increase your income by whatever means possible. The good news being you will find it easy to implement your new plans and schemes.

Taapsee breaking moulds

Mumbai: In the ever-evolving tapestry of Bollywood, Taapsee Pannu has emerged as a dynamic and versatile force, weaving her own distinct narrative in her over a decade long career. She has created her own mainstream world for herself in an industry with diverse and thought-provoking projects such as *Chashme Baddoor*, *Pink*, *Badla*, *Thappad* and *Mulk*. And industry insiders feel it is just a start to a great journey ahead.

According to producer and trade expert Girish Johar, she is a rare find who hasaced the art of blending meaningful cinema with

commercial, while creating a glam image as well.

"It is a very rare mix. Because traditionally we saw that actresses who did meaningful cinema didn't find a strong foothold in the commercial world. With the changing time and audience's preferences getting progressive, Taapsee is one of those rare few talents who has a strong footing in all forms of cinema," says Johar.

Beyond the glitz and glamour, her journey is a testament to the evolving landscape of Bollywood. With projects such as *Baby*, *The Ghazi Attack*, *Manmarziyaan*, *Naam Shabana*, *Mission Mangal*, *Saand Ki Aankh*, *Haseen Dillruba*, *Rashmi Rocket*, *Loop Lapeta* and *Shabaash Mithu*, she has woven a compelling narrative that transcends the conventional boundaries of Hindi cinema.

In fact, the industry is hoping to see her push the boundaries further. Trade expert Akshaye Rathi asserts, "Her journey as an actor who is not from the entertainment industry, has been great and inspirational for all. For an outsider who had no connection in the entertainment industry, she has come and worked her way up the rank."

As per trade expert Atul Mohan, what worked in her favour was that "she never considered herself to be part of the race."



Ranveer (L) with his statue

RANVEER UNVEILS HIS WAX FIGURES

London: Actor Ranveer Singh became the latest Indian personality to get his wax figure at Madame Tussauds set for attractions in London and Singapore.

"What an incredible moment it is for me to be here with my mum, launching my own figures at Madame Tussauds London. It feels like life has come full circle today. I remember reading in wonderment about this mythical, magical place as a kid, going through my mum's early pictures with popular celebrities' figurines here and wondering what this place is all about. Today, being immortalised as a figure in the company of such esteemed individuals is a remarkably proud feeling for me and for my family and I am so grateful for everything," the actor said in a statement.

While Singh's London figure pays homage to his culture and heritage with the neon sherwani designed by Manish Arora as part of his wedding celebrations, his Singapore statue is dressed in a custom tuxedo crafted by Gaurav Gupta which features a velvet blazer with floral embellishments.

Singh's London figure will be open for display from December 18 and from December 23 at the Singapore branch.

Neha to make her int'l film debut

Mumbai: Actress Neha Dhupia is set make her International film debut with *Blue 52*, directed by renowned Egyptian filmmaker Ali El Arabi.

Arabi is known for his award-winning documentary feature *Captains of Za'atari*. *Blue 52* unfolds against the stunning backdrops of Kochi, India, and Qatar.

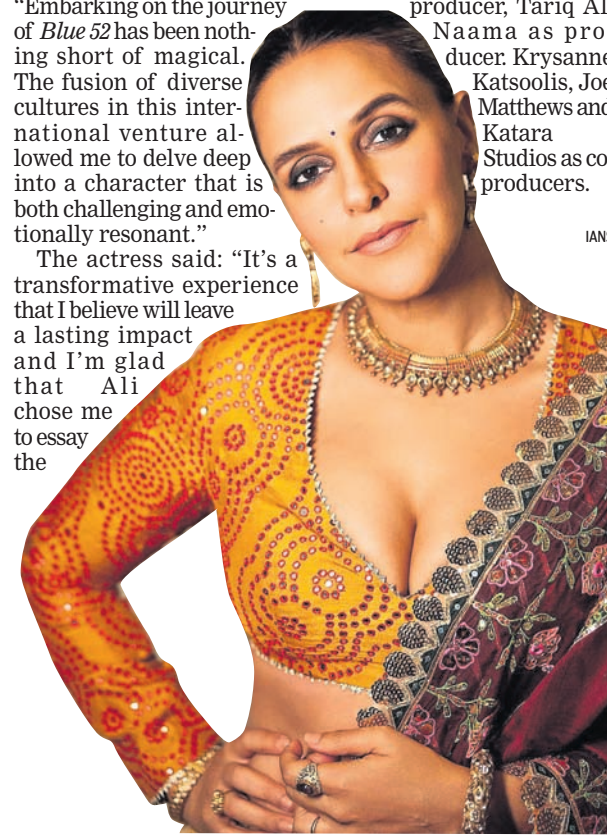
Speaking of her international debut, Neha said: "Embarking on the journey of *Blue 52* has been nothing short of magical. The fusion of diverse cultures in this international venture allowed me to delve deep into a character that is both challenging and emotionally resonant."

The actress said: "It's a transformative experience that I believe will leave a lasting impact and I'm glad that Ali chose me to essay the

lead in what is my international first."

Director Ali El Arabi said: "Creating *Blue 52* was a labour of love, blending the cinematic languages of Egypt, America, and India. Neha brought an unparalleled dedication to her role, infusing the character with a nuanced emotional depth."

The film is Presented by Ambient Light with Ali El Arabi serving as director and producer, Tariq Al-Naama as producer, Krysanne Katsoolis, Joe Matthews and Katara Studios as coproducers.



Elvis Presley was nervous, insecure: Ex-wife

THE 78-YEAR-OLD ACTRESS, WHO WAS MARRIED TO THE ROCK 'N' ROLL ICON FOR SIX YEARS, OPENS UP ABOUT THEIR RELATIONSHIP AHEAD OF THE RELEASE OF NEW FILM PRISCILLA

Los Angeles: Legendary musician Elvis Presley's ex-wife Priscilla Presley has shared that he was 'nervous and insecure' about his performances.

The 78-year-old actress, who was married to the late music legend for six years between

1967 and 1973, has opened up about the former couple's relationship ahead of the release of Sofia Coppola's new film *Priscilla* which tells her life story, reports Female First UK. She has revealed the late King of Rock 'n' Roll was con-

stantly seeking reassurance because he was worried he wasn't good enough.

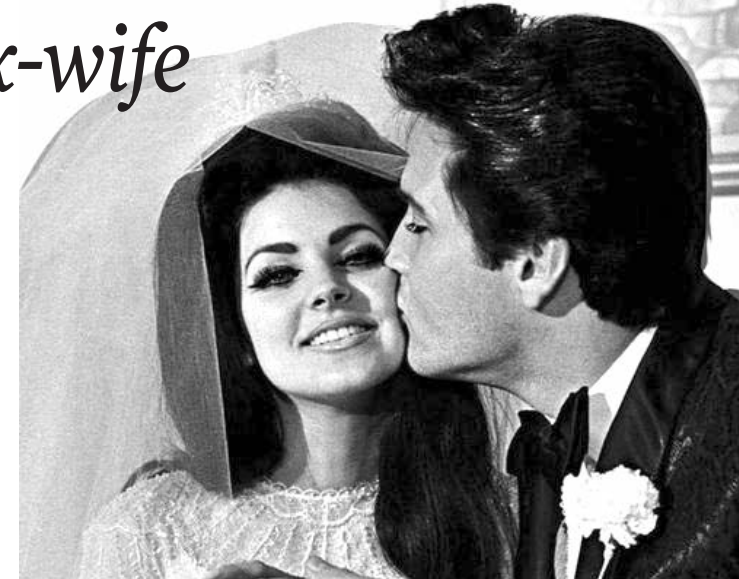
She told *Fox 32*, "People wouldn't believe that he was nervous when he would do a show like in Vegas. Every show that he came out was, 'How was I? Was I okay? Did it come out?' He was insecure and wanted to make sure that he was okay, which is hard to believe."

As per Female First UK, she went on to reveal Christmas was Elvis' favourite time of year but he was never very

good at decorating their tree.

Priscilla explained: "Yes, that (Christmas) was his special time. He loved all the decorations. I would do the tree, I would put all the lightbulbs on the tree and the lights, and he would take the tinfoil and stand in the back where the dining room table is and curl it all up, squish it together and throw it."

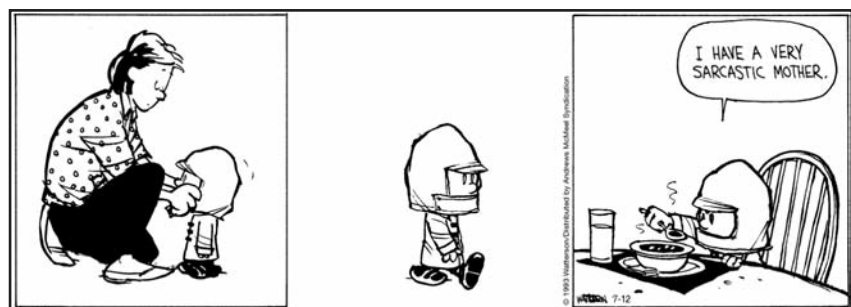
"And I go, 'No, that's not how you put tinsel on and so I would take it and put a little bit and he would just take it and throw the tinsel on," she added.



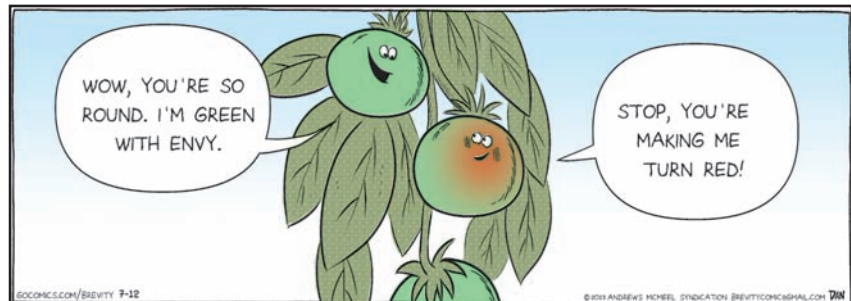
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

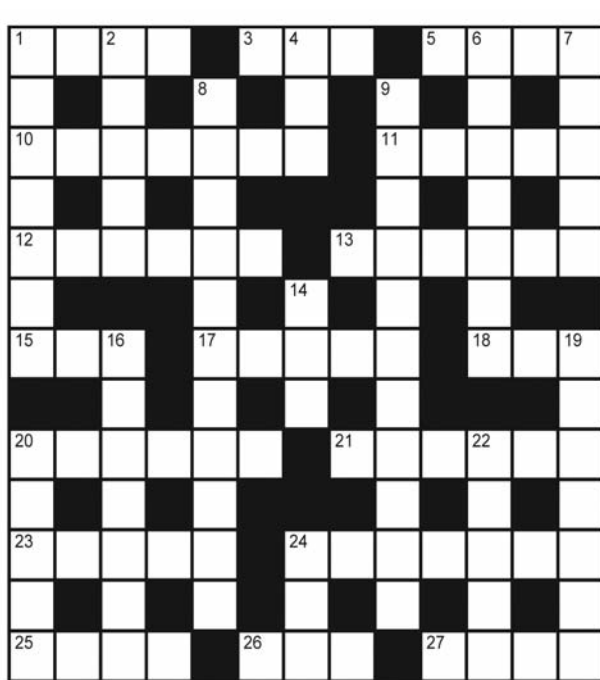


BREVITY



FUN post

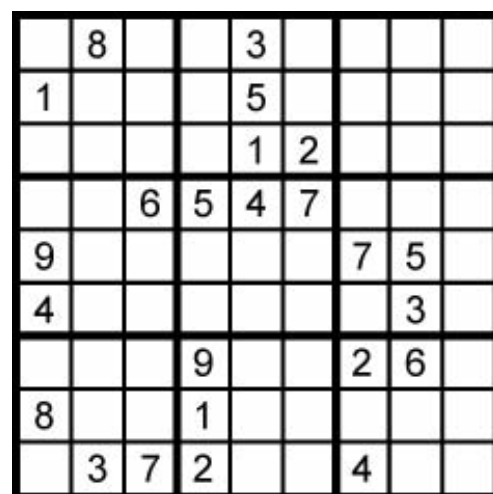
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Plummet
 - 3 Yoga class need
 - 5 Origin
 - 10 Babysitters
 - 11 Construct
 - 12 Chafe
 - 13 Down in the dumps
 - 15 Hankering
 - 17 Muse of poetry
 - 18 Tool with teeth
 - 20 Laughable
 - 21 Empty
 - 23 Picture part
 - 24 Toy dog (4-3)
 - 25 Loose garment
 - 26 Inclined
 - 27 Pluck
 - Down**
 - 1 Wishful thinking
 - 2 Cruise ship
 - 4 Commercials
 - 6 Burdensome
 - 7 Sir or madam, e.g.
 - 8 Generous (4-7)
 - 9 Ancient land between the Tigris and Euphrates
 - 14 Tartan cap
 - 16 Savings (4,3)
 - 19 Diver's garment (3,4)
 - 20 Black ink item
 - 22 Following
 - 24 Easy mark

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

Fresh summons
Enforcement Directorate issues fresh summons to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for questioning him December 21 in the excise policy-linked money laundering case
NATIONAL | P7

Sisi remains Prez
Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi wins a third six-year term in office, according to info provided by poll officials Monday
INTERNATIONAL | P8

Tax collections rise
Net direct tax collections grow by 20.66 per cent to over ₹13.70 lakh crore in the current fiscal as per the I-T department
BUSINESS | P9

Second ODI today
A determined Indian team look to seal series when they take the field against South Africa in the second ODI at Qqeberha
SPORTS | BACK PAGE

A NOTCH ABOVE



Freestyle football couple, Aguska from Poland and Patrick Baurer from Germany, display their skills on the banks of the Dal Lake in Srinagar, Monday
PTI PHOTO

Bill for control of telecom tabled

AGENCIES
New Delhi, Dec 18: The Centre tabled Monday the new telecom bill in the Lok Sabha. The Telecommunications Bill, 2023, proposes that the Centre will take temporary possession of telecom networks in case of any public emergency or in the interest of public safety. The Bill was tabled by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.
The new version of the Bill excludes OTT services, such as on-line messaging players like WhatsApp, video-streaming platform Skype, streaming services and digital payments from its purview.
The previous draft version included OTT services in its purview, which triggered huge debate among the internet companies and other stakeholders. The Bill also includes a provision mandating biometric identification for telecom companies before issuing SIM cards to people.
According to the Bill, the government may notify standards and conformity assessment measures in respect of - telecommunication equipment, telecommunication identifiers and telecommunication network; telecommunication services, in consonance with any regulations notified by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) from time to time.

78 MPs suspended

92, the highest number of lawmakers barred for a Session since 1989, when 63 were suspended



POST NEWS NETWORK
New Delhi, Dec 18: A total of 78 Opposition MPs were suspended Monday from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for raising slogans and demanding a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah on the security breach in Lok Sabha, December 13.
While 64 opposition MPs were suspended for the remainder of Winter Session in both the houses, 14 MPs (Rajya Sabha-11, Lok Sabha-3) were suspended till the submission of the report of the Privileges Committee. The Lok Sabha suspended 33 MPs - 11 from Congress, including its leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, nine each from DMK and TMC, two from IUML and one each from JD(U) and RSP.
On the other hand, 45 Rajya Sabha MPs, including 18 from the Congress, seven from TMC, five from DMK were suspended. With the suspensions Monday, the total number of lawmakers suspended reached 92 (46 Lok Sabha and the same number from RS). This marks the highest number of suspended MPs since March 1989 when 63 members were suspended in the Lok Sabha for a week under the Rajiv Gandhi regime after they protested against the report of the Thakkar Commission which looked into the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
Significantly, there have been multiple incidents in the history of Parliament when MPs were suspended from both the Houses over various issues. In 2022, 23 MPs (19 from RS and four from LS) were suspended for protesting within the House. However, there hasn't been single Session where 92 MPs have been suspended.
Reacting to his suspension, Congress MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury put the entire blame on Union Home Minister Amit Shah. "We have been demanding revocation of the suspended MPs and a statement from the Home Minister. He can speak on various TV channels, but he doesn't have the time to come to the House. The government has reached the heights of tyranny," Chowdhury said.
Congress MP from Koraput, Saptagiri Ulaka called the BJP government arrogant and said that Opposition will continue to voice its protest.
TMC MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay said that BJP wants to suppress the Opposition in Parliamentary democracy. "The BJP government is trying to gag the voice of the opposition," Sudip said.
Congress lawmaker KC Venugopal said the House is functioning with only one purpose and that is to suppress the entire voice of the Opposition.
Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Bhartruhari Mahtab said that the suspension is the end result of the disruptions caused by the opposition MPs since last week.

FIGURE MUCH HIGHER THAN 20 STATED BY NTCA

Similipal tiger count at 35

POST NEWS NETWORK
Baripada, Dec 18: Contradicting the census of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), officials of the Forest department here said Monday that there are 35 big cats present in the Similipal Tiger Reserve. Earlier in a census, the results of which were announced in August, the NTCA had said that Odisha has a total of 20 tigers, among which 16 are in Similipal. The latest census carried out by the state Forest department has found that the number of tigers are much higher than the figure provided by NTCA. This being the number only in Similipal, the numbers will certainly be higher across Odisha.
Forest department officials said that the present census had been launched in October this year. The existence of 35 big



cats was known from the camera traps during the ongoing enumeration process.
The number may well go up once the tiger census is completed, added the official. Confirming this information Monday, the director of the Similipal National Park, Prakash Chand Gogineni added that a fierce fight had taken place between two adult tigers over territory more than a month back. "The fight started November 9. Since then there had been sporadic clashes between the

two tigers identified as T-35 and T-31. Subsequently T-31 had to leave the area," Gogineni said. He added that the complete data about the exact number of tigers in the park will be known January next year, as by then the census will be over.
Earlier the state Forest department had alleged that the number of camera traps used by the NTCA were not enough. Officials had also pointed out that many areas in South Odisha had been left uncovered. Earlier in 2018, the all India tiger estimation survey had found 28 tigers in Odisha. Sources said that more than 600 camera traps had been used to count the tigers in Similipal, this time.
It should be stated here that there have been a couple of cases where tigers from neighbouring Chhattisgarh has crossed over into Odisha and settled.

Odia youth dies by suicide in Kolkata

PNN & AGENCIES
Kolkata, Dec 18: The body of a youth was found hanging from one of the galleries of Eden Gardens here Monday, police said. The deceased was identified as 21-year-old Dhananjay Barik, son of a groundsman, they informed. Police said that the deceased was a resident of Bhadrak district.
"The deceased was possibly suffering from depression because he was not getting employed as a ground staff at the Eden Gardens. He wanted to do the same work as his father and uncle. However, with the passage of time, Dhananjay became disillusioned and took the drastic step," a police officer said. "We are investigating whether it is a case of suicide or something else. The body has been sent for post-mortem," the officer added.
The youth's family members had filed a missing complaint with the Maidan police station here Sunday, the official said. He added that the deceased was staying with his father and uncle at the staff quarters inside the Eden Gardens.
Sources meanwhile informed that the youth had come to this city to pursue a career. He had seen the attention that his father and uncle got during the ODI World Cup matches. Since then Dhananjay had been pestering his father to talk to the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) officials regarding a job. However with the passage of time, the deceased lost hope of getting a job at the 'Mecca of Cricket' and took the drastic step, they added.
The family members told the cops, as uncertainties prevailed over him getting the desired job, the deceased started going into acute depression. The family members told the cops that the deceased went missing since Sunday afternoon following which they filed a missing complaint ultimately late Sunday evening with the police. They added that Dhananjay in the past had also left home for lengthy durations.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Book a return ticket for the same day, Mr MP sir. Everybody knows you'll be suspended

SHORT TAKES

Diarrhoea toll goes up to 9 in Rourkela

Rourkela: Diarrhoea claimed two more lives in the last 24 hours taking the toll to nine in this town, officials said Monday. They added that the number of patients getting discharged from hospitals is increasing which is encouraging for all. "The Rourkela Government Hospital had initially attended to 329 persons affected with the disease. Currently 142 patients are under treatment," an official said.

SUV ploughs into Biden's motorcade

Wilmington (US): A car ploughed into a parked SUV that was guarding President Joe Biden's motorcade Sunday night while the president was leaving from a visit to his campaign headquarters. However, the President and First Lady Jill Biden were unharmed. While Biden was walking to his waiting armoured SUV, a sedan hit a US Secret Service vehicle that was being used in the cavalcade.

UNDERWORLD DON BEING TREATED AT ISOLATED KARACHI HOSPITAL FOR THE PAST 2 DAYS, SAY SOURCES

Tight security for 'poisoned' Dawood

AGENCIES
New Delhi, Dec 18: Underworld don Dawood Ibrahim has been hospitalised in Pakistan's Karachi due to a serious health complication, sources and a section of the Pakistan media stated Monday. There were several reports on various social media platforms that Dawood has been 'poisoned'. However, there was no information forthcoming on this aspect.
Sources close to the UN-designated terrorist have said that Dawood had been hospitalised two days back. However, they did not give reasons. They added that he is being 'treated' at a facility amid huge security. The floor in which he is residing has been completely vacated. Except for doctors, his family members and security personnel, no one is being allowed on the floor.
Sources also informed that Mumbai police are trying to gain more information on the hospitalisation of the underworld don from his relatives Alishah Parkar and Sajid Wagle living in India's financial capital.
The life of Dawood, the mastermind of the 1993 Mumbai blasts and who is the most-wanted gangster in India, has been shrouded in secrecy for the past many years. India has said it has irrefutable evidence that Dawood is based in Karachi.
Senior Pakistani journalist Arzoo Kazmi has been quoted as saying in a number of national news websites that there has been an alleged communication blackout, in and around the hospital where Dawood is staying. The internet and social media platforms have been shut down making it very difficult to get

proper information.
Some sources informed that there is a possibility that the 67-year-old Dawood may have breathed his last. That is the main reason why Pakistan has been keeping quiet on the matter. However, in the past, there have been a number of occasions when Dawood has 'died'. However, all those turned out to be rumours.
There have been previous reports claiming that the underworld don contracted Covid-19 and suffered a heart attack and died. However, on both occasions, his gang members rejected such claims and asserted that their boss was alive and well.
Pakistan has all through denied the presence of Dawood on its territory. However, it had once unwittingly admitted that Dawood lives in Pakistan in a

report provided to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Since then Dawood, his second wife and children have stayed out of public glare.

India wants to lay its hands on Dawood for his involvement in multiple crimes, terror acts, narcotics, etc in Mumbai and elsewhere, plus, also as 'a political trophy'.



MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VIATION
SENSEX	71315.09	↓ 168.66
NIFTY	21418.70	↓ 38.00
DOLLAR	83.09	↑ ₹0.06
EURO	90.65	↓ ₹0.38
GOLD	₹62,095	↓ ₹97
SILVER	₹74,349	↓ ₹176

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	26.6°C	26.4°C
Min Temp	13.5°C	13.5°C
Humidity	74%	75%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY

Cloud of uncertainty hangs over free IAS coaching plan



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Questions are now being raised on the success of free civil services coaching initiative in degree colleges across the state which is going to be operational from next academic year. The state government had recently announced the programme with a view to increasing the success rate of Odia students in all-India administrative services exams which has been on the decline, of late.

The skepticism stems from two grounds - the failure of the free coaching programmes launched earlier, and the large number of vacancies in teachers' posts across colleges, the latter being the biggest impediment in imparting coaching to students.

As per the announcement, it was decided to impart coaching to students in degree colleges and universities. The Higher Education department had decided that these institutions will support the initiative from their own funds. In a review meeting chaired by Higher Education secretary Aravind Agrawal held last month it was decided that changes will be introduced in the syllabus keeping in mind the examination pattern of competitive tests like UPSC and OPSC. However, no guidelines have been formulated so far.

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The examination pattern of competitive tests like UPSC and OPSC. However, no guidelines have been formulated so far.

It is worth mentioning that 200 students had enrolled themselves in the free coaching scheme earlier launched by the department. They expected that the success rate would increase in all-India administrative services, especially of poor and meritorious students, if they are given coaching at college level.

However, success eludes the students as well as the state government even as crores have been spent on the earlier schemes to provide free coaching to aspiring students. This is prima-

rily on account of lack of infrastructure and paucity of teachers. As per data tabled in the Assembly, as many as 906 posts of teaching staff are lying vacant in government degree colleges.

Golak Nayak, president of 662-category teachers' association, said that although the initiative of the state government is welcoming, emphasis should be laid on making it operational as soon as possible. "The announcement was made though no guidelines were set. The Nua-Odisha programme is in progress while the election is round the corner in which the government will be busy. I'm doubtful if the scheme could be implemented from the next academic year."

Nayak added that the most important factor is over 50 per cent vacancies in teachers posts across degree colleges in the state. "They should rather focus on filling these vacancies," he said. Meanwhile, efforts to elicit response from the Higher Education secretary yielded no results.

It may be noted that free coaching centres were opened in more than 50 degree colleges and eight universities between 2016 and 2018. Students prepared for UPSC exams along with studies free of cost. However, no success could be achieved following which the state government signed an agreement with private institutes in the second phase in 2019-20 and launched a coaching hub in Bhubaneswar. A total of 99 students were enrolled at the facility of which none could be successful.

Given the experience, doubts have been raised about the progress and success of the free coaching scheme for IAS exam in colleges.

Can't wake up someone acting asleep: Pandian

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Lashing out at those opposing state's development journey during his visit to Kendrapara, 5T Chairman Kartik Pandian Monday said, "You can't wake up a person who is pretending to be asleep."

Addressing a gathering near Baladev temple about the transformation the state is going through, the 5T Chairman said Odisha getting appreciated internationally for its disaster management skill is one of the examples of transformation.

"However, a few (Opposition) can't see the transformation. It's easy to wake up a person who is sleeping. But hard to wake up someone who is pretending to be asleep," Pandian said, adding, "Let them sleep."

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's relentless effort for



the welfare of all needs people's cooperation, he said.

"Kendrapara is Biju Babu's workplace. Our CM loves the district a lot, and wants the district to get developed. Kendrapara is going to have world's biggest investment. The district will get a massive facelift, with big-ticket companies like ArcelorMittal setting up factories here. Youths will get employment," Pandian said.

He added, "We have instructions from the CM to accept all

demands from the district. All schools and colleges here will be transformed within two months." The 5T Chairman formed the gathering about state's achievement in disaster management and CM's 'zero casualty' policy. He also highlighted the state government's efforts towards poverty alleviation and food security since 2007.

He said the state government has been undertaking a host of initiatives towards empowering

farmers and boosting agricultural output. "Now, Odisha is a food surplus state," he said.

Odisha government has been taking revolutionary measures for developing sports. "World is witness to it," he said, adding that Odisha is now a revenue surplus state.

Attracting foreign investment, providing piped water, facilities like Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojna, school and college transformation, shrine and heritage site transformation are all steps towards a new and empowered Odisha, he said.

The 5T Chairman reviewed various developmental projects, and interacted with farmers and Mission Shakti SHG members in Kendrapara. Pandian announced the decision of the CM for providing Rs 3.03 crore towards development of the Jagannath temple in Keradagada.

BJEM SCHOOL GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

Don't try to copy, be yourself: Kapil Dev

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Legendary cricketer Kapil Dev called upon students to stay away from imitating anyone and, instead, realize their own potential.

"Don't try to copy anybody be yourself, duplicate can't be better than original. Don't lie to yourself and be honest and live for the moment," said the Captain of the World Cup winning Indian cricket team of 1983 while addressing the concluding day event of the three-day annual function of the Buxi Jagabandhu English Medium (BJEM) school here, Monday. The school is celebrating its golden jubilee this year.

He said completing 50 years is a big thing for any organization. "I want to congratulate BJEM for achieving that," he said adding,



"legacy is a very difficult thing to maintain, but very easy to spoil. So please maintain the brand and legacy of the school through hard work."

Asked what memory he wanted to preserve from his glorious career as a cricketer, the Haryana Hurricane said, "I live for the present moment, I don't believe in looking back. I live in present moment and try to enjoy that."

To a question whether the present crop of Indian cricketer are better than those in the past, he said, "Today's youngsters and

cricketer are far better than us. Whenever we play World Cup these days, we are always top contenders, which was not the case in the past."

Guest of honor Police Commissioner Saumendra Priyadarshi appealed to parents to take care that children don't get addicted to gadgets.

Principal Sandhya Jena said that a generation was inspired after Kapil Dev won the 1983 trophy. "And today, BJEM students will be inspired with his presence," she said.

Brown sugar worth ₹66L seized; 2 held

Bhubaneswar: The Special Crime Unit (SCU) of Commissionerate Police arrested two drug peddlers and seized drugs valued at around Rs 66 lakh from CRP Square area in Bhubaneswar, Police Commissioner Saumendra Priyadarshi said. Police sources said acting on credible intelligence regarding the transportation of a substantial quantity of brown sugar in a Bolero pick-up from Jaleswar in Balasore district to Khurda, passing through Bhubaneswar, the team successfully intercepted the vehicle on National Highway-16 flyover at CRP Square Sunday. They said the two suspects were apprehended and found in possession of 660 gm brown sugar, valued approximately at Rs 66 lakh. The accused carriers were identified as SK Sadrudin of Basta and Ajmer Khan of Jaleswar area in Balasore district. They are suspected to be part of a network involved in transporting narcotics for financial gains - from Jaleswar to Khurda area. The SCU has reportedly sought the court's permission to take the accused duo on remand to further unearth their network.

120 days to repair Natamandap beam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: Orissa High Court-appointed amicus curiae NK Mohanty Monday told the court that the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) needs 120 days to fix the cracked beam of Srimandir Natamandap.

Mohanty submitted the status report on the Srimandir Natamandap (dancing hall) repair works by ASI, Monday.

He informed the HC that the work to fix a crack on a beam of Natamandap is in progress. The wooden ceiling of Natamandap has been kept at the temple museum. "The core committee meeting, scheduled to be held from December 19 to 21, will decide on the design and other aspects of the box beam that will be installed for the safety of the cracked Natamandap beam," Mohanty said adding that the work is going on for six hours every day.

The next hearing in the case has been scheduled for January 18.

OMC clocks over ₹14K- cr turnover in last fiscal

Chief Minister appeal to the mining fraternity to put more efforts for sustainable mining by adopting cutting edge technology and new international benchmark

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18: The Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) has produced over 30 million tonnes of ores in the last fiscal with a turnover of over Rs 14,000 crore, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said while laying foundation for the corporate office of the state PSU in the Capital city here, Monday.

"OMC is not only contributing to the economy but also contributing to the sustainable mining and spreading happiness among the people through its various people-centric development and welfare activities," Patnaik said.



"Odisha is on the fore-front of adopting cutting edge technology and sustainable mining practices," he added and appealed to all in the mining fraternity to put more efforts for sustainable mining by adopting new initiatives of international benchmark.

The new building of OMC, spread over 6 acres of land, will be a landmark of the City. The design of the building is very attractive and will add value to City's beautiful landscape.

Speaking on this occasion, Patnaik hailed OMC for its efforts in serving the society

through Ihealth, education, sports and periphery development activities.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister also laid foundation for 5 Odisha Mining Adarsh Vidyalayas. He inaugurated 7 Quality Control Labs, 10 Sample Processing Units, one Chrome Ore Beneficiation Plant of OMC. He also flagged off 6 Mobile Health Units.

Expressing happiness over OMC's welfare initiatives in mining areas, the CM said that OMC has set up five CBSE-affiliated fully residential schools for the students of the mining periph-

ery. The Mobile Health Unit is an excellent initiative and will play important role in providing health care facilities at the doorsteps of the villagers around the operational areas of OMC, he added.

The Chrome Ore Beneficiation Plant at South Kaliapani and the quality control laboratories at different operational areas will play in important role in adopting more transparency and quick dispatch of quality raw materials to the user industries, he added.

The CM also appreciated OMC's commendable support during the Covid pandemic.

He wished the OMC to touch new heights of excellence and establish itself as a globally acclaimed organization. On this occasion, Chief Minister also laid the foundation for the Drill Core Library.

Steel and Mines Minister Prafulla Mallick, in his address, praised the CM for his visionary leadership in taking Odisha to a new level with fast paced transformation process.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

I, Sanjay Kumar Behera (27), S/o. Prabhat Kumar Behera, At-Barapadi, P.O.-Barikpurbazar, P.S./Dist-Bhadrak declare that L.I.C. policy 588862719 & 585384293 of my mother Anupama Behera died on 25.11.22. I am the Nominee & my nick name is Mukesh Behera but my correct name is Sanjay Kumar Behera in Aadhaar Card No.xxxx xxxx 9461. Sanjay Kumar Behera & Mukesh Behera, S/o. Prabhat Kumar Behera is one & same person.

Cold wave grips state

Bhubaneswar: Cold wave continues to sweep Odisha with mercury dipping below 10 degrees Celsius in many places, India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Monday. G Udaygiri in Kandhamal district and Kirei in Sundargarh district were the coldest place in the state with minimum temperature recorded at 8 degrees Celsius in both the towns, the IMD said. The other places where the temperature plummeted below 10 degrees Celsius were - Koraput (8.6), Keonjhar, Daringbadi, Phulbani and Angul (9), Ranital in Bhadrak district at 9.6 followed by Sundargarh and Rourkela at 9.8 degrees Celsius, it said. The twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack also continued to be in the grip of cold wave conditions with minimum temperature hovering around 13 degrees Celsius for the third consecutive day.

Class X dropout rate highest in state: Minister

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 18: With almost 50 per cent of Class X students dropping out in Odisha, the state recorded the highest dropout rate for 10th standard in the country as per data for the 2021-22 academic year shared by the Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in Lok Sabha Monday.

For 2021-22, while the dropout rate for Class X nationally stood at 20.6 per cent, Odisha performed the worst among states with a dropout rate of 49.9 per

cent, followed by Bihar, which had a dropout rate of 42.1 per cent, informed Pradhan in a written reply.

The minister was responding to a question by DMK MP Kalanidhi Veeraswamy on whether the government is cognizant of the analysis based on the recent exercise carried out by the Ministry of Education that about 3.5 million students stop their education in Class 10.

Pradhan informed that 1,89,90,809 students appeared for Class X examination in 2022, of which 29,56,138 students failed to



progress further.

In a positive development for Odisha, number of students failing in Class X board exams has fallen from 1,38,462 in 2019 to only 8,944 in 2022.

"The reasons for failure of students in examination depends on various factors namely, not attending the schools, difficulty

in following the instruction in schools, lack of interest in the studies, level of difficulty of question paper, lack of quality teachers, lack of support from parents, teachers and schools," said the minister.

"Further, education is in the concurrent list of the Constitution and majority of the schools are under the domain of respective State and UT Governments," he added.

The ministry also shared details of students' dropout rate at Class X for the last four years (2018-19 to 2021-22) state-wise.

Apart from Odisha and Bihar, the other states with high dropouts are Meghalaya (33.5 per cent), Karnataka (28.5 per cent), Andhra Pradesh and Assam with 28.3 per cent each, Gujarat (28.2 per cent) and Telangana (27.4 per cent).

The states with dropout rate less than 10 per cent are Uttar Pradesh (9.2 per cent), Tripura (3.8 per cent), Tamil Nadu (9 per cent), no dropout in Manipur, Madhya Pradesh (9.8 per cent), Himachal Pradesh (2.5 per cent), Haryana (7.4 per cent) and Delhi (1.3 per cent).

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Ganjam cotton farmers rely on Rayagada seeds



POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 18: Abysmal yield and unavailability of quality seeds have forced the cotton farmers in Ganjam district to outsource seeds from Rayagada district, a report said Monday.

According to farmers, the cotton seed available in Rayagada district is high-yielding and resistant to pesticides used for de-weeding. Left with no option, farmers in Ganjam district are buying the seeds available in Rayagada district for cultivation of cotton on their farmlands.

Farmers in Ganjam district have suffered losses in cultivation of paddy during the last kharif season due to inadequate rainfall. Cotton cultivation was also affected in the district but managed to scrape through. The harvest has been more this year than the previous year.

Cotton is usually cultivated on black soil where it grows best. It is cultivated more in areas under Sanakhemundi, Sorada, Sheragada, Jagannathprasad and Patrapur blocks.

The seeds germinate in four to five days after they are sown. The germinated seeds then grow into cotton plants and it takes six to seven months for the cotton flowers to bloom.

According to details available

Farmers in Ganjam district have suffered losses in cultivation of paddy during the last kharif season due to inadequate rainfall. They alleged that the seeds provided by the district agriculture department are low-yielding, and also resulting in stunted growth of the cotton plants.

Left with no option, they have to travel to Rayagada district and buy the cotton seeds from there for their cultivation

from the district agriculture office, cotton was grown on 2,394 hectare land in last kharif season while the target was set for cotton cultivation on 3,230 hectare of land.

The fibre was grown on 554 hectare in Sanakhemundi block, 410 hectare in Sheragada block, 293 hectare in Sorada block, 268 hectare in Digapahandi block, 506 hectare in Jagannathprasad block, 38 hectare in Aska block, 5 hectare in Bellaguntha block, 48 hectare in Purushottampur block, 10 hectare in Patrapur block, 34 hectare in Kukudakhandi block, 40 hectare in Khallikote block, 118 hectare in Jagannathprasad block and 25 hectare in Bhanjanagar block.

Meanwhile, over 80 per cent of the crop has been harvested in the district. Notably, the district agriculture department had set a

target for cotton cultivation on 8,010 hectare but the crop was actually cultivated on 3,017 hectare.

Farmers, however, have alleged that the seeds provided by the agriculture department are low-yielding, adding that the cotton plants grown using the seeds are withering after they spray pesticides for de-weeding. The sub-standard seeds are also resulting in stunted growth of the cotton plants. Left with no option, they have to travel to Rayagada district and buy the cotton seeds from there for their cultivation.

The cotton plants wither when they spray pesticides for de-weeding. As a result, they are forced to use the seeds available in Rayagada for cultivation instead of the seeds supplied by the district agriculture department, a farmer Dibakar Goud alleged.

When contacted, Assistant Agriculture Officer Pranati Panda said the agriculture department is not supplying the seeds but a private agency is selling the seeds at Digapahandi for which farmers are provided with incentives.

However, the agriculture department has fixed separate minimum support prices (MSPs) for the harvested cotton at the mandis.

The MSP for a quintal of cotton which is more in length has been fixed at ₹7022 while the MSP for the medium range of cotton is ₹6620 per quintal. The regulated market committee (RMC) at Digapahandi will open the mandi after the harvest where farmers can sell their harvest and get their money.

Later, the harvested cotton will be procured by the Cotton Corporation of India which will prepared threads at its spinning mill, district agriculture officer Subrat Kumar Sahu said.

Farmers have demanded to ensure proper marketing facilities for their harvest and quality check of the cotton as the harvest is increasing in Ganjam district.



CLASSICAL DANCE: Dancers perform at Maitapur Mahotsav at Maitapur under Simulia block in Balasore district on its concluding night

OP PHOTO

Man hacks 2 co-villagers to death over petty fight

Rourkela: Two persons were hacked to death by a co-villager after an altercation broke out among them at Amrudi village in Sundargarh district Monday morning, police sources said adding that the accused has been detained. The deceased duo -- Sadhu Charana Buriali, 24, and Janka Sundhi, 45, of Amrudi village under K Balang police limits -- were engaged in chicken business. Sources said, some of their chickens were infected with some disease and were dying one by one. The accused Juri Munda, 35, had taken one such chicken from them and had eaten that. "However, Buriali and Sundhi warned him that he should not relieve himself in close vicinity to their farm lest it may affect more of their chickens," said K Balang IIC Smruti Ranjan Nayak. An altercation ensued and the duo slapped him. "Later they met near Munda's house and again they had a scuffle over the same issue. An enraged Munda assaulted them with his axe and brutally injured them leading to their death on spot. Out of fear, he threw their bodies away," Nayak added.

Leopard hides being smuggled to Bengal from Odisha; 3 held

SKIN WORTH ₹10L SEIZED IN BENGAL, 3 FROM ODISHA HELD

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Dec 18: The sleuths of West Bengal Forest department Monday arrested three people from Odisha and seized leopard skin worth ₹10 lakh in Madhyamgram in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district.

Acting on a tip-off that people hailing from Odisha were staying in Madhyamgram for selling leopard skin, a team of the Forest department late Sunday night raided the place and nabbed them.

During interrogation, the accused admitted that they have brought the leopard skin from Odisha and were supposed to pass it on to an agent of a prospec-



REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

Crucial clues regarding an inter-state wildlife smuggling racket involving Bengal and Odisha have surfaced through the interrogation of the accused.

Preliminary investigation has revealed that the accused were mere carrying agents and the main brains behind the racket are some influential persons from both the states.

Investigation is on to find out who is the prospective buyer in Kolkata, for whom the smuggled leopard skin was destined for.

RSP hot steel mill gets CE marking for its products

Rourkela: Rourkela Steel Plant's hot strip mill (HSM) has got CE marking for its products, which opened opportunities in the European market, an official said Monday. CE marking represents a manufacturer's declaration that the products comply with the EU's directives, he said. The HSM-2 of RSP has been certified for producing CE-marked products, he added. RSP's Director In-Charge Atanu Bhowmick received the certificate at a recent function. The audit for the certification was conducted by Hyderabad-based DNV-GL. It thoroughly witnessed the rolling, testing, and marking of the products and rigorously assessed the factory production control system. Hot Strip Mill-2 will be supplying nine different grades of non-alloyed hot rolled plates and coils. Rourkela Steel Plant obtained CE marking for its export-grade plates in 2016, and has been supplying CE-marked plates to the EU on a regular basis.

Nimantran Restaurant opens in Sambalpur's Rani Bakhri

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Dec 18: Nimantran, renowned for its exquisite dining experience, launched its third restaurant at the historic 17th-century Rani Bakhri, also known as the Queen's Palace in Sambalpur, Monday.

The grand opening ceremony at Rani Bakhri Monday was a spectacular event graced by the presence of Minister of Tourism Ashwini Kumar Patra, OTDC Chairman Lenin Mohanty, Sambalpur Zilla Parishad President Kumodini Nayak, Sambalpur Collector and DM Ananya Das, SMC Commissioner Vedbhushan, and Sambalpur ADM Pradeep Kumar Sahu. The ambiance of the Queen's Palace, coupled with the culinary excellence of Nimantran, promises a regal dining experience like never



before. This marks a significant expansion for the Nimantran restaurant chain, with two successful establishments already operating in Bhubaneswar and Puri. The inauguration of the first Nimantran restaurant chain in Bhubaneswar was a momentous occasion, graced by the presence of the Chief Minister of Odisha, Naveen Pattnaik.

"The local cuisine helps a tourist to get a sense of knowing about the area and its people. The tourism and cuisines will

Teacher held for planning to elope with girl student

Sheragada: Irate locals detained a teacher and tied him to a utility pole Monday after they came to know that he was planning to elope with a girl student of the school in this block of Ganjam district. The accused was identified as Nilambar Das, an art teacher of B Berhampur High School. On being informed, BEO Upendra Kumar Padhi and police rushed to the spot and held talks with the villagers. Police rescued Das and brought him to the police station where they questioned him. Later, they arrested him over a complaint lodged by the minor girl. The girl's father alleged that his daughter had gone to school, Saturday but did not return home till 12 noon. Family members searched for her and finally rescued her from the house of the accused teacher. Locals alleged that they had informed the school authorities about the matter but they failed to take any action. Enraged, they locked up the school gate, Monday and prevented entry of the students. They caught Das and tied him to the pole when he reached the school at 10.00am.

DCCBs to become associate members of nat'l federation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Dec 18: The National Federation of State Cooperative Banks (NAFSCOB) has allowed District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs) to enroll as its associate members.

This was stated here by Ambika Prasad Das, one of the directors of NAFSCOB. NAFSCOB MD and President of ICBA Bhima Subrahmanyam informed this in a letter to chairpersons and chief executives of all the DCCBs, December 14. Earlier, the DCCBs were only working as members.

The efforts were initiated October 23, this year towards enrollment of DCCBs in NAFSCOB as associate members. The Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies (CRCS) registered the amendments to NAFSCOB bye-laws under Section-11 of the Multi State Cooperative



Societies Act, 2002 (39 of 2002), to frame the same in accordance with the MSCS (Amendment) Act, 2023 and MSCS (Amendment) Rules, 2023.

This amendment allows all DCCBs to seek associate membership of NAFSCOB by depositing the membership application form along with annual subscription for the FY-2024-25. Bhima Subrahmanyam the managing director of NAFSCOB, said.

The plan is to organize either regional or national conference of DCCBs to discuss the issues arising out of the new membership enrollment.

Home guard run over after jumping from running train

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Dec 18: In a tragic incident, a police home guard here died after jumping from a running train at Rayagada Railway Station, Sunday night.

The deceased was identified as B Harishankar Rao, 58. He was posted in district police headquarters at Rayagada.

According to sources, Harishankar had gone to Sriakulam in Andhra Pradesh, Sunday morning. While returning he boarded the Okharpuri express train running via Rayagada.

But later when he came to know that the train was going on a different track and will not stop at Rayagada station, he allegedly jumped from the train but unfortunately fell on the track and the train ran over him. Immediately after the incident, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the Government Railway Police (GRP) informed SP



Vivekanand Sharma and sent the body to district headquarters hospital (DHH) for post-mortem. Informed, SP Sharma immediately reached the hospital.

On the other hand, rumours were flying in the town that Harishankar committed suicide, which was rejected by his relatives and close friends. Upon asking GRP DSP Debendra Pingua said Harishankar fell from the running train and the train ran over him leading to his death. The actual reason behind his death will be ascertained after getting the post-mortem report, he added.

OMBADC funds transform school edu in Sundargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Dec 18: To realise the career dreams of students, the state government is focused on energising and strengthening the education sector. As part of the vision, government high schools and Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas in the mining-affected Sundargarh district are being modernised. Financial assistance for the same is being provided by Odisha Mineral Bearing Areas Development Corporation (OMBADC).

Various state-run high schools are being revamped and upgraded with modern facilities in the High School Transformation programme under 5T in Sundargarh district. Smart classrooms, modern science labs, ICT labs and e-libraries have been set up in 347 high schools with the help of OMBADC funds.

Using smart board, children are being engaged in lessons and learning concepts in a fun and intuitive way. Similarly,



they get hands-on practical learning using latest scientific equipment available in the modern science lab.

Thanks to the modern ICT labs at schools, students at the high school level are availing of digital skills. Additionally, the e-Library facility helps them learn beyond the books by facilitating information from all around the globe.

"Teachers are teaching us with the help of smart boards. As a result, it is easier for us to

show their sporting talent. More than 1,600 government high schools across seven mining-affected districts of the state have been included in this transformation process with the help of the OMBADC.

Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas (OAVs) are being established in each block of the district to impart quality education to rural children, following the CBSE pattern. The support of OMBADC further strengthens the infrastructure of Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya established in all 17 blocks of Sundargarh district.

"Today, our school has all the modern facilities that we earlier dreamt of. It helps in the all round development of children," said Ashish Kumar Nayak, a student of Kutra Government High School in the district.

Development of playgrounds and provision of sports equipment in government high schools is being done with the help of the OMBADC. This gives the students an opportunity to

understand the subjects. Earlier we used to read books and see pictures only. Now, we can apply our learning on our own in the science lab. Through this, we gain more knowledge about science," said Pooja Barua, a student of Kutra Government High School in the district.

At the OAV, hostels for both boys and girls are being constructed with OMBADC support. The children who earlier

show their sporting talent. More than 1,600 government high schools across seven mining-affected districts of the state have been included in this transformation process with the help of the OMBADC.

Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas (OAVs) are being established in each block of the district to impart quality education to rural children, following the CBSE pattern. The support of OMBADC further strengthens the infrastructure of Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya established in all 17 blocks of Sundargarh district.

At the OAV, hostels for both boys and girls are being constructed with OMBADC support. The children who earlier faced difficulty coming to school due to distance can today stay in the hostel and study uninterrupted. Similarly additional facilities like kitchen, dining hall and bicycle stand add value to the overall ecosystem.

"We appreciate OMBADC for their support in this program which helps in the overall development of the education sector in Sundargarh district. Due to such measures, students can develop physically, mentally and intellectually. As a result, they can establish themselves in various fields in the coming days," said Manoj Mahajan, Chief Development Officer-Cum-Executive Officer, Zilla Parishad, Sundargarh.

High School Transformation and modernisation of Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya have improved the standard of education in the mining-affected districts of Odisha. By supporting the cause, OMBADC helps students fulfil their future and career dreams thereby leading to a developed society.

FOCUS ART

QUEST FOR SWADESHI



The series of 'Haripura' panels using natural art materials depicted the everyday life to be observed in village India



Jyoti Sahi

THE RELATION OF ART TO NATIONALISM RAISES LARGER QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE ROOTS OF MODERN INDIAN ART

The first-ever comprehensive showcase of paintings that were commissioned by Mahatma Gandhi for what turned out to be a significant session of the Congress at Haripura, Gujarat, in 1938 are now on display at the prestigious National Gallery of Modern Art, Bangalore. The so-named "Haripura panels," considered a national treasure, are the work of the Indian painter and teacher Nandalal Bose (1882-1966). The renewed interest and discussions occasioned by the exhibition bring up important questions on ideas of swadeshi, nationalism and the role of cultural diversity in rediscovering our own roots.

Visiting this exhibition, I have been struck by the political impact of the freedom struggle on the imagination of artists. The exhibition explores the nationalism of Nandalal Bose, as well as the fact that he represents the source of a uniquely Indian modernism. Was the underlying impulse within the artistic genius of Nandalal Bose just a return to the past, inspired by his youthful participation in the "Swadeshi" movement? Or is his art something quite new in the Indian tradition, and in that sense a sign of a modern vision in Indian culture?

The relation of art to nationalism raises larger questions concerning the roots of modern Indian art. In the Indian context, nationalism, art and political imaginations are closely linked. Modern Indian art had its beginnings in the freedom struggle that broke free of the cultural dependency that drained away Indian creativity during the colonial period. The driving impulse behind this effort was to rediscover an authentic self-image, the identity that was called "swadeshi" or "of our own land." "Swadeshi" implies self-sufficiency, acknowledging that every community receives what is needed for life from its natural and cultural environment. Every authentic culture evolves out of a relationship between the human person and com-

munity, and the physical body of the land that provides a nurturing environment for a nation. However, 'self-sufficiency' is not simply about a national identity. Creative art addresses the relation of culture to its natural environment. Culture cannot grow through self-dependence alone. Growth arises from the interplay between different, though complementary, forces. The image of a tree represents the link between sky and earth. It symbolises the coming together of what is above, and what is below; what is seen, and what remains hidden. A seed, in order to sprout, needs both earth and water. A living plant grows naturally towards the light and warmth that comes from above the soil. Organic growth is the consequence of inner and outer energies working together. In that sense, nothing is sufficient in itself, as every living process implies moving outwards, reaching towards what is the 'other'. In the same way, a living culture responds to outer influences that enhance the potentiality within a local culture.

Nandalal Bose had been deeply impacted by the study of Ajanta frescoes, influenced by his teacher Abanindranath Tagore. These murals incorporate scenes from everyday life, executed in the second century before our common era. These scenes have shaped the imagination of many artists through the millennia. However, though Indian art is profoundly indebted to this vision of life, it is not possible for artists

today to repeat the art coming from some 22 centuries in the past. Though Bose encouraged his students to explore the everyday life in the countryside around Kala Bhavan in Santiniketan, that offered a source for their imaginative growth, he never insisted that students copy past artistic styles. His own art was very much an approach to natural materials which he learnt from exchanging techniques with contemporary artists coming from China and Japan, who were attracted by the universal vision of the 'Viswa Bharathi' experiment of Tagore.

The series of 'Haripura' panels using natural art materials depicted the everyday life to be observed in village India. The themes painted with a simple directness, and spontaneous brush strokes, are unique in that they derive their strength from a synthesis of Indian and Far Eastern art traditions. As a student of Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose was influenced by the Swadeshi movement which began in 1905 when Bose was in his early twenties. The Bengal School of Art style that tried to return to the achievements of Indian art in the past, remind one of the spirits that infused the pre-Raphaelite revivalist art of England that reacted against the Industrial Revolution. John Ruskin along with Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, developed a decorative approach to aesthetics, which they believed expressed the spirit of Gothic art. The

problem of this romantic effort to go back in time to recover a lost pre-industrial culture in harmony with nature was that it lacked a real engagement with the present and future of British culture. The Bengal School of Art, though preparing the ground for an Indian style, seems to lack the vigour and spontaneous energy which can be seen in the art of Nandalal Bose.

The work of Bose, like that of his contemporary, Jamini Roy, who also studied under Abanindranath Tagore, was a break away from an imitation of the past. These artists tried to find an Indian identity in a contemporary folk art. The way that the Haripur panels show the life of everyday village culture, is reminiscent of the art of Jean-Francois Millet (1814-1875) who broke from the historical themes of the Paris academic art of his day, rediscovering his native rural culture which he painted, celebrating everyday peasant life. This approach to the immediate present deeply influenced the art of Van Gogh.

A democratisation of art, drawing from folk culture that is in direct contact with the realities of those who live close to the cycles of nature, represents a modern outlook that draws inspiration from contemporary reality. Such an art, by being more accessible for those involved with today's political concerns, has an energy that is the source of a socially engaged vision. It is in this sense that one can see in the art of Nandalal Bose what Ananda Coomaraswamy termed a "true Swadeshi," as opposed to the "false Swadeshi" that draws from an imagined past. That is the significance of Nandalal Bose, and it carries deep messages for today's social, cultural and political environment.

The Bangalore exhibition was inaugurated last month and will remain open till April 2024.

The writer is an artist, art teacher and runs an 'Art Ashram' in Silvepura, Bangalore. Views are personal.

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SPECTRUM SOCIETY

Fight against gender persecution

It has now been over two years since the US military ended its decades-long war in Afghanistan, and the world's attention has predictably shifted to the horrific conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine. But the mess left behind by the chaotic US withdrawal has not been cleaned up - far from it. Since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, the country's economic and humanitarian crises have deepened and sharpened.

Conditions for Afghan girls and women, in particular, have deteriorated rapidly, shattering their hopes for their personal and professional lives. In edict after edict, the new theocratic government has systematically stripped them of their fundamental human rights, including to an education. As a result, Afghanistan has become the only country in the world where girls are prohibited from attending school beyond the age of 11.

Millions of Afghan girls are being denied a chance to develop their talents and fulfill their dreams, putting a generation at risk of lasting damage and jeopardising the country's economic

future. Worse, those girls and women who fled to Pakistan to continue their education will once again be denied schooling. Pakistani government recently ordered the expulsion of 1.7 million undocumented Afghans, around 700,000 of whom sought refuge in the country after the Taliban's takeover. But the Taliban is not a monolith: some government officials seemingly recognise the critical importance of their daughters returning to school. In November, Rangina Hamidi, an education minister before the Taliban's return to power who had just visited Afghanistan, suggested that the Taliban could be convinced to reopen girls' secondary schools.

For that to happen, however, the international community would need to engage much more actively with the Taliban, and help its more moderate voices prevail over the hardliners. Hamidi's experience, and that of others, suggests that there are increasingly apparent internal divisions within the Taliban regime over the education of girls and women. In this context, Muslim-led delegations should visit

Afghanistan and meet with both the Taliban's formal governing cabinet in Kabul and its leadership council. The dire situation in Afghanistan demands urgent action. The UNFP has warned that acute malnutrition is above emergency thresholds in 25 of 34 provinces and is expected to worsen. Despite these stark figures, the Taliban's religious leadership has continued to hack away at the rights of girls and women, often to the exclusion of other policy objectives. This systematic discrimination includes not only denying girls and women access to secondary and tertiary education, but also restricting their freedom of movement, expression, and association, and prohibiting them from almost all forms of employment.

The participation of women in public life is heavily constrained, as they often cannot leave their homes without a male relative. Moreover, the Taliban has effectively removed any possibility for women to seek justice through the judicial system. After UN experts visited Afghanistan earlier this year, the Office of High Commissioner for

Human Rights concluded in a report that Taliban's discriminatory and misogynistic policies and harsh enforcement methods constitute "gender persecution and an institutionalized framework of gender apartheid."

Diplomatic recognition of the Taliban government, let alone fully normalised relations, is certainly out of the question as long as religious edicts deprive girls and women of their basic human rights. But that does not preclude the international community from taking steps to promote gender equality. One such step would be developing new channels of communication with officials who understand that Afghanistan needs to educate all young people. The internal divisions within the regime have opened a window, albeit a small one. We must seize this chance to help give the world's most oppressed girls and women the opportunity to realise their potential.

Gordon Brown is a former PM of the UK. Yasmine Sherif is Executive Director of Education Cannot Wait.

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Gordon Brown & Yasmine Sherif

WE MUST SEIZE THIS CHANCE TO HELP GIVE THE WORLD'S MOST OPPRESSED GIRLS AND WOMEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL



Sin and virtue are a game of resistance we play with God in His efforts to draw us towards perfection.

SRI AUROBINDO



Judges on Judgements

When highly respected former judges of the Supreme Court open their mouths to find fault with some crucial apex court judgements on Central decisions and legislative actions with far-reaching consequences for the country's democratic system, it is cause for both hope and alarm. For, in recent times the country has experienced with great consternation how the apex court put its seal of approval on controversial government actions which seem obviously detrimental to the social fabric and democratic rights of the people. Yet, not much could be said on such rulings of grave import by laymen since the apex court is always held with awe and respect and any criticism of its judgements is discouraged in various ways. But, when eminent judges sit on judgement of judicial verdicts, which is a rather rare phenomenon, it infuses courage and hope into votaries of civil liberty. This is exactly what former SC judges - Justice Rohinton F Nariman and Justice Madan Lokur - have done lately. Pointing out how the Supreme Court's five-judge Bench erred in validating the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution and consequential reorganisation of the state of Jammu & Kashmir, the opinions expressed by former judges are interesting to note.

Justice Nariman said the Centre's decision to bifurcate J&K when there was already President's rule imposed on the state had an ulterior motive. It was to bypass the clause in Article 356 which stipulates such a rule cannot exceed one year unless there is a national emergency or the Election Commission says elections are not possible to be held. Justice Lokur also questioned the imposition of President's rule in the first place since the Assembly was not dissolved while political parties were pleading with the Governor to be offered a chance to form government. Under Article 356 of the Constitution, if a state government is unable to function according to constitutional provisions, the Union government can take direct control of the state machinery. That may not have been the case in J&K.

The SC validated the abrogation of Article 370 even after declaring that the method in which it had been done was not legally tenable. Justice Nariman also questioned how the Supreme Court could accept an assurance given by the Solicitor General (SG) that statehood will be restored since the SG does not have any authority to bind the successor government. This only would give an excuse to the Centre to delay granting statehood dealing a body blow to federalism in the country.

Justice Nariman went further to examine and explain the threats to democracy posed by the government's legislation replacing the Chief Justice of India with a Prime Minister-appointed minister in the panel that selects the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners. He also pointed out how the functions of a state government are being paralysed and virtually taken away by the Governor, a Central government appointee, with the help of the President.

Justice Nariman chose the occasion of delivering a lecture on "Constitution: Checks and Balances" to articulate how he is feeling "disturbed" by four instances of government-judicial actions from the beginning of the year culminating in the recent judgement on the repeal of Article 370. For the first time the country heard coruscating criticism of four such disturbing actions by a legal luminary. Retired Justice Nariman first lambasted the attack on the media by the government when the latter had banned the telecast of two BBC documentaries on PM Modi's role as the then Chief Minister in the 2002 Gujarat riots and then ordered tax raids on the media outlet. Strongly defending the media's role as a "watch dog" of democracy, Justice Nariman has so cogently stated that whenever there is a tax raid on a media organisation following some expose of government actions by the former, the court should immediately declare such raids as illegal and unconstitutional and stop them. If the media is not defended for its criticism of the government's acts of omission and commission, it would spell danger for democracy, the judge said. His words are memorable for the survival of democracy: "If our watchdog - media - is killed, then nothing remains."

Justice Nariman minced no words in slamming the introduction of the Election Commission Bill in the Parliament and passed by the Rajya Sabha. The process has followed a disturbing trajectory. The SC ordered that the Chief Election Commissioner and the ECs should be selected by a panel comprising the PM, CJI and the Leader of Opposition, until the Parliament enacted a law. As if taking a cue from the apex court, the government moved a Bill to replace the CJI by a selected cabinet minister. This, according to Justice Nariman, is "most unfortunate." The composition of the resulting committee means the government's view will always prevail and the Opposition's opinion against the government nominee would be rejected, the voting result being two against one. Already, the EC has been accused by commentators and politicians of acting blatantly in favour of the ruling party at the Centre.

The actions of the Governor of Kerala have come in for criticism for sitting on Bills for months and then referring them to the President. Justice Nariman warned "wholesale reference to the President," of Bills by the Kerala Governor has the potential to bring the legislative activity of the state to a standstill.

The utterances of the two judges in defence of democracy and federalism are indeed sagacious and welcome.

WISDOM CORNER

- Life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating. O HENRY
- I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand. CONFUCIUS
- Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children. SITTING BULL

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1843:** English author Charles Dickens published A Christmas Carol, which became one of the outstanding Christmas stories of modern literature.
- 1966:** The United Nations General Assembly endorsed the Outer Space Treaty, an international treaty binding the parties to use outer space only for peaceful purposes.
- 1971:** A Clockwork Orange released. The dystopian film was directed by Stanley Kubrick and was based on a novella of the same name by British author, Anthony Burgess. Based in a futuristic London, the film opened with critical acclaim, though the centrality of violence in it drew a lot of mainstream criticism. Today, the movie is considered to be one of the best movies of the 20th century.
- 1984:** Hong Kong Treaty signed. Formally known as the Joint Declaration of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Question of Hong Kong, the Sino-British Treaty was signed by Zhao Ziyang of China and Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom in Beijing. The treaty decided the fate of Hong Kong as a territory of China from July 1, 1997.
- 1998:** Articles of impeachment approved against US President Bill Clinton. The US House of Representatives impeached President Bill Clinton, charging him with perjury and obstruction of justice, though Clinton was acquitted by the Senate the following month.

Demand for deputies

Sir, The position of Deputy Chief Minister is not mentioned in the Constitution. Despite this, the demand for this position has skyrocketed in recent years. Seven Deputy CMs have recently been appointed in freshly constituted governments in four states. As a result, the country presently has 24 Deputy CMs spread throughout 14 states. This is the most Deputy CMs ever appointed in India's political history. Although the position of Deputy CM is comparable to that of a cabinet minister in a state government, it denotes that the individual is second in command to the CM. However, the motivations for this experiment and the reasons for its technique vary in each state. Even under a coalition government, the Deputy CM formula works well. When two parties establish a government, only one of them will be appointed as CM. As a result, the deputy is picked from the other party to demonstrate that all parties are equal partners in the government. This strategy is quite effective in several states. Following the recent assembly elections, both the BJP and the Congress pursued a similar tactic. In Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan, the BJP has named two Deputy CMs each. In MP, one Brahmin and one member of the SC community were appointed as Deputy CMs, while the CM was from the OBC community. Similarly, the BJP appointed a Brahmin as CM and a Rajput and a Dalit as Deputy CMs in Rajasthan. In Chhattisgarh, the BJP appointed a tribal CM and two deputies OBC and Brahmin communities. In Telangana, the Congress appointed a CM the Reddy community and a deputy from the SC community. **Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR**

Call for ceasefire

Sir, Following the errant killing of hostages, calls for Israel to resume negotiations with Hamas leaders in Gaza have intensified. The Israeli army ignored the hostages' pleas in Hebrew and their action of waving a white flag and proceeded to shoot them. Concerns arose among Israel's European allies regarding its actions in the ongoing war, prompting calls for a ceasefire. Despite giving military and diplomatic aid, Washington has expressed unease over civilian casualties. Given the Netanyahu government's indifference, it's doubtful the war will end soon. **NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE**

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rajasgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Revival of political activity to rekindle regional priorities

The inherent political clash of interest owes itself to the days of the autocratic Dogra rule in the erstwhile state

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, Dec 18: Politics in Jammu and Kashmir has been driven by regional interests and challenges since 1947.

Till August 5, 2019, when J&K was a state, it was whether you stood for the interests of the Valley or Ladakh and Jammu regions.

After Ladakh became a Union Territory, it is now directly between those who claim to represent the interests of the predominantly Muslim majority Valley or the Hindu dominated Jammu division.

Even within the Jammu division, districts like Rajouri, Poonch and Doda with a large number of the Muslim electorate, have more affinity with the Valley rather than other districts of Jammu division like Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Reasi, Udhampur and even Ramban.

Out of the 87 assembly seats in the erstwhile J&K legislative assembly, the Valley had 47 and Jammu division had 36 (Ladakh region had 4).

Given this electoral arithmetic, those who won the majority of seats in the Valley dictated the terms.

After delimitation, this disparity has been addressed by giving 46 seats to the Valley and 44 seats to Jammu division out of 90 seats for which elections would be held.

Three assembly seats, two for



the migrant Kashmiri Pandit community and one for the refugees from Pakistan occupied Jammu and Kashmir (POJK) would be directly nominated by the Lt Governor.

Interestingly, in contrast to the erstwhile assembly, the nominated members would have the right to vote during government formation.

Even after the delimitation commission tried to address the disparity in representation between the two regions, political dynamics in J&K is still based on whether you stand for the wishes and aspirations of the Valley or the Jammu division.

This inherent political clash of interest owes itself to the days of the autocratic Dogra rule in the state.

The Dogra rulers were Hindu Rajputs belonging to Jammu and the political movement against the last Dogra king, Maharaja Hari Singh was started by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who was believed to be a devout Muslim.

The Maharaja's rule was replaced by the rule of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah who became the chief administrator when the Maharaja fled to Jammu from Srinagar after the tribal in-

vasion of the state in 1947.

The Sheikh later became the 'Wazir-e-Azam' (Prime Minister) of J&K with Maharaja Hari Singh's son, Karan Singh as the 'Sadr-e-Riyasat' (Head of State).

While Sheikh ruled the state, Karan Singh was just a 16-year old boy who was made the titular head to satisfy some constitutional legality after the accession of the state to India.

How much authority the so-called 'Sadr-e-Riyasat' wielded during the rule of the late Sheikh should become amply clear from the fact that Karan Singh donated 247 acres of land for establishing the present cam-

pus of Kashmir University, but he could not get the 'luxury' of naming even a path in the large campus after his father, Maharaja Hari Singh.

Thus since 1947, it has been politically relevant whether you stood to represent the Valley's interest or that of the Jammu division.

The Valley centric parties have always ruled the state with their chief ministers heading all governments which belonged to the Valley based Muslim community.

Be it the late Sheikh or Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, Syed Mir Qasim, Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Ghulam Nabi Azad or Mehbooba Mufti, all chief ministers were Valley based Muslims except Ghulam Nabi Azad who though a Kashmiri speaking Muslim belonged to Doda district of Jammu division.

The ruling Valley centric political parties like the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had the predominant majority of seats in the assembly which belonged to the Valley with marginal presence in the Jammu division and that too in Muslim dominated districts of the division.

Today also, the Valley based political parties demand restoration of Article 370 and grant of statehood.

J&K parties demand statehood restoration

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Dec 18: The leaders of various political parties held a meeting here Monday and later staged a demonstration, demanding immediate restoration of statehood, assembly elections and extension of Article 371 to Jammu and Kashmir.

The political parties, including the Shiv Sena (UBT), National Panthers Party (NPP) and Dogra Swabhiman Sangathan Party (DSSP), also highlighted their demand for deportation of illegally settled immigrants, early return and settlement of the Kashmiri migrant Pandits and regularisation of the daily wagers.

This was the first such meeting in Jammu after the Supreme Court December 11 upheld the abrogation of Article 370 by the Centre in August 2019.

"We have taken part in the 'all-party meet' organised by the Shiv Sena and Sainik Samaj Party and highlighted our demand for immediate restoration of statehood and democratically elected government in Jammu and Kashmir," NPP chairman and former minister Harsh Dev Singh told PTI after the meeting.

The NPP chairman accused the BJP of ruling Jammu and Kashmir by a remote control over the past many years.



"Almost all the bureaucrats posted in J&K are from outside and do not know anything about the region as a result of which the alienation among the local populace is increasing with each passing day," he said.

"The democratically elected government is also an antidote against militancy, extremism and violence," Singh said, adding his party will always remain in the forefront to safeguard the interests of the people of Jammu region.

Manish Sahni, the president of Shiv Sena (UBT) Jammu and Kashmir, said that the meeting was organised to discuss various "burning issues" pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir, especially the Jammu region.

"The issues discussed in detail at the meeting include the restoration of statehood and extension of special status under Article 371 to J&K besides holding of the assembly elections, deportation of illegally settled immigrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh and return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrants," he added.

Illegal mining: Cops to cancel registration of 1,378 vehicles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Dec 18: The police Monday initiated the process of cancellation of registration of 1,378 vehicles involved in illegal mining activities in Jammu district, officials said.

The police have taken decisive action against illegal mining activities, resulting in the seizure of 1,378 multiple vehicles engaged in these unlawful operations, they said.

An officer said that the process for the cancellation of vehicles registration associated with these illegal mining activities has been initiated with the concerned department. He added that the seized vehicles were found to be actively involved in illegal mining operations, disregarding environmental regulations and posing a significant threat to the local ecosystem. Jammu Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Vinod Kumar said the "exploitation of our natural resources through illegal mining will not be tolerated." He said the actions taken by the police are aimed to curb these illicit activities and deter the individuals from engaging in practices that harm our environment and jeopardise public safety.

Farmers asked to protect fruit plants from fog



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hamirpur, Dec 18: The horticulture department of Himachal Pradesh has urged farmers and gardeners to protect fruit plants of mango, litchi, papaya, and guava, besides amla and lemon species, from the effects of fog during winter.

Deputy Director (Horticulture) Rajeshwar Parmar said Monday that the weather has been dry in lower areas of the state for the last few days and the temperature has dropped. Under these circumstances, the chances of fog increase.

Fruit plants, especially mango, papaya, and litchi, are adversely affected due to fog, which reduces moisture in the air, an official statement quoted him as saying. Due to

the low temperature, plant cells burst, and yield could be affected. The effect of fog is more on plants like mango and papaya, he added.

Parmar further said that about 8,000 hectares of land are under horticulture crops in Hamirpur district. If the temperature continues to decline like this, the chances of fog in the next few days will increase, which can affect fruit plants.

Plants of 4-5 years old can be covered with grass or reeds, and potash fertilizer in the approved quantity could also be used as it increases their ability to tolerate fog, he advised.

Parmar also advised that gardeners should get their fruits and plants insured under the government's weather-based crop insurance scheme to compensate any losses.

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER BARIPADA FOREST DIVISION INVITATION FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement Email: dfo.baripada@odisha.gov.in 1st Corrigendum Notice to Tender Call Notice No. DFO-BPD-PRO. EXP-05/2023-24

GOVT. OF ODISHA No. MM-374 OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, ANGUL FOREST DIVISION e-Procurement Notice, Angul Forest Division Bid Identification No. 08 of 2023-24

ବାରିପଦା ପୌରପରିଷଦ, ବାରିପଦା ନିଲମ୍ପା ଉପାହାର ଚା: ୧୬୧୨୧୨୦୨୩ No. C-2154: ଏକାଧାରୀ ସର୍ବସାଧାରଣକ ଅବରତି ନିମନ୍ତେ ଜଣାପ ଦିଆଯାଉଅଛି କି ବାରିପଦା ପୌରପରିଷଦ ଅଧିକ ନୟରେ ୫୪ ଗୋଟି ଗଛ ବିଦ୍ୟୋଗକୁ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ରଖିଅଛି, ଗଛର ଗାଢ଼ିବା ଏକାଧାରୀ କରାଯାଇଛି। ଏହି ପ୍ରକଳ୍ପରେ ବନଖଣ୍ଡ ବିକାର ଅଧିକାରୀଙ୍କ ଚରଣକୁ ନିଲମ୍ପା ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ବାରିପଦା ପାଠ୍ୟ ଅନୁମୋଦନ ହୋଇଅଛି। ଯେଉଁ ଚରଣକୁ ଏକାଧାରୀ ବ୍ୟବସାୟରେ ଗଛ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭାବେ ମୂଳ ସହିତ ଶାଖାଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ କାଟି ସଜାଇ ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ ବାର୍ଷିକ ଭେଦାନ୍ତ ଚଳାଏ। ଏହା ୧୦୦୦ (ଏକ ହଜାର ଚଳାଏ) ପଇସା କରି ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରିତ ନିଲମ୍ପା ଉପାହାର ପ୍ରତି ଗଛ କରି ସେଥିରେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଗଛର ବର ସଂଗ୍ରହକରଣ ଭାବେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରି ବରମୁଦା ଲାଗାଯାଏ (Sealed Quotation) ଚା:୦୨୧୦୧୨୦୨୩ରୁ ୪ ଘଟିକା ପୂର୍ବା ନିମ୍ନ ସାକ୍ଷରକାରୀଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଦାଖଲ କରିପାରିବେ। ଦାଖଲ ହୋଇଥିବା ନିତିବା ବେଶିକିନ ୪ ଘଟିକା ସମୟରେ କର୍ତ୍ତୃପକ୍ଷଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ ପ୍ରକଳ୍ପରେ କର୍ତ୍ତୃକ ଦେବା ଓ ନିତିବାଦା ବିକା ଗାଳ ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟାକୁ କର୍ତ୍ତୃପକ୍ଷରେ ହୋଇପାରିବ। ଯଦି ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ବର ସଂଗ୍ରହକରଣ ନ ହେବ, ତାହା ହେଲେ ସମସ୍ତ ନିଲମ୍ପା ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟାକୁ ବୌଦ୍ଧିକ ଭାବେ ନ ବର୍ତ୍ତାଇ ରଦ୍ଦ କରାଯାଇପାରିବ। ଯେଉଁ ଗଛଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଗାଢ଼ିବା ରହିଅଛି, ତାହା ଅତିବ ଖୋଜାଥିବା ସମୟରେ ତାହାର ଗାଢ଼ିବା କେତେପାରିବେ।

राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान दिल्ली NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI (शिक्षा मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार के अधीन एक स्वायत्त संस्थान) (An autonomous institute under the aegis of Ministry of Education (Shiksha Mantralaya), Govt. of India)

Recruitment of Faculty Positions at the level of Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor (Grade-I) and Assistant Professor (Grade-II) Online applications are invited from Indian Nationals for filling up the faculty positions at the level of Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor (Grade-I) and Assistant Professor (Grade-II) in various Departments of the Institute.

Himachal starts scheme to promote self-employment

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, Dec 18: To promote self-employment opportunities in Himachal Pradesh and to provide livelihood to the local youth by encouraging entrepreneurship, the state government has initiated the Rajiv Gandhi Swarozgar Yojna 2023 (RGSY) with an outlay of Rs 680 crore, a statement said.

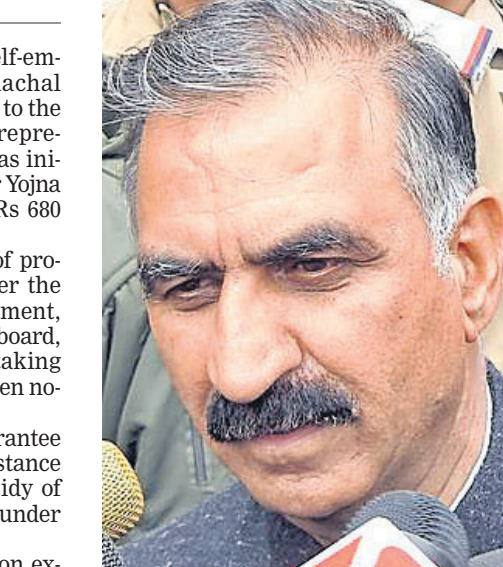
In the first phase, the standard of procedures for hiring of e-taxi under the scheme by a government department, local authority, autonomous body, board, corporation, government undertaking or any other establishment has been notified.

The government will give a guarantee for employment and start-up assistance to the youth by providing a subsidy of 50 per cent on purchase of e-taxi under RGSY, an official statement said.

The subsidy will be computed on ex-showroom price, including all types of taxes.

A bonafide Himachali with minimum age of 23 years, having an experience of seven years in driving a vehicle, with educational qualification of class 12 is eligible to apply for e-taxi. The applicant should have a driving license, Aadhaar card, unemployment certificate and any of the certificates of the Scheduled Caste, the Scheduled Tribe, etc.

Only one person in a family can avail



the benefit and experience criteria can be relaxed in special cases to help the needy. Applicants have to create an account on the portal of the Transport Department which will be authenticated through Aadhaar or mobile onetime password (OTP).

The RGSY will ensure guaranteed livelihood for the youth and help the state reduce vehicular pollution and move forward to become a 'green state' as well, said Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu.

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, ATHMALLIK FOREST DIVISION, AT/PO: ATHMALLIK, DIST-ANGUL - 759125 E-mail: dfoathmallikt@gmail.com, Tel: 9437004236 Tender Notice No.75651/F/ 2023 Date:16.12.2023 "Construction of ACF Residence in Athmallik NAC, Athmallik Range of Athmallik Forest Division No.MM-375:A percentage basic bid is hereby invited by the undersigned on behalf of the Governor of Odisha, for the following works from the eligible contractor as detail below.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BARGARH e-Procurement Notice No.ONLINE-BGH-13 of 2023-24 Email:rd_bgh@yahoo.co.in, Gmail:rdw.bgh@gmail.com

ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଉନ୍ନୟନ କର୍ତ୍ତୃପକ୍ଷ ଆକାଶ ଶୋଭା ବିକ୍ରି, ପଞ୍ଚିତ କରାହରଭାର ନେତୃତ୍ୱ ପାଇଁ, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର - ୭୫୧୦୦୧ ପତ୍ର ସଂଖ୍ୟା: 55188/ଭ.ଉ.କ., ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଚା: ୧୩୧୨୧୨୦୨୩ରୁ KNL-1047/93 ସୂଚନା No. CAD-3334: ଏକାଧାରୀ ସର୍ବସାଧାରଣକ ଅବରତି ନିମନ୍ତେ ଜଣାପ ଦିଆଯାଉଅଛି କି କଳିଙ୍ଗନଗର ପୁରତ୍ତ୍ୱ ତେଲପଲମେଣ୍ଟ ସି.ଏ. ନୌକା: ସୁରୁକ୍ଷିତ, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଅବରତି ପୁର ନ. K-4-701କୁ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଉନ୍ନୟନ କର୍ତ୍ତୃପକ୍ଷଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ ଆବେଶ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ୯୦୦୨ ଚା:୨୨୧୦୩୨୦୨୩ରୁ ଅନୁମୋଦିତ ଉତ୍ତରାଧିକାରୀ ସୂତ୍ର ଶ୍ରୀ ଭୁବେଶ୍ୱର ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ମହାନ୍ତି, ପିତା: ସ୍ୱର୍ଗତ ସୁବାନ ମହାନ୍ତି, ଗ୍ରାମ: ବିରିପୁର, ପୋଷ୍ଟ: ରୁପାପାଟଣା, ଥାନା: ବିରିପିଆ, ଜିଲ୍ଲା: କଟକ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ନାମକୁ (୧) ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମଜରା ମହାନ୍ତି (ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ), (୨) ଶୁଭଶ୍ରୀ ପଦନାୟକ (ବିବାହିତା କନ୍ୟା), (୩) ଭୁବେଶ୍ୱର ମହାନ୍ତି (ବିବାହିତା କନ୍ୟା) ଓ (୪) ଶ୍ରୀ ଶୁଭେନ୍ଦୁ ମହାନ୍ତି (ପୁତ୍ର)ଙ୍କ ନାମରେ ଆବେଶକ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ କରାଯାଇଥିଲା।

Climate change is the biggest emergency for us. The world, on average, has seen about 1.46 degrees Celsius (2.63 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming above pre-industrial temperatures this year, with global greenhouse gas emissions hitting new highs. Every new benchmark brings crippling economic losses and untold human suffering to communities across the globe. The current scenario hints towards a “now or never situation”. OrissaPOST takes a close look at the ongoing global issue



CLIMATE EMERGENCY

- As greenhouse gas emissions blanket the Earth, they trap the Sun's heat. This leads to global warming and climate change
- Projections indicate that 2024 may set even higher temperature records
- The anticipated range for the average global temperature is between 1.34°C and 1.58°C
- The UN's IPCC climate expert panel has said emissions need to be slashed by over 40% this decade to keep the 1.5°C threshold in sight
- The UN's recent emissions gap report concluded that there is only a 14% chance that the world will limit global warming to the maximum 1.5°C rise that is being called for by climate scientists

Here's how climate change is harming people's health across the world, and what countries might expect in the future

VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

Mosquitoes that carry viruses including dengue, malaria, West Nile and Zika are shifting into new parts of the world as warmer temperatures and heavy rains create more hospitable conditions for them to breed. Reported dengue cases have grown from around half a million in 2000 to more than 5 million in 2019, according to the WHO. Climate change is also having an unpredictable impact on malaria, with 5 million more cases registered in 2022 than the previous year - reaching a total of 249 million, the WHO's World Malaria Report found. Future temperature changes could elevate epidemic intensity of dengue in some areas.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE



TIME TO ACT

progress as just a few years ago it was inconceivable that fossil fuels, which in fact still fulfil almost every country's energy needs to a large extent will be phased out and might be banned. However, the announcement doesn't mean anything, as there is no mandate behind it, but it could help build momentum for more action from governments.

The Dubai COP 28 summit started a fortnight ago with little promise of any major breakthrough on climate rules.

However, the governments and delegates at this time proved their critics wrong and the final agreement announced that for the first time the world has agreed to move away from the coal, oil and natural gas that are the principal causes of global warming.

ENDING FOSSIL FUELS The countries agreed to contribute to a transition “away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science.” This could be counted as some

Scientists say methane has been responsible for up to 30 per cent of global warming since the industrial era began, so the Dubai agreement offers a win for the climate, even if the 50 signatories account for less than a third of the industry's total operational emissions.

may choose to shut some production because that is the most cost effective answer to the target of zero flaring of methane. Some of the biggest oil companies have already promised zero routine flaring and near-zero methane, and a number have shown that big progress can be made on the latter.

If we stopped emitting greenhouse gases today, the rise in global temperatures would begin to flatten within a few years



The year 2023 has shattered climate records, accompanied by extreme weather which has left a trail of devastation and despair, as per the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) report.

The WMO provisional 'State of the Global Climate' report confirms that 2023 is set to be the warmest year on record. Data until the end of November shows that the year was about 1.40 degrees Celsius (with a margin of uncertainty of plus/minus 0.12 degrees C) above the pre-industrial 1850-1900 baseline.

The difference between 2023 and 2016 and 2020 -- which were previously ranked as the warmest years -- is such that the final two months are very unlikely to affect the ranking.

The past nine years, 2015 to 2023, were the warmest on record.

The warming El Niño event, which emerged during the Northern Hemisphere spring of 2023 and developed rapidly during summer, is likely to further fuel the heat in 2024 because El Niño typically has the greatest impact on global temperatures after it

peaks. “Greenhouse gas levels are record high. Global temperatures are record high. Sea level rise is record high. Antarctic sea ice is at a record low. It's a deafening cacophony of broken records,” said WMO Secretary-General Prof Petteri Taalas. Carbon dioxide levels are 50 per cent higher than the pre-industrial

era, trapping heat in the atmosphere. The long lifetime of CO2 means that temperatures will continue to rise for many years to come.

The rate of sea level rise from 2013-2022 is more than twice the rate of the first decade of the satellite record (1993-2002) because of continued ocean warming and melting of glaciers and ice sheets.

The maximum Antarctic sea-ice extent for the year was the lowest on record, a full one million km2 (more than the size of France and Germany combined) less than the previous record low, at the end of southern hemisphere winter.

Glaciers in North America and Europe once again suffered an extreme melt season. Swiss glaciers have lost about 10 per cent of their remaining volume in the past two years, according to the WMO report.

The report shows the global reach of climate change. It provides a snapshot of socio-economic impacts, including on food security and population displacement.

WORLD ON THE BOIL

February 2023 was recorded as the warmest February in India for 122 years

Starting in April 2023, a record-breaking heat wave in Asia has affected multiple countries, including India, China, Laos and Thailand

Turkmenistan recorded 42 °C (108 °F) temperatures in early April

Swiss glaciers lost about 10% of their remaining volume over the last two years



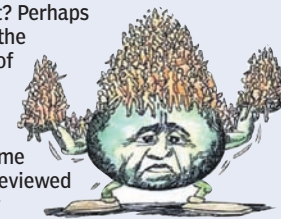
This year, Antarctic sea ice reached its lowest winter maximum extent on record, some 1 million square kilometres less than the previous record

EXTREME HEAT

Heat stress - one of the more obvious health impacts of global warming - is projected to impact hundreds of millions of people as temperatures continue to climb through the next few decades. With the world already about 1.1C (2F) warmer than the average preindustrial temperature, people in 2022 experienced about 86 days on average of dangerously high temperatures, a report from the Lancet medical journal found last month.

OVER POPULATION

Do you feel guilty about your potential child's carbon footprint? Perhaps you're frustrated by the materialistic values of modern society and the inevitability of overconsumption? These issues also came up in several of the reviewed studies. The urgency with which we need to tackle the climate crisis also implies that opting not to have children for the sake of the climate would now prove insufficient and ineffective. Even with reduced fertility, the population will continue to grow because of population momentum.



Major Indian cities might go 3 feet under water

The recent deluge in Chennai, triggered by Cyclone Michaung, has once again brought to light the vulnerability of Indian cities to climate-induced disasters. With over 40 cm of rainfall inundating the city within 48 hours by December 4, Chennai's plight is a stark reminder of the escalating climate crisis facing urban India.

heavy rainfall from the north-east monsoon. This event was a wake-up call, highlighting the consequences of inadequate urban planning and poor institutional capacity. The causes of such flooding are multifaceted. Heavy rainfall, inadequate drainage systems, and the incapacity of rivers to manage high discharge levels are primary contributors.

Chennai is no stranger to flooding; the city was submerged in a historic flood in 2015 due to

Urbanisation plays a significant role, with encroachments on major water bodies and



ecologically sensitive zones exacerbating the situation. However, Chennai's struggles are part of a broader narrative of climate vulnerability across Indian cities. Kolkata and Mumbai, for example, face significant risks from sea-level rise, tropical cyclones, and riverine flooding. These densely populated metros are already witnessing the impacts of climate change, with increased intensity of rainfall and flooding, as well as heightened drought risks. The World Bank Group's commissioned research by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Climate

Analytics warns that India, being close to the Equator, will experience higher sea-level rises than higher latitudes.

This poses a severe threat to coastal cities through saltwater intrusion, impacting agriculture, degrading groundwater quality, and potentially leading to an increase in waterborne diseases. A report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2021 had dire warnings for India. The most dangerous risk factor, it said, is rising sea levels that threaten to submerge 12 coastal cities in the country by the end of the century. A dozen Indian cities, including Mumbai, Chennai, Kochi and Visakhapatnam, could be nearly three feet

The flooding brought by cyclone Michaung has highlighted the threat to Indian cities from climate-induced disasters. Not just Chennai, a dozen Indian cities could be under three feet of water by the end of this century

underwater by the end of the century, IPCC report warned.

The risk of getting flooded due to climate change isn't just for coastal cities.

The pattern of extreme weather events is changing, with flood-prone areas becoming drought-prone and vice versa, affecting over 40% of Indian districts.

GDP GROWTH AT RISK

The global average annual loss in infrastructure sectors and buildings is now in a range of \$732-\$845 billion taking into account climate change and that around 14% of 2021-2022 global GDP growth is at risk, as per a report. Around 30% of the average annual loss is associated with hazards such as earthquakes and tsunamis whereas 70% is associated with climate-related hazards like cyclones, floods, and storms.

TOUGH DAYS AHEAD

Professor Chetan Singh Solanki, often called the Solar Man of India, who is touring the country on a solar-powered bus since late 2020 to create awareness among people about solar energy and the threat of climate change has said that India would be among the top countries to be impacted by the latter.

national

of the day quote

Decisions like Dharavi redevelopment are bad for Mumbai and Maharashtra. Our protest march was not a settlement morcha because the BJP was not part of it. Only the BJP indulges in settlement

The Finance Department has a bad intention. They alleged financial mismanagement in the Delhi Jal Board and, despite me writing to the Finance Department to name any corrupt official, they have not replied and stopped the funds

You people seem to have just one thing to say that Modi is going to come back (to power). If it is so, so be it... Please do not make a big fuss about Modi. We all in INDIA will drive him out of power

SHORT TAKES

Mullaperiyar dam water levels surge

Idukki (Kerala): The Mullaperiyar Dam's water level rose to 137.50 ft Monday, prompting authorities to decide on releasing excess water through the spillway starting tomorrow, officials said here. The Idukki District Disaster Management Authority, chaired by Collector Sheeba George, held a review in response to the rising water levels caused by unexpected and continuous rains in the catchment area.

Mann announces 4% hike in DA

Chandigarh: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Monday announced a 4 per cent hike in dearness allowance for government employees with effect from December 1. With this, the DA has increased from 34 per cent to 38 per cent. A decision in this regard was taken following a meeting with the representatives of Punjab State Ministerial Services Union (PSMSU) here.

Man hit by minibus, dragged on bonnet

New Delhi: A 25-year-old man was allegedly hit by a minibus and dragged on his bonnet for some distance in south Delhi's Kotla Mubarakpur area, police said Monday. Videos of the incident, which took place Sunday night, went viral on social media. In one video, the man is seen on the bonnet of the moving vehicle and in another, he is seen getting down from it.

Kejriwal meets Mamata, Uddhav

New Delhi: A day before opposition INDIA bloc's meeting here, AAP national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal met his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee and Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray Monday. Kejriwal did not comment on the discussions at the around 45-minute meeting at the residence of Abhishek Banerjee.

CBI chief in Imphal

New Delhi: CBI Director Praveen Sood reached Imphal Monday to take stock of the investigations related to the Manipur ethnic violence, officials said. The agency had taken over 27 cases of violence that were earlier probed by the state police, they said and added that the violence has claimed over 175 lives and left thousands displaced since May.



Not even a single educational institution of such a vast country with the world's oldest knowledge tradition is among the top 50 educational institutions of the world. We need to think about it

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

EXPLOSIVES UNIT BLAST: POLICE REGISTER CASE

Police have registered a case against unidentified persons in connection with the blast at an explosives manufacturing factory in Maharashtra's Nagpur district which claimed nine lives, officials said Monday



8 ISIS operatives arrested as NIA raids 19 locations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested eight alleged ISIS operatives including a module head as it carried out raids at 19 locations in three states and Delhi Monday, an official said.

The early morning crackdown against the terror group in Ballari and Bengaluru in Karnataka, Amaravati, Mumbai and Pune in Maharashtra, Jamshepur and Bokaro in Jharkhand and Delhi, led to the foiling of a plan by the accused to carry out terror acts, especially Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blasts.

Besides the module head Minaj who was arrested along with Syed Sameer from Ballari, the official said Anas Iqbal Shaikh was apprehended from Mumbai, Mohammad Muniruddin, Syid Samiullah alias Sami and Md Muzammil from Bengaluru, Shayan Rahman alias Hussain from Delhi and Md Shahbaz alias Zulfikar alias Guddu from Jamshepur.



"The eight ISIS agents arrested during the raids were involved in actively promoting terror and terror-related acts and activities of ISIS, the proscribed organisation. They were operating under the leadership of Minaj alias Md Sulaiman," a spokesperson of the federal agency said.

The official said the raids also led to the seizure of explosive raw materials, such as sulphur, potassium nitrate, charcoal, gunpowder, sugar and ethanol, sharp-edged weapons, unaccounted cash and "incriminating" documents, along with smartphones and other digital devices. According to initial investigations, the accused had planned to use the explosive raw materials for the fabrication of IEDs which were to be used for carrying out terror acts, the spokesperson said.



People use a boat to shift from a flooded road following heavy rains in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. Paddy fields, roads and bridges were submerged and many residential colonies came under sheets of water in several regions of southern Tamil Nadu as heavy rains, unprecedented in recent times wreaked havoc in Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Tenkasi districts of the state

PARLIAMENT SECURITY BREACH

Meta asked to give deleted account details of 6 accused



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 18: Delhi Police has written to Meta to access social media accounts of the six accused arrested in the Parliament security breach case and details of the now-deleted Facebook page 'Bhagat Singh Fan Club', where they met each other, according to sources.

Various Delhi Police teams approached family members of the accused on Sunday and collected details of their bank accounts. Bank passbooks of accused Neelam Devi and Sagar Sharma were seized from their residences in Haryana's Jind and Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow, respectively, sources said.

A total of six accused have been arrested so far in the case. Apart from Sagar and Neelam, other accused are Manoranjan D, Amol Shinde, Lalit Jha and Mahesh Kumawat. They have been booked under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Meanwhile, a team of Special Cell visited Manoranjan's residence in Mysuru on Monday and recorded the statements of his parents and relatives. The family

Police have collected bank account details of all the accused to see if they received money from someone for executing the December 13 incident, they said Monday

According to police sources, police have also approached Google Pay and Paytm to know if there were any digital transactions on the bank accounts of the accused

was asked about his bank details and foreign visits, sources said, adding the team remained at his residence for at least seven hours.

Sources said a team of Delhi Police managed to identify the shoe shop in Lucknow's Alam Bagh from where Sagar had bought two pairs of shoes, for Rs 600 each, in which he hid the smoke canisters. The shop is just a kilometre from his house in Lucknow, said a source.

The team is looking for the cobbler who helped Sagar in making the cavities in his shoes, sources said, adding Sagar's other family members and friends in Lucknow were also questioned by the police team.

Delhi Police Counter Intelligence unit has written to Meta, which owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, to access social media accounts of the accused persons and sought details of Facebook page 'Bhagat Singh Fan Page' like the number of members, etc. The page was created by the accused and later deleted. Meta has also been requested to share WhatsApp chats of the accused as their mobile phones have been damaged, sources said.

EXCISE POLICY CASE

Fresh ED summons to Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: The Enforcement Directorate has issued a fresh summons to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for questioning December 21 in the excise policy-linked money laundering case, officials said Monday.

He was first called by the federal agency to appear on November 2, but he did not depose alleging that the notice was "vague, motivated and unsustainable in law".

The summonses to Kejriwal, also the national convener of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), pertain to questioning in the alleged Delhi excise policy case and for recording his statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the officials said.

He has to appear at the ED headquarters here December 21, they said.

The development comes days after Delhi government officials said Kejriwal will leave for a 10-day Vipassana meditation course at an undisclosed location from December 19.



ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

How many people have been sentenced? All the cases filed by ED are fake and they are used to topple governments or form them. ED does not file cases to eradicate corruption. They do it to buy MLAs, topple governments

AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh are among those arrested in this case by the ED and the agency is expected to file a supplementary charge sheet in the case soon.

Centre issues advisory to states

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: The Centre Monday asked states and union territories to maintain constant vigil amid an uptick in Covid-19 cases and the detection of the first case of the new JN.1 variant in the country.

In a letter to states and union territories, Union Health Secretary Sudhansh Pant underlined that "due to consistent and collaborative actions between the Centre and state governments, we have been able to sustain the (Covid-19) trajectory

at sustainable low rates".

"However, as the Covid-19 virus continues to circulate and its epidemiology behaviour gets settled with Indian weather conditions and circulation of other usual pathogens, it is important to keep the momentum going to effectively deal with the challenges in public health," he said. Recently, a few states like Kerala have reported a slight increase in the number of Covid-19 cases, Pant noted. India's first case of Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 was detected in Kerala December 8.

CT scans can increase risk of blood cancer: Study

THE RESULTS STRENGTHEN THE BODY OF EVIDENCE OF INCREASED CANCER RISK AT LOW RADIATION DOSES AND HIGHLIGHT THE NEED FOR CONTINUED JUSTIFICATION OF PAEDIATRIC CT EXAMINATIONS AND OPTIMISATION OF DOSES

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 18: Computed tomography (CT) scans are associated with an increased risk of blood cancers in children and young adults, according to a study published in the Nature Medicine journal.

The European Pediatric CT (EPI-CT) study, involving nearly a million patients, reveals that the radiation from these scans, which use X-rays and a computer to create detailed images of the inside of the body, might be putting youngsters at risk.

A team led by researchers at Pompeu Fabra University,

Barcelona, Spain found that there is a clear link between the radiation doses from CT scans and a higher risk of blood cancers, both lymphoid and myeloid.

The risk starts at doses as low as 10-15 units. That's a wake-up call for anyone who thought those CT scans were harmless, the researchers said.

Contrary to previous beliefs, the EPI-CT study found an increased risk of Hodgkin's lymphoma (HL), especially in the younger age groups. This demands more attention and deeper dives into the data on CT scans, the researchers said. "The risk associated with CT scans isn't negligible, and it's not



just for rare cases - we're talking about a 16 per cent increased risk for these blood cancers per scan. That's not a number to be brushed off lightly," the authors of the study said.

"In terms of absolute risk, among 10,000 children who receive such an examination today, we expect about 1.4 cases due to CT radiation during the 12 years after the examination," they said. The study acknowledged the benefits of CT imaging in patient management, for diagnostic efficacy, treatment

planning and follow-up, are undisputed.

The research doesn't just point fingers, it urges action, the researchers said. From rethinking the necessity of CT scans to ensuring that radiation exposure is kept as low as possible, the implications are clear, they said.

"The EPI-CT study, encompassing over one million European children, reveals a concerning association between cumulative CT scan radiation exposure and childhood hematological malignancies," said Dr. Ravinder Singh, Consultant Radiology, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals, New Delhi.

"These findings emphasise the importance of ongoing scrutiny and optimisation of paediatric CT examinations to mitigate the potential risk of developing blood cancers in the subsequent 12 years," Singh, who was not involved in the study, told PTI.

SNIPPETS

PM inaugurates world's largest meditation centre in Varanasi

Varanasi (UP): Inaugurating the world's largest meditation centre Swarwad Mahamandir here Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the country has declared freedom from the slave mentality and is taking pride in its heritage. "In the era of slavery, the oppressors who made an effort to weaken India first targeted our symbols. After independence, re-building of these cultural symbols was essential," he said. Modi said that after India gained independence, "there was an opposition to the rebuilding of the Somnath temple and this thought process remained dominant for decades."



Guv Khan hits streets in Kerala amidst tensions with Left govt

Malappuram/Kozhikode (Kerala): Amidst the ongoing row between the ruling Left in Kerala and the Governor, the state witnessed dramatic scenes Monday with Arif Mohammed Khan taking to the streets to interact with people, while CPI(M)'s student outfit SFI protested against him and burnt his effigy in colleges across the southern state. At the same time, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan questioned the way Khan conducted himself and said that his government may consider approaching the Union Government seeking the recall of the Governor. Incensed by the SFI protests and Vijayan's comments a day ago that the Governor was making provocative statements to destroy peace in the state, Khan launched a scathing attack against them by calling them "bullies".

ASI submits Gyanvapi survey report in court

Varanasi: The Archeological Survey of India (ASI) Monday submitted a survey report in a sealed cover on the Gyanvapi mosque complex in the district court, which scheduled the next hearing for December 21. Advocate Madan Mohan Yadav, who is representing the Hindu petitioners, said, "The report in sealed cover was placed before the court by the ASI's standing counsel Amit Srivastava."



international

of the day quote

We must mobilise all activists, all supporters in order to prevent any disruptions during the election campaign, stop any attempts to influence the course of the campaign from the outside, arrange provocations, disseminate false, harmful information or violate public order

The policy of double standards towards South Asia, based on a narrow strategic, political and commercial considerations, must be eschewed

Malicious use of AI could undermine trust in institutions, weaken social cohesion, and threaten democracy itself

SHORT TAKES

11 killed, 88 hurt in Guinea blast

Conakry: At least 11 people were killed and 88 injured in a blast at an oil terminal in Guinea's capital Conakry early on Monday, head of civil protection Jean Traore said, as the government warned the incident could directly impact the country's population. The explosion at the West African nation's main oil terminal rocked the Kaloum administrative district in downtown Conakry, blowing out the windows of several nearby homes and forcing hundreds to flee, according to a Reuters witness.

Cyberattack hits Iran's gas stations

Tehran: Nearly 70% of Iran's gas stations went out of service Monday following possible sabotage — a reference to cyberattacks, Iranian state TV reported. The report said a "software problem" caused the irregularity in the gas stations. It urged people not to rush to the stations that were still operational. Israeli media, including the Times of Israel, blamed the problem on an attack by a hacker group dubbed "Gonjeshke Darande" or predatory sparrow. State TV quoted a statement by the Oil Ministry as saying more than 30% of gas stations remain in service. The country has some 33,000 gas stations.

Mexico attack leaves 12 dead

Mexico City: A dozen people were killed in an attack at a holiday party in the central Mexican state of Guanajuato, Mexican authorities said Sunday. The attack took place at dawn in the town of Salvatierra when an armed group opened fire on partygoers attending a posada, a traditional Mexican party held in the days leading up to Christmas.

Landmark ruling

Vatican City: The Vatican said Monday in a landmark ruling approved by Pope Francis that Roman Catholic priests can administer blessings to same-sex couples as long as they are not part of regular Church rituals or liturgies. A document from the Vatican's doctrinal office said such blessings would not legitimise irregular situations but be a sign that God welcomes all. It should in no way be confused with the sacrament of heterosexual marriage.

NK FIRES ICBM WITH RANGE TO STRIKE US

REUTERS

Seoul/Tokyo, Dec 18: North Korea fired an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) Monday that has a range to hit anywhere in the United States, said South Korea and Japan, marking its second launch in hours as Pyongyang condemned a US-led show of force as "war" moves.

The missile has a potential to travel more than 15,000 km (9,300 miles), meaning it can reach anywhere in Japan and the mainland United States, Japan's Parliamentary Vice Minister of Defense Shingo Miyake said.

South Korea's National Security Council said it was a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), labelling the launch a destabilising act that ignored international warnings and multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions.

President Yoon Suk Yeol had ordered the upgrading of the effective operation of "nuclear deterrence" by South Korea and the



The missile has a potential to travel more than 15,000 km (9,300 miles), meaning it can reach anywhere in Japan and the mainland United States, Japan's Parliamentary Vice Minister of Defense Shingo Miyake said

United States, it said in a statement.

Monday's missile was fired from an area near the capital Pyongyang towards the sea off the North's east coast and flew about 1,000 km, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

Japan's defence ministry re-



The BNP and its allies cannot win the hearts of people through arson attacks and killing people

SHEIKH HASINA | BANGLADESH PM

IMRAN USES AI-CRAFTED SPEECH TO LURE VOTES

Pakistan's jailed former Prime Minister, Imran Khan, whose party isn't allowed to hold public rallies, used an audio clip generated by artificial intelligence (AI) late Sunday to address a virtual rally in the first event of its kind in the country



Sisi sweeps to third term as President

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cairo, Dec 18: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who has ruled with an unquestioned grip for the past nine years, won reelection to a third, six-year term in office, election authorities announced Monday. He ran against three virtually unknown opponents.

El-Sisi recorded a landslide victory, securing 89.6% of the vote, the National Election Authority said. Turnout was 66.8% of more than 67 million registered voters. "The voting percentage is the highest in the history of Egypt," declared Hazem Badawy, the election commission chief, who announced the official results in a televised news conference.

The vote was overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza on Egypt's eastern border, which has threatened to expand into



wider regional turmoil. The North African country is also in the midst of an economic crisis, with monthly inflation surging above 30%. Over the past 22 months, the Egypt pound has lost 50% of value against the dollar with one third of the country's 105 million people already living in poverty, according to official figures.

A key Western ally in the region, el-Sisi has faced international criticism over Egypt's human rights record and harsh crackdown on dissent.

BP pauses all Red Sea shipments after attacks

In the past few days, four of the five world's largest container shipping companies have paused or rerouted movements through the Red Sea

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 18: Oil and natural gas giant BP has joined the growing list of companies that have halted their shipments through the Red Sea because of the risk of attack from Yemen's Houthi rebels, threatening a major trade route in what is expected to have global effects.

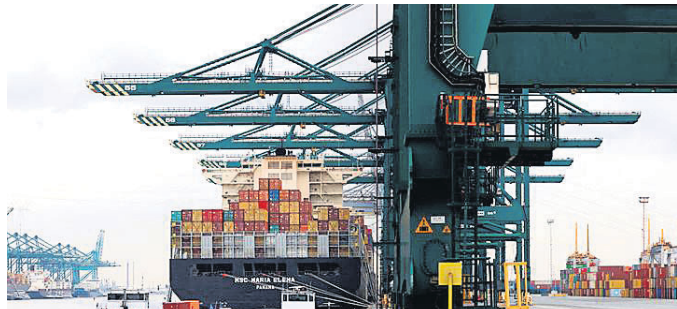
London-based BP said Monday that it has "decided to temporarily pause all transits through the Red Sea," including shipments of oil, liquid natural gas and other energy supplies. Describing it as a "precautionary pause," the company said the decision was under ongoing review but that it was prioritizing crew safety.

Oil prices rose Monday partly over market nerves about attacks by the Iranian-backed Houthis, which have targeted container ships and oil tankers passing through a narrow waterway that separates Yemen from East Africa and leads north to the Red Sea and Suez Canal, where an estimated 10% of the world's trade passes through.

The Houthis have targeted Israeli-linked vessels during Israel's war with Hamas but escalated their attacks last week, hitting or just missing ships without clear ties.

In the past few days, four of the five world's largest container shipping companies have paused or rerouted movements through the Red Sea.

Maersk, MSC, CMA CGM Group and Hapag-Lloyd are leaders in alliances that move basically all consumer goods between Asia and Europe, so "virtually all services will have to make this rerouting," said Simon Heaney, senior manager of container research for Drewry, a maritime research consultancy.



Stranded residents stand on a road, a large section of which has washed away, in the suburb of Holloways Beach in Cairns, Australia, Monday. Officials say more than 300 people have been rescued from floodwaters in northeast Australia, with dozens of residents clinging to roofs

PRESSURE MOUNTING ON ISRAEL

REUTERS

Cairo/Gaza, Dec 18: Israel faced pressure from the visiting US defence chief and censure from a global rights group Monday over the intensity of its war with Hamas in Gaza due to spiralling civilian deaths and hunger among Palestinians.

With no let-up in the more than two-month-old bombardment and siege of the densely

populated enclave, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was the latest U.S. official to head to Israel to press for a transition away from high-intensity warfare.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to achieve total victory over Gaza's ruling Hamas militants, who killed 1,200 people and took 240 hostages in a surprise October 7 raid into Israel, according to Israeli tallies.



The war has left the Gaza Strip

largely in ruins and killed about 19,000 Palestinians, according to health authorities.

Food is running scarce for the territory's 2.3 million people, basic services have collapsed, and most people are homeless.

In its report, HRW accused Israeli forces of deliberately blocking delivery of water, food and fuel, razing agricultural areas and depriving people of items needed for survival.

The big one: Preparing for a long war with China

Over the past decade, the prospect of Chinese military aggression in the Indo-Pacific has moved from the realm of the hypothetical to the war rooms of US defence planners. Xi Jinping has accelerated his country's military buildup, now in its third decade. China has become increasingly assertive across a wide swath of the Pacific, advancing its expansionist maritime claims and encroaching on the waters of key US allies and important security partners, including Japan, the Philippines, and Taiwan. Xi has asserted, with growing frequency, that Taiwan must be reunited with China, and he has refused to renounce the use of force to achieve that end. With the US distracted by major wars in Europe and the Middle East, some in Washington fear that Beijing may see an opportunity to realize some of these revisionist ambitions by launching a military operation before the West can react.

A military confrontation between China and the United States would be the first great-power war since World War II and the first ever between two great nuclear powers. Given the concentration of economic might

and cutting-edge technological prowess in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan—all three advanced democracies that are either close allies or partners of the United States—such a war would be fought for very high stakes.

As was the case with the Soviet Union and the United States in the late twentieth century, both China and the United States possess the ability to destroy the other as a functioning society in a matter of hours. But they can do so only by running a high risk of incurring their own destruction by provoking a nuclear counterattack, or second strike. This condition is known as "mutually assured destruction," or MAD.

Of course, Beijing's nuclear balance of power with Washington is significantly different from that of Moscow during the Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union achieved a rough parity in forces. China's nuclear arsenal is a fraction of the size of the United States', although Beijing is pursuing a dramatic expansion with the goal of matching the U.S. strategic arsenal within the next decade. Nevertheless, even now the Chinese arsenal is large enough that if China were attacked, it would have sufficient



nuclear forces left to execute a retaliatory strike on the United States—thus bringing about MAD.

There are many ways that a war between China and the United States could start. Given China's ambition to dominate the Indo-Pacific, such a war would very likely involve the so-called first island chain, the long arc of Pacific archipelagoes extending from the Kuril Islands north of Japan, down the Ryukyu Islands, through Taiwan, the Philippines, and parts of Indonesia. As many in

Washington have argued, Taiwan is the most obvious target, given the island's strategic location between Japan and the Philippines, its key role in the global economy, and its status as the principal object of Beijing's expansionist aims. China's military has been increasingly active in the Taiwan Strait, and the PLA has massed its greatest concentration of forces across from the island. In the event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, the United States would be compelled to defend the island or risk having key neutral coun-

tries and even allies drift toward an accommodation with Beijing.

Yet the Taiwan Strait is not the only place a war could begin. China has continued its incursions into Japan's airspace and its provocative actions in the exclusive economic zones of the Philippines and Vietnam, raising the possibility of a war-provoking incident. Moreover, tensions between North Korea and South Korea remain high. If fighting broke out on the Korean Peninsula, the United States might dispatch reinforcements there, causing Beijing to see an opportunity to settle scores at other points along the first island chain.

Once a war has broken out, both China and the United States would have to confront the dangers posed by their nuclear arsenals. As in peacetime, the two sides would retain a strong interest in avoiding catastrophic escalation. Even so, in the heat of war, such a possibility cannot be eliminated. Both would confront the challenge of finding the sweet spot in which they could employ force to gain an advantage without causing total war. Consequently, leaders of both great powers would need to exercise a high degree of self-control.

To keep the war limited, both Washington and Beijing would

need to recognize each other's redlines—specific actions viewed as escalatory and that could trigger counter escalations. Efforts toward this end can be enhanced if both sides can clearly and credibly communicate what their redlines are and the consequences that would be incurred for crossing them.

Given the potential for uncontrollable nuclear escalation, it is not unreasonable to assume that both China and the United States would err on the side of caution when considering how and where to intensify military operations. But the imperative on both sides to avoid nuclear escalation would not only create parameters for the objectives sought and the means employed to achieve them. It would also set the stage for a conflict that could likely be prolonged since both sides would have very significant resources to draw on to keep fighting. In this way, the war's containment in one respect would also facilitate its broadening in others.

To prevail in a war with China, then, the United States and its coalition partners will need to have a strategy not only for denying Beijing a quick victory but also for sustaining their own defences in a long war.

business

of the day quote

We will upload the DPR (detailed project report) very soon for a project with the World Bank, with significant investments both from the World Bank side as concessional lending and an equal amount from the Government of India

RAJESH KUMAR SINGH | SECRETARY, DPIIT

The government is likely to achieve the fiscal deficit target of 6.9 per cent of the GDP in the current financial year 2023-24

BHAGWAT KARAD | JUNIOR FINANCE MINISTER

The use cases of Generative AI are still being defined, which means that it has the potential to create more job opportunities in the future. Undoubtedly, the possibilities are just opening, and there is more to come

CP GURNANI | CEO, TECH MAHINDRA

SHORT TAKES

ACL going green

New Delhi: Ambuja Cements Ltd, owned by Adani Group, on Monday said it will invest Rs 6,000 crore in 1,000 MW renewable power projects by FY26. The transformative investment, funded through Internal accruals, encompasses a diverse portfolio of solar and wind power projects strategically positioned across Gujarat and Rajasthan, Ambuja Cements Ltd (ACL) said. The lineup includes a 600 MW solar power project a 150 MW wind power project in Gujarat, and a 250 MW solar power project in Rajasthan. This will be achieved by FY 2026 (200 MW by March 24) in addition to the existing 84 MW of solar and wind power.

Sugar output dip

New Delhi: India's sugar production fell 11 per cent year-on-year to 74.05 lakh tonnes during the October 1-December 15 period of the current marketing year, mainly due to lower output in Maharashtra and Karnataka, according to industry body ISMA. The sugar marketing year runs from October to September. In a statement, the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) said that the sugar production till December 15 in the current 2023-24 marketing year reached 74.05 lakh tonnes against 82.95 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Siemens spin-off

New Delhi: Siemens Ltd board has approved the incorporation of a wholly-owned subsidiary in India to execute a proposed demerger process of its energy business, the company said in a regulatory filing Monday. Certain promoters -- namely Siemens Aktiengesellschaft, Germany, Siemens International Holding BV and Siemens Energy Holding BV, and also its ultimate parent company Siemens Energy Aktiengesellschaft -- have each requested the board of directors (BoD) of the Siemens Ltd to consider, evaluate and thereafter, start taking exploratory steps towards a potential demerger of its energy business into a separate entity, the BSE filing said.

Oilmeal exports fall

New Delhi: Oilmeal exports fell 22 per cent annually to 3.17 lakh tonne in November, mainly due to fall in shipment of rapeseed meals, according to industry data. In a statement Monday, the Solvent Extractors' Association of India Executive Director BV Mehta said the export of oilmeals stood at 3,17,870 tonne in November compared to 4,07,193 tonne in the same month last year.



Between April 2021 and July 2022, Google also reviewed approximately 3,500 to 4,000 loan lending apps and suspended or removed over 2,500 fraudulent loan apps from its Play Store

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

TAMING TOXICITY: EU'S FIRST TARGET X

The European Union is looking into whether Elon Musk's online platform X breached tough new social media regulations in the first such investigation since the rules designed to make online content less toxic took effect. The investigation will look into whether X failed to do enough to curb the spread of illegal content



ICRA REVISES GDP FORECAST TO 6.5%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 18: Domestic rating agency IcrA Monday revised its FY24 GDP growth forecast to 6.5 per cent from 6.2 per cent earlier. However, the revised forecast is still much lower than the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 7 per cent real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth estimate for the ongoing fiscal.

Earlier this month, the RBI had revised upwards its GDP estimate to 7 per cent from 6.5 per cent, calling the revised number a "conservative" one.

The rating agency did not specify reasons for the lower growth estimate made in its business activity monitor.

The revision is being done because IcrA feels the deflation in commodity prices will be sustained and there are expectations of better growth in the October-December period than previous estimates, it said.

"The festive-led uptick in volume growth in high frequency non-agri indicators as evinced by ICRA Business Activity Monitor in October-November 2023 (1.3 per cent versus the 9.5 per cent in Q2FY24) leads us to believe that the GDP growth is likely to fare better in Q3 FY2024 than what we had penciled in," it said.

It added that the global commodity prices have remained benign in the ongoing quarter, partly owing to growing demand concerns from China, adequate supplies for commodities like crude oil, and normalisation of supply chains. While October and November have seen higher activity, the early trends for December are mixed, the agency said, pointing to a moderation in electricity demand growth, a rise in daily vehicle registrations, and a contraction in diesel sales.

Tax mop-up swells

The robust tax collection reflects economic recovery as well as improved administrative skills of the tax department

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 18: The direct taxes after refunds grew 20.66 per cent at Rs 13.7 trillion till December 17 of the current financial year compared to Rs 11.36 trillion during the corresponding period of the previous financial year, backed by a 20 per cent rise in advance tax revenues.

"The provisional figures of Direct Tax collections for the Financial Year 2023-24 (as of 17.12.2023) show that net collections are at Rs 13,70,388 crore, compared to Rs. 11,35,754 crore in the corresponding period of the preceding Financial Year (i.e. FY2022-23), representing an increase of 20.66 per cent," the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said in a statement.

With this, direct taxes have yielded a bit over three-fourth of the Budget Estimates (BE) at Rs 18.23 trillion for 2023-24. With a bit less than four and a half



NET DIRECT TAX COLLECTION JUMPS 21% TO RS 13.70L-CR IN FY24

IT HAS TOUCHED 75% OF BUDGET ESTIMATES OF DIRECT TAX MOP-UP

₹18.23 LAKH CRORE IS EXPECTED TO BE COLLECTED IN DIRECT TAXES

months still remaining for the financial year to end, the projection for direct tax mop-up would be easily exceeded. The Budget has projected an 11.57 per cent rise in direct tax collections for 2023-24.

This, together with robust goods and services tax (GST) collections, would provide the government enough ammunition after devolution to the states to rein in fiscal deficit at the required 5.9 per cent of GDP despite dwindling disinvestment receipts, excise duty collections, and a higher subsidy bill than budgeted in the current

financial year.

The direct tax receipts included corporation tax revenues at Rs 6.95 trillion and personal income tax, including securities transaction tax (STT) at Rs 6.73 trillion. Corporation tax kitty constituted 75.30 per cent of the BE at Rs 9.23 trillion and personal income tax accounted for 74.72 per cent of BE at a bit over Rs 9 trillion for FY24.

Direct tax revenues before refunds stood at Rs 15.96 trillion, representing an increase of 17.01 per cent over that in the corresponding period of FY23. Refunds amounting to Rs 2.25 trillion were issued till November 17 of this financial year.

The gross direct collection includes corporation tax at Rs 7.90 trillion and personal income tax including STT at Rs 8.02 trillion.

This included advance tax collections at Rs 6.25 trillion during the period, which was a 19.94 per cent growth over Rs 5.21 trillion a year ago. The advance tax collection comprised corporation tax at Rs 4.82 trillion and personal income tax at Rs 1.43 trillion.

7.40 crore filed ITRs in FY23

Over 7.40 crore persons filed income tax returns in the 2022-23 fiscal, of which 5.16 crore showed zero tax liability, the Finance Ministry said Monday. Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary informed the Lok Sabha there has been an increase in the number of returns filed in the last five years. The number of persons filing ITRs increased from 6.28 crore in fiscal 2018-19, to 6.47 crore in 2019-20, to 6.72 crore in 2020-21. The number of ITRs filed in the 2021-22 fiscal rose to over 6.94 crore and further to over 7.40 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal. The number of persons whose I-T returns amount to zero tax liability during the last four years increased from 2.90 crore in fiscal 2019-20 to 5.16 crore in 2022-23. "There may not be proportionate increase in direct tax collection and number of income tax returns filed because the direct tax collection is dependent upon multiple factors which include tax rate applicable for relevant assessment year, admissible deductions/exemptions under the law, overall economic growth in various sectors in economy, etc.," Chaudhary said.

TIDBITS

IndiGo carries 100mn passengers in 2023



Mumbai: No-frills carrier IndiGo said Monday it has flown 100 million passengers in a calendar year, becoming the first domestic airline to achieve such a feat. The Gurugram-based airline, which celebrated its 17th anniversary this year, claimed that it has also become one of the airlines to reach this mark at the fastest pace.

"IndiGo has created history by becoming the first Indian airline to carry 100 million passengers in a single calendar year (2023)," it said in the statement. In the previous calendar year, IndiGo had flown 78 million passengers across its domestic and international network, (slightly above pre-Covid 2019 levels), it said, adding that the latest milestone represents a 22 per cent year-on-year increase in passenger traffic for 2023. This development further cements the airline's standing among the 10 largest airlines in the world in terms of passenger traffic, it said. IndiGo also holds the distinction of being the first domestic airline to have over 2,000 daily flights across its network, which has 118 destinations, including 32 international ones. "We are incredibly delighted to achieve this historic milestone, welcoming aboard 100 million passengers in a year. This milestone is also a validation of our strategy which has been executed so diligently," Pieter Elbers, Chief Executive Officer of IndiGo, said.

Japan's Nippon Steel to acquire US Steel

New Delhi: Japan's Nippon Steel said Monday it would buy US Steel in a deal valued at \$14.9 billion, helping it add significant capacity in a key market that is primed for a price hike. US Steel's shares rose about 28% to \$50.35 in pre-market trading, but were still trading well below the offer price of \$55. That represented a premium of 142% since the company announced a strategic review process August 11. The all-cash offer represents an equity value of about \$14.1 billion and the world's No 4 steelmaker said it had secured financing commitments to fund the transaction. The deal is expected to help Nippon move toward 100 million tonnes of global crude steel capacity, while significantly expanding its production in the United States, where steel prices are expected to rise as automakers ramp up production following their recent deals with labor unions to end strikes.



UPI driving digital payment growth

UPI ACCOUNTS FOR 62% OF DIGITAL PAYMENT TRANSACTIONS THIS YEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has been the major driving force in the overall growth of digital payment, and helped in reducing bank notes in circulation to 7.8 per cent in the last financial year, the government said Monday.

UPI transactions have grown from 92 crore in 2017-18 to 8,375 crore in 2022-23 at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 147 per cent in terms of volume, Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat K Karad said in a written reply to Lok Sabha.

Similarly, he said, the value of UPI transactions has grown from Rs 1 lakh crore in 2017-18 to Rs 139 lakh crore in 2022-23 at a CAGR of 168 per cent.

UPI has achieved 8,572 crore transactions during the current financial year till December 11, 2023.

"UPI has been the major driving force in the overall growth of digital payment transactions in the country accounting for 62 per cent of digital payment



UPI TRANSACTIONS HAVE GROWN FROM 92CR IN 2017-18 TO 8,375CR IN 2022-23

VALUE OF TRANSACTIONS UP FROM RS 1L-CR IN 2017-18 TO RS 139L-CR IN 2022-23

IT HAS ACHIEVED 8,572CR TRANSACTIONS DURING CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR TILL DEC 11

transactions in 2022-23. The Year-on-Year growth in the value of bank notes in circulation

PROFIT-TAKING

Stock markets snap record-breaking run

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 18: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty declined Monday due to profit-taking by investors after a three-day record-breaking rally and a largely weak trend in Asian markets.

Snapping its three-day rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 168.66 points or 0.24 per cent to settle at 71,315.09. During the day, it fell 341.46 points or 0.47 per cent to 71,142.29. The Nifty fell by 38 points or 0.18 per cent to 21,418.65.

Among the Sensex firms, Power Grid, ITC, JSW Steel, ICICI Bank, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, IndusInd Bank and Mahindra & Mahindra were the major laggards.

Sun Pharma, Reliance Industries, HCL Tech, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finance and Maruti were among the gainers.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said, "The market started on a subdued note as concerns over oil supply disruptions through the Red Sea and elevated valuations dented investor sentiment."

"Markets started the week on a muted note and ended marginally lower, taking a breather after the recent surge. After the initial downtick, the Nifty oscillated in a narrow range and finally settled at 21,418.65 levels," said Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.48 per cent and midcap index gained 0.28 per cent.



Among the indices, realty declined 0.98 per cent, financial services fell by 0.32 per cent, FMCG by 0.28 per cent, IT by 0.27 per cent, teck by 0.26 per cent and oil & gas by 0.16 per cent.

Services index jumped 1.50 per cent, telecommunication by 0.81 per cent, capital goods by 0.75 per cent and consumer durables by 0.60 per cent.

The rupee surrendered its initial gains to settle 7 paise lower at 83.10 against the US dollar. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.29 per cent to \$76.33 a barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the equity market Monday despite hectic activity. FIIs bought shares worth Rs 11,473.54 crore and sold equities worth Rs 11,507.05 crore, leading to a net outflow Rs 33.51 crore.

Rising for the third day running, the BSE benchmark jumped 969.55 points or 1.37 per cent to settle at its record closing high of 71,483.75 on Friday. During the day, it surged 1,091.56 points or 1.54 per cent to 71,605.76, its all-time intra-day high level. The Nifty climbed 273.95 points or 1.29 per cent to settle at its new closing high of 21,456.65. During the day, it zoomed 309.6 points or 1.46 per cent to hit its record intra-day peak of 21,492.30.

Realme 1st 5G phone in 'Champion' series



Bhubaneswar: Realme, the most reliable smartphone service provider, today announced the launch of its first 5G smartphone in its 'Champion' series - the Realme C67 5G. The Realme C67 5G, the 5G charging champion comes with 5G connectivity and combines a powerful camera, fast charging, a massive battery, an appealing design, a powerful 5G chipset, adequate RAM for multitasking and generous storage capacity. The smartphone also gets a 33W SUPERVOOC charging solution for fast charging, with a massive 5000mAh battery that goes from 1 to 50% in just 29 minutes. The smartphone is available in two colors: Sunny Oasis and Dark Purple which comes in two storage variants priced at Rs 13,999 (4GB+128GB) and Rs 14,999 (6GB+128GB).

India's homegrown single malt love stirs global giants

IN RESPONSE TO THE DRINK-INDIA TREND, GLOBAL BRANDS THAT HAVE FOCUSED ON SINGLE MALTS AGED IN SCOTLAND ARE LOOKING TO INDIAN WHISKIES TO TAP THE BOOM IN ONE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST WHISKY MARKETS

REUTERS

New Delhi, Dec 18: Oak casks, once used to store bourbon and wine, are stacking up in a distillery near New Delhi, filled with ageing whisky as workers churn out almost 10,000 bottles a day of Indian single malt Indri, recently named the world's best whisky.

Sugarcane and mustard fields, not peat bogs, ring the distillery, where the two-year-old Indian brand's owner Piccadilly is ramping up production and building a three-hole golf course to lure connoisseurs and tipplers in the whisky-loving nation.

As India comes into its own as a maker, not just consumer, of whisky, its single malts are reshaping the country's \$33 billion spirits market.

Established global brands such as Glenlivet, made by France's Pernod Ricard, and Talisker by Britain's Diageo fight for shelf space with local rivals Indri, Amrut and Radico Khaitan's Rampur.

Unlike many Asian countries where beer dominates alcohol sales, India is predominantly a whisky-drinking nation. Global awards, increased affluence and a mass of drinkers trying new brands while cooped up during



Covid-19 have rocked India's whisky landscape, industry executives and analysts say.

Indri's \$421 Diwali Collector's Edition won "Best in Show" at the Whiskies of the World Awards blind tasting in San Francisco in August, beating Scottish and US rivals.

With Bollywood stars and Indian music, Pernod

Wednesday uncorked its first made-in-India single malt, the \$48 Longitude 77, with plans to expand sales to Dubai and then the rest of the world.

"We are extremely bullish about this category. It has seen unprecedented growth," said Kartik Mohindra, Pernod India's chief marketing officer.

'CATEGORY OF THE FUTURE'

Diageo, Pernod's larger rival, last year launched its first Indian single malt, Godawan - named after a large, endangered Indian bird - that sells in five foreign markets, including the United States. "We seem to be moving from whisky in India to Indian whisky - within India and globally," said Vikram Damodaran, Diageo's India chief innovation officer.

Pernod's Glenlivet, long India's top-selling single malt, grew 39% by volume last year but was dethroned by Amrut, which spiked 183%, Euromonitor data shows. Indian single malts soared

INDIA'S SINGLE MALTS RESHAPING \$33 BILLION SPIRITS MARKET

PERNOD, DIAGEO LAUNCH INDIAN WHISKIES AS LOCAL BRANDS EXPAND

GLOBAL AWARDS, GREATER WEALTH, COVID-19 CURBS SPUR BOOM

144% in 2021-22, beating the 32% growth in Scotch, data from IWSR Drinks Market Analysis shows. For the period until 2027, it predicts, consumption of Indian malts is set to grow 13% a year compared to Scotch at 8%.

Indri maker Piccadilly Distilleries hopes to expand capacity by 66% to 20,000 litres a day by 2025, reaching beyond the 18 foreign markets that make up 30% of its sales, said founder Siddhartha Sharma.

It plans to double the number of casks to 100,000 at the sprawling distillery in a farm belt 160 km north of India's capital.

The local brands are not cheap: Indri starts at \$37 a bottle, Amrut \$42 and Rampur \$66 in shops near New Delhi. In comparison, Pernod's Glenlivet retails from \$40 to \$118, depending on age.

At the Longitude 77 launch, Pernod served CEOs, diplomats, celebrity chefs and other invited guests the new single malt and cocktails made with it, combined with local ingredients like Kashmiri saffron and Alphonso mangoes. Radico expects Rampur sales to double each year and will focus more on expanding the domestic market, as foreign sales contribute 75% of its business, said Sanjeev Banga, president of international business.

The biggest endorsement of the category, he said, "is that you have both Diageo and Pernod coming up with an Indian single malt."

"Otherwise, they were only talking about their mainstream foreign brands," Banga said. "They realise this is a category of the future."

INDIA LOOK TO SEAL SERIES

Hardik 'will' bring evolution to MI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: India cricketer Sunil Gavaskar reckons that Hardik Pandya, as the new leader, will bring in "fresh thinking" in the Mumbai Indians camp as Rohit Sharma appeared fatigued and has not contributed enough with the bat in the last few years.

The India T20 skipper was traded to Mumbai Indians ahead of the 2024 IPL auction, scheduled to take place in Dubai Tuesday.

Rohit and Chennai Super Kings skipper MS Dhoni are the most successful captains in the IPL, guiding their teams to five titles each in the lucrative league. However, Mumbai Indians have gone without a title since 2021, finishing last in the 2022 edition.

Gavaskar said that it could be because Rohit is "fatigued" since he has been playing continuously not only as IPL team skipper but also as the India captain.

"See, we don't have to look at it (decision appoint Hardik as MI captain) as right or wrong. The decision they (MI) have taken has been for the benefit of the team. We can say that the contribution of Rohit, even with the bat, has become slightly lesser," Gavaskar told Star Sports.

"Earlier, there used to be a lot of contribution (with bat) from Rohit, but in the last few years, they have finished at No.9 or 10. And last year they qualified for the playoffs, but the 'josh' (enthusiasm) of Mumbai Indians was not there to be seen as we have seen in the past.

"Maybe because he has played cricket continuously he must have been fatigued, constantly captaining the Indian side and then Mumbai Indians," added Gavaskar.

Hardik, after leading Gujarat Titans to title triumph in the team's inaugural year in 2022 also led his side to runners-up fin-



ish this year. The cricketer-turned-commentator felt Hardik has proved himself for the Gujarat franchise and his return to Mumbai Indians will infuse fresh ideas into the side.

"So, the decision that they have taken, he is a young player, young in terms of captaining a side, who has proven himself, taking Gujarat Titans to the finals twice and winning it once.

"So with the same thought process, they have made him captain. Because sometimes you need that fresh thinking, and he can bring that fresh thinking and I think the decision that has been taken, Mumbai Indians can benefit from it and won't damage them," he added.

Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan said the biggest challenge for Hardik at Mumbai Indians would be to manage senior players like Rohit, Suryakumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah, all of whom are lead-

ers themselves. "Hardik will have to learn to manage these guys and it will be his biggest challenge. And this won't be easy for him," said Pathan.

He compared Rohit's stature with that of Dhoni, saying the stalwart had built the Mumbai franchise with his hard work and commitment. "The stature that Rohit Sharma has in Mumbai Indians, I think it can be compared to the stature that Dhoni has in CSK. He has made this team with his own hard work and dedication through his captaincy.

"He's a great captain who has carried this team for years and last year, with the team they had, many people thought they could qualify for the playoffs. They qualified, even though they didn't have (pacer) Jofra Archer and their bowling was light.

"Even their form wasn't good. They didn't have the facilities of Bumrah (who was recovering from injury)," said Pathan.



No.6 slot currently has been given to Sanju Samson, who is playing as a specialist batter behind skipper KL Rahul, who is donning the big gloves.

As has been the template of national team managements, they would like to give Samson, who is senior to Rinku, a fair go at that slot before turning to the south-paw. However Rinku's brilliant List A record (near 50 average) will force the team management to give him a go.

In fact, both Rinku and Patidar could get a go but in that case, Tilak Varma, who got to face just a couple of deliveries in the opening game, will have to be dropped from the playing eleven. That doesn't seem very logical at the moment.

The opening game witnessed the debut of young left-handed opener B Sai Sudharsan, whose silken half century held a lot of

MATCHDAY
India vs South Africa
2nd One Day International
Time: 4:30 pm
Telecast: Star Sports channels
Stream: Dishney+Hotstar

promise going into the future. For the hosts, this series is a massive white ball test for their batters in the post Quinton de Kock era. De Kock's exhilarating strokeplay at the top, allowed the Rassie van der Dussens, Heinrich Klaasens and David Millers to accelerate.

But in slightly helpful bowling conditions, India's fringe pacers exposed their shortcomings and they will have to put up a way better show in the second game, which will be a day/night affair.

Not much change
The bowling department will

not need much tinkering after a near-perfect performance from Arshdeep and Avesh. Mukesh Kumar, whose 0/46 in 7 overs did stick out like a sore thumb, would want to present an improved version of his bowling as he either went too full or at times bowled too short during the opening game.

In case the team management wants to experiment, it can replace Mukesh with his Bengal teammate Akash Deep but that looks unlikely in the second game when the team is gunning for series glory.

In the spin department, both Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav, who have not been picked for Tests, wouldn't like to miss out on international matches and it is unlikely that they would volunteer to rest which would allow Rahul to give Yuzvendra Chahal a chance to play the only format he has been selected.

Man United frustrate Liverpool in 0-0 draw



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Liverpool, Dec 18: Erik ten Hag needed this. A 0-0 draw at Liverpool in the Premier League Sunday won't win any beauty pageants, but a stubborn and battling performance at Anfield suggests Manchester United's players are up for the fight. On too many occasions this season, the opposite has looked to be the case.

United had folded at the home of their fiercest rival when routed 7-0 on their last visit in March. With Ten Hag facing speculation over his position and his team eliminated from the Champions League at the earliest stage, he upset the odds to end Liverpool's 100% 11-game winning run at Anfield this season and also put a dent in Jurgen Klopp's bid to win the Premier League title. A draw saw Liverpool knocked off the top

of the table and into second place by Arsenal, which beat Brighton 2-0 and travels to Anfield Saturday. Ten Hag will be more concerned about United's fortunes and, while a gutsy display will not totally shut out talk of a crisis at Old Trafford, it gives the Dutch coach something to build on.

It was a frustrating day for Liverpool, which dominated the possession and chances, though Rasmus Hojlund's second-half effort from close range for United was arguably the best opening created by either team.

It was United's first draw in the league this season, having won nine and lost seven of its 16 games going into the match. The result leaves Ten Hag's team six points off fourth-place Manchester City. Second-place Liverpool is one point behind Arsenal and above third-place Aston Villa on goal difference.

Real thrash Villarreal, go to top

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Dec 18: Real Madrid lead the Spanish league after beating Villarreal 4-1 but lost defender David Alaba with a serious knee injury Sunday.

Jude Bellingham, Rodrygo, Brahim Diaz and Luka Modric scored for Madrid, which moved one point ahead of Girona ahead of the Catalan club's home game against Alaves Monday. Madrid are seven points ahead of third-placed Barcelona. The defending champions drew 1-1 at Valencia Saturday.

Alaba had to be helped off the field at the Santiago Bernabeu before halftime when his left knee buckled while he tried to steal the ball from an opponent near midfield. The Austria defender fell and immediately called for help while grabbing his knee. He couldn't put weight on his left leg while being carried off the field in the 34th minute.

Madrid said after the match that Alaba ruptured the anterior cruciate ligament and will need to undergo surgery in the next few days. The club did not immediately say how long he is expected to be sidelined.

It was the latest serious knee injury for Madrid this season. The club is already without goal-keeper Thibaut Courtois and defender Eder Militao because of cruciate ligament injuries that are expected to keep them out of action for a long period. Eduardo Camavinga and Arda Guler also



RIGHT ON THE MONEY: Jude Bellingham heads in for his goal against Villarreal, Sunday

sustained knee injuries.

Bellingham and Rodrygo continued their good scoring runs to give Madrid a 2-0 first-half lead. Bellingham scored his league-leading 13th goal with a header off a cross by Modric in the 25th, and Rodrygo added to the lead in the 37th for his fifth goal in his last six games. Bellingham has seven goals in his last nine matches with the club.

Diaz scored the third goal after a beautiful run that started near the midfield line in the 64th. He cleared two defenders before finding the net from inside the area. Modric closed the scoring with another shot from inside the box in the 68th.

Jose Luis Morales scored in the 54th for Villarreal, who haven't won in three straight league matches and have dropped to

14th place. Villarreal have nine losses in 17 league matches so far, their worst run at this point of a season.

Villarreal had been the last team to beat Madrid in the league at the Bernabeu, winning 3-2 last season. That was Madrid's only loss in their last 31 league matches as a host. They lost both of their league matches against Villarreal last season.

Napoli drawn against Barca in CL last 16

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nyon (Switzerland), Dec 18: Defending champions Manchester City got a kind draw for the round of 16 in the Champions League, while tough Napoli test awaits Barcelona. Paris Saint-Germain's opponent could have been much tougher, too.

City will continue their title defense against Copenhagen, who are making their first appearance at this stage since 2011. The Danish champions qualified ahead of Manchester United in group play.

PSG weren't punished as hard as they could have been for finishing second in their group. The French champions, still without a Champions League title under its Qatari ownership and eliminated in the last 16 for the past two years, will face a Real



Sociedad team playing in Europe's top competition for the first time in a decade.

The draw for the two-legged round of 16 was made Monday at UEFA's headquarters, with the standout matchup being Napoli vs Barcelona — two of the late Diego Maradona's former clubs. Barcelona haven't advanced beyond the round of 16 since the 2019-20 season.



Real Madrid, seeking a record-extending 15th European Cup title, will play Leipzig while Inter Milan, last season's beaten finalist and another high-profile group runner-up, play Atletico Madrid. It's also Porto vs Arsenal, PSV Eindhoven vs Borussia Dortmund and Lazio vs Bayern Munich.

In the last 16, teams cannot play an opponent from their own country or a team they already

Europa matchups

NYON (SWITZERLAND): Feyenoord and Roma will meet in the playoffs to enter the Europa League's round of 16 in a repeat of their title match in the UEFA Conference League in 2022. Roma won that match 1-0 in Tirana to give Jose Mourinho another European trophy. The draw Monday pitted the teams who finished second in their Europa League groups with the clubs who were third in the Champions League groups. AC Milan stayed alive in European competition by beating Newcastle in their final Champions League group game and were rewarded with a two-legged match against Rennes.

faced in the group stage. There's no country protection after that. The round of 16 will be played from February 13-14.

ODISHA FC, BFC IN SAME GROUP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 18: Reigning champions Odisha FC were Monday clubbed with last edition runners-up Bengaluru FC (BFC) in the same group for the Super Cup football tournament to be played in Bhubaneswar from January 9 to 28.

Another Indian Super League side FC Goa and an I-League club (which will be known after qualifying play-off) will make up the four-team Group D, according to the group stage draw held here.

Odisha FC, which recently qualified for the AFC Cup inter-zone playoff semifinals, had beaten BFC in the 2023 Super Cup final in Kozhikode, Kerala. Kolkata rivals Mohun Bagan and East Bengal were also clubbed together in the same



group.

The national team players from various clubs will, however, miss the whole or most part of Super Cup tournament as they will be playing in the AFC Asian Cup in Doha, beginning January 12.

Sixteen teams (12 from ISL and four from I-League) will take part in the tournament and they will be divided into four groups of four teams each.

The top-ranked team from each group will progress to the semifinals. The winner of the final, to be played January 28, will earn a ticket to the 2024-25 AFC Champions League 2.

Five I-League teams — Gokulam Kerala FC, Sreenidi Deccan FC, Shillong Lajong FC, Inter Kashi and Rajasthan United FC — confirmed their participation in the Super Cup. The top three of these four teams, as per the December 24 I-League standings, will qualify directly for the tournament.

The bottom two teams will play in a single-leg qualifying playoff January 9 to determine the fourth and final I-League team in the group stage.

The teams were divided into four pots, with the 12 ISL teams placed in pots 1-3, according to their points per match in the 2023-24 ISL as of December 17.