

Ankita's revelation
 Actor Ankita Lokhande recalls she didn't reveal about her breakup with Sushant Singh hoping that he would return

LEISURE | P2

HOW MANY MORE INNOCENTS MUST DIE?
NEW TRUCE ON ANVIL
 Israel and Hamas may be inching towards another truce and hostage release deal in the Gaza war as ceasefire talks intensify

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Stocks tank over 1%
 Sensex and Nifty go into a tailspin after hitting their fresh all-time highs but closing down by over 1 per cent, Wednesday

BUSINESS | P11

Series decider today
 All eyes on Indian top-order when they take the field against South Africa in the final ODI of the 3-match series

SPORTS | P12

Bukhari fleeced girls by taping them nude

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: The investigation into the suspected terror-links of Kashmiri man Sayed Ishaan Bukhari who had been arrested for impersonating a PMO official and a doctor last week, has revealed that the imposter would entrap many girls by engaging them in nude video calls, and later extort them by threatening to make the tapes viral.

Bukhari has been booked for fraud, impersonation and a host of IPC Sections pertaining to breach of trust and criminal conspiracy.

A source privy to the interrogation of the accused, said that Bukhari, a native of Kupwara in J&K had been living in Neulpur area of Jajpur by masquerading as a doctor.

Though he was married to a woman in the locality, this didn't stop him from developing relationship with multiple women from across the country through a special app which he had developed for the purpose of trapping them. Sources said his diabolic plan involved pushing them into a honey-trap ring.

Sources said he would also extort these women after engaging them in disrobed video calls on the app by threatening to upload the contents on social media platforms.

Investigators of the Crime Branch Special Task Force, which obtained his five-day remand and brought him to custody from the Ragadi sub-jail in Jajpur to Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, have learnt that Bukhari has nine bank accounts and as many as two girls from Odisha were in touch with him.

Meanwhile, officials from multiple Central agencies are also interrogating Bukhari.



IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Why do you want to come to the House today? Not a single opposition MP is left to be suspended, sir!

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	BOURSES	VARIAION
SENSEX	70506.31	↓ 930.88
NIFTY	21150.20	↓ 302.90
DOLLAR	83.22	↑ ₹0.01
EURO	91.05	↑ ₹0.06
GOLD	₹62,450	↓ ₹26
SILVER	₹75,420	↑ ₹596

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	25.4°C	25.2°C
Min Temp	13.0°C	13.0°C
Humidity	73%	70%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
 DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY

NATURE'S FURY



A drone picture shows lava spewing from the site of the volcanic eruption north of Grindavik, photographed from Sylingarfell in Iceland recently

GPS-based toll collection from March '24: Gadkari

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: The Union government will introduce new technologies, including GPS-based toll collection systems, by March next year to replace existing highway toll plazas, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said Wednesday.

The move is aimed at reducing traffic congestion and charging motorists for the exact distance travelled on the highways.

"The government is looking at new technologies, including GPS-based toll systems to replace toll plazas in the country... We will start new GPS satellite-based toll collection across the country by March next year," he said.

Gadkari also said the road transport and highways ministry has conducted two pilot projects of automatic number plate recognition system (automatic number plate reader cameras) to enable automated toll collection without stopping the vehicles.

During 2018-19, the average waiting time for vehicles at toll plaza was eight minutes. With the introduction of FASTags during 2020-21 and 2021-22, the average waiting time of the vehicles was reduced to 47 seconds.

Although there is considerable improvement in waiting time at certain locations, especially near cities, in densely populated towns, there are still some delays at toll plazas during peak hours.

Bills passed sans Oppn

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 20: Amid suspension of 143 Opposition members following protests over the recent security breach in Parliament, three crucial Bills - Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita, 2023, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023 and the Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023 - that will replace Indian Penal Code (IPC) of 1860, Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) of 1973 and Indian Evidence Act, of 1872 were passed in Lok Sabha Wednesday.

Replying to a debate on the Bills in the Lok Sabha Wednesday, Home Minister Amit Shah said the proposed laws were framed after comprehensive consultations and that he had gone through every comma and full stop of the draft legislations before bringing them to the approval of the House.

Members of the Congress, DMK, TMC and other opposition parties were not present during the debate after 97 of



their colleagues were suspended from Lok Sabha for 'unruly' behaviour in the House.

While many opposition parties have been critical of the Bills that seek to replace the IPC, CrPC and the Evidence Act, only a handful of non-NDA members, including Hyderabad MP and AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi, MPs of the Biju Janata Dal and Bahujan Samaj, were present in the House.

"I am astonished at how some people defend and save the lives of terrorists in the name of 'human rights'. Remember, this is neither the rule of Britishers nor of Congress. This is Modi's rule. No arguments to save terrorists will be entertained here," Shah said.

"We have changed the definition of Sedition from 'Rajdroh' (offences against the government) to 'Deshdroh' (offences against the Nation)," he said noting IPC Section 124, or the Sedition Law,

Telecom Bill gets Lok Sabha nod

NEW DELHI: A Bill allowing the Centre to temporarily take control of telecom services in the interest of national security, and providing a non-auction route for allocation of satellite spectrum was approved by the Lok Sabha, Wednesday. The Telecommunications Bill, 2023, which was passed by a voice vote after a short debate, also allows the Centre to take possession of a telecom network in case of any public emergency or in the interest of public safety. Most of the opposition members did not attend the House following their suspension.

MORE P3 & REPORT P9

has been repealed. The purpose of the new law is "not to save the government, but to save the country. In a healthy democracy, everyone has the right to criticise the government, but we will not allow anyone to say anything demeaning about India," the Union Home minister added.

SHORT TAKES

Colorado SC blow to Trump

WASHINGTON: In a stunning verdict, the Colorado Supreme Court has barred Donald Trump from running for president next year in the state citing his role in the unprecedented attack on the US Capitol in 2021 and ordered the exclusion of his name from the state's Republican presidential primary ballot. The disqualification of the 77-year-old former president Tuesday was based on the Constitution's 14th Amendment, which says officials who take an oath to support the US Constitution are banned from future office if they "engaged in insurrection." The 4-3 ruling by the 7-member Colorado Supreme Court does not apply outside of the state.



Odisha plans 11 new anti-Maoist camps

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha Police Wednesday said it would set up 11 new CRPF/BSF camps in remote areas of the state to take on the Maoists. This was revealed by Director General of Police (DGP) Sunil Kumar Bansal after inaugurating the strategy conference on Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) here. "We have plans to set up 11 new company operation bases of CRPF/BSF in remote areas as Maoists may unleash violence to make their presence felt," Bansal said.

Rayagada teacher detained for molestation

RAYAGADA: Irate residents gheraoed the Government UP School at Indira Nagar here and beat up a teacher black and blue on charge of molesting girl students in the educational institution, Wednesday. The accused was identified as Manoranjan Nayak. Later, the guardians submitted a memorandum to the headmistress demanding stringent action against Nayak. On being informed, police reached the spot and detained Nayak, who would retire in a year. It was alleged that Nayak used to molest the girl students in a school room during lunch time, in the absence of other teachers.

21 cases of new Covid sub-variant JN.1 found

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: As many as 21 cases of Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 have been detected across the country till now, NITI Aayog member (Health) VK Paul said Wednesday but asserted that there was no need to panic.

He said that the scientific community in India was closely investigating the new variant as he emphasised on the need for states to ramp up testing and strengthen their surveillance systems. Paul highlighted that about 91 to 92 per cent of those infected are opting for home-based treatment.

According to official sources, 19 cases of the sub-variant JN.1 have been traced in Goa while one each was found in Kerala and

Maharashtra. Over the past two weeks, 16 deaths related to Covid-19 were recorded with the victims having serious comorbidities. The Centre has asked states and Union territories to maintain a constant vigil amid an uptick in Covid-19 cases and the detection of the new JN.1 variant in the country.

Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya Wednesday reviewed the preparedness of health facilities across the country and stressed on being alert against emerging strains of coronavirus.

Union Health Secretary Sudhanshu Pant said even though cases are increasing, 92.8 per cent of the cases are in home isolation.

No Covid case in Odisha | P3

Chinese mourners resurrect dead with AI

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Beijing, Dec 20: A growing number of Chinese people have found a novel way to commemorate and mourn their near and dear ones by creating their lifelike avatars through artificial intelligence (AI). Some Chinese firms claim to have created thousands of "digital people" from as little as 30 seconds of audiovisual material of the dead.

At a quiet cemetery in eastern China, bereaved father Seakoo Wu pulls out his phone, places it on a gravestone and plays a recording of his son.

They are words that the late student never spoke, but brought into being with artificial intelligence.

"I know you're in great pain every day because of me, and



feel guilty and helpless," intones Xuanmo in a slightly robotic voice.

"Even though I can't be by your side ever again, my soul is still in this world, accompanying you through life."

Stricken by grief, Wu and his wife have joined a growing number of Chinese people turning to AI to create lifelike avatars of their departed kin.

Ultimately, Wu wants to build a fully realistic replica that behaves just like his dead son but dwells in virtual reality.

"Once we synchronise reality and the metaverse, I'll have my son with me again," Wu said.

"I can train him... so that when he sees me, he knows I'm his father."

Some Chinese firms claim to have created thousands of "dig-

ital people" from as little as 30 seconds of audiovisual material of the dead.

Experts say they can offer much-needed comfort for people devastated by the loss of loved ones.

But they also evoke an unsettling theme from the British sci-fi series "Black Mirror" in which people rely on advanced AI for bereavement support.

leisure



MINOGUE BREAKS DOWN OVER CANCER DIAGNOSIS REFLECTION

Singer Kylie Minogue recovered from breast cancer after undergoing surgery and chemotherapy for eight months in 2005. But she admitted the memories of her health battle are still 'raw'. During an interview with *CBS News*' Seth Doane, she tearfully said, "It's trauma, and any trauma resides within you."

VANILLA ICE ON PARTYING WITH PABLO ESCOBAR

Rapper Vanilla Ice recently said he once palled around with drug lord Pablo Escobar, but didn't know he was a major drug kingpin. The rapper made the revelation in a *VladTV* interview, saying he used to party with the Colombian gangster during his heyday in the 1990s.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES

It is a sunny, sparkling day, and the stars spell success. If you're feeling creative, simply pick up a paintbrush or try a new recipe. However, care and caution should be the buzzwords if you are driving alone, suggest Ganesh.

TAURUS

You may feel let down as your folks may not extend the support you expected from them, says Ganesh. You should try to remain practical and not get swayed by emotions. It is highly likely that family feuds may erupt today. Ganesh advises you to avoid confrontations and keep smiling to emerge a winner.

GEMINI

An extremely profitable and progressive day awaits you. You may come into a handsome inheritance. Your responsibilities will increase along with a possible promotion at work. However, do not let your success go to your head, says Ganesh.

CANCER

Ganesh advises you to watch your back today. However, he wants to make it clear that you may be at the receiving end of others' actions. Anyway, your cautious and watchful approach will save you from needless discomfiture.

LEO

You have to let go of your stubborn and obstinate streak. You will need to compromise according to the situation. If you do not have such an attitude, arguments and confrontations with your business partners, friends and family members are possible.

VIRGO

The artist in you will set the floor ablaze today. You have the remarkable abilities of a showman and comedian, and people will feel thrilled at your treasure of jokes in the evening, says Ganesh. However, you will do well to conserve some energy for other urgent matters and duties as well.

LIBRA

Ganesh says you will be able to show your love and appreciation for your beloved. Small issues will crop up and keep you tensed and uncomfortable today. Just remember good days and old memories and life will seem good again. It is essential to have confidence in yourself if you want to go ahead in life and be happy.

SCORPIO

According to Ganesh, it's a good day for long term and real estate investments. It may lead to benefits and profits in long run. Sit back, relax and enjoy the pleasures of life before you miss out on them. Welcome all the opportunities with open arms.

SAGITTARIUS

The wheel of fortune turns towards you today, says Ganesh. Make a wish and it's bound to come true. However don't be over-confident when it comes to decision-making. In case of disappointments, "this too shall pass" would be the best remedy.

CAPRICORN

You comparatively less experienced than others in the office, but the boss will choose you with a hope to get the company out of the existing troubles. Trusting your intelligence, skills, and potential, you will be assigned some crucial matters. It is a great deal to live up to such high expectations, but you will be able to do so and win the hearts of many, predicts Ganesh. Personally, you will express your deep emotions to your sweetheart.

AQUARIUS

You need to think dispassionately and with clarity, says Ganesh. As always, sentiments may come in the way of your success today. Be careful, especially while taking decisions that will impact your future. You don't want to study law, just because your friends are doing it!

PISCES

You will feel very emotional about those who are close to your heart. Those people who know you will endear you because of this quality of yours. But Ganesh adds a word of caution; take care of those people whom you hold close to your heart because in your sentiments for them you might not notice their bad qualities or forgive their mistakes.



Alaya redefines power dressing

Mumbai: Despite being a newcomer to Bollywood, Alaya Furniturewalla's obsession with fashion goes well beyond being a typical girl next door. Every time she releases a new look, style enthusiasts are inspired to wear certain things. Would an all-black ensemble ever become outdated? The response, then, is unequivocally no! Black is a colour that fashionistas have proven they adore, and Alaya is no exception. The actress appears amazing and sophisticated as she is fully clothed in jet black. Seeking the utmost in classic style, she wore a black Nikhil Thampi pantsuit with a backless design. Every time Alaya Furniturewalla makes a public appearance, her daring and audacious wardrobe experiments and fashion choices ignite the internet on fire, and this time it was no different. Many people expressed their adoration for the actress as she showed up to the Elle India Graduates 2023 event wearing a chic blazer combination. A gold chain-like ornamentation at the back of a full-sleeved blazer was the focal point of the Nikhil Thampi ensemble. Alaya paired the three-quarter-sleeved jacket with wide-leg trousers, accented with gold buttons on the side pockets. The actress went for a glitzy, glossy look that included heavily pigmented eyes, defined cheekbones, and a sheer lip colour. She finished off her stylish look by pulling her hair back into a tidy ponytail. Meanwhile, on the work front, Alaya will next be seen in *SRI*, which is a Srikanth Bolla biopic. The film also stars Rajkumar Rao and Jyothika.

Ankita recalls hoping for Sushant to return

Mumbai: The latest episodes of *Bigg Boss 17* are high on drama as the former girlfriend of comedian Munawar Faruqi, Ayesha Khan, has entered the show. Besides her wild card entry, what caught viewers' attention was Ankita Lokhande recalling how Vicky Jain extended support to her after her breakup with Sushant Singh Rajput. It happened when she was candidly discussing why Munawar didn't make his breakup public on the show with fellow contestant Isha Malviya. The *Pavitra Rishta* actress told Isha,

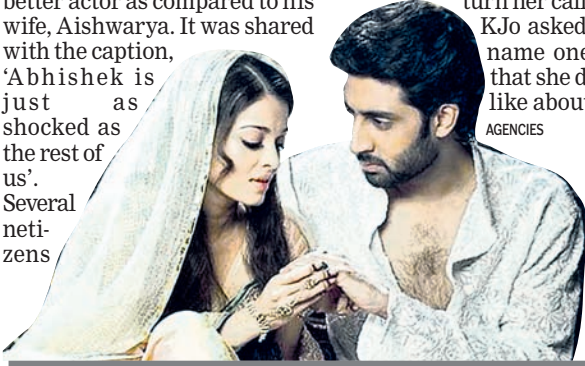
"There are times when a person does not talk about his breakup because he has this hope that they might reconcile. Hope is always here. I remember when I had my breakup. I did not open up about it for 2 years. Later, I got into a relationship with Vicky, and everyone trolled him badly. But he never gave up and supported me throughout." As their conversation continued further, Ankita added, "I can understand, but I had hopes of Sushant returning as our relationship was 7 years old. I had hoped he would return home, and hence I didn't tell anyone. I was staying in a home that had photos of us all over. When I met Vicky, I didn't know what it would lead to, but he supported me a lot."



'ABHISHEK BETTER ACTOR THAN ASH'

Mumbai: The Bachchan family has hit headlines multiple times recently for alleged fallout among family members and the rumoured separation of Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan. While none of the reports are confirmed, speculations around the Bachchan family saga don't seem to end. An old video of Shweta Bachchan from her appearance on *Koffee With Karan* with Abhishek has resurfaced on social media. It showed the moment when Shweta named her brother as a better actor as compared to his wife, Aishwarya. It was shared with the caption, 'Abhishek is just as shocked as the rest of us'. Several netizens

have penned their reactions to Shweta's video in the comments section of the video. A user wrote, "Well, she could have insisted on both. So many people refuse to pick one person in this rapid fire. But being diplomatic is not her cup of tea, lol," whereas another one wrote, "Abhishek is a better actor, while Aishwarya, at her peak, was a bigger star." Notably, another video of Shweta from the same episode made headlines wherein she said that Ash takes forever to return her calls when KJo asked her to name one thing that she doesn't like about her.

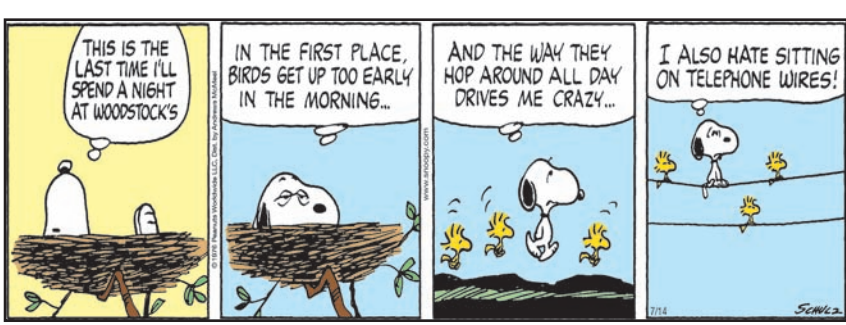


Kareena talks about her unforgettable characters

Mumbai: Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan has given several memorable performances in a career spanning 23 years. Poo and Geet are much talked about, but there is Khushi from the 2003 film *Khushi* and Sanjana from *Main Prem Ki Diwani Hoon*, and Tina from *Mujhse Dosti Karoge*, which one can't forget even today. The actress finds it heartening that these roles are still etched in everyone's mind. Her portrayals of Preet (*Uda Punjab*), Riana (*Ek Main Aur Ekk Tu*), and Simrita Rai (*Kambhakt Ishq*), among many others, also keep finding their way back on social media reels, a testimony to the fact that all the characters in her filmography are unforgettable, despite whatever the film's fate. Talking about the same, Kareena said, "Honestly, it's so wonderful to know that these characters refuse to fade away." The actress has given her 100 per cent to each role that has come her way. "I've always believed in giving my all to each character, and it's incredibly rewarding to see that effort resonate with the audience," she added. Kareena has lent her voice to *Black Widow* in *Marvel Wastelanders: Black Widow*, the third installment of the Hindi Audible podcast series. On the acting front, Kareena will next be seen in *The Crew* and *Singham Again*.



PEANUTS



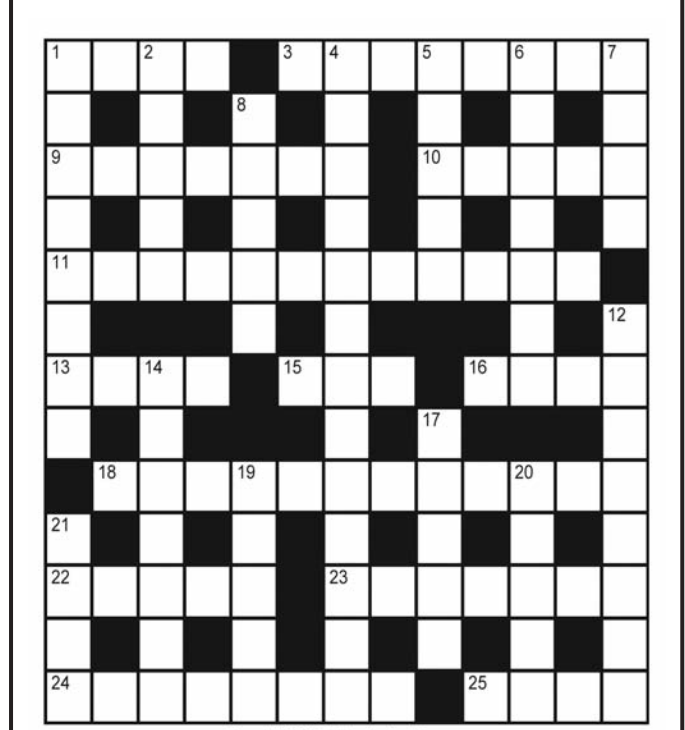
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



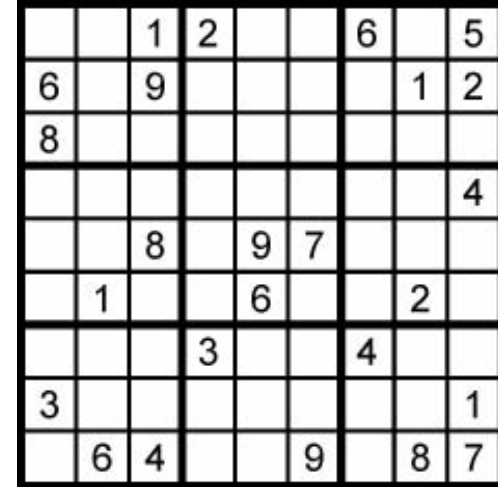
FUN post CROSSWORD



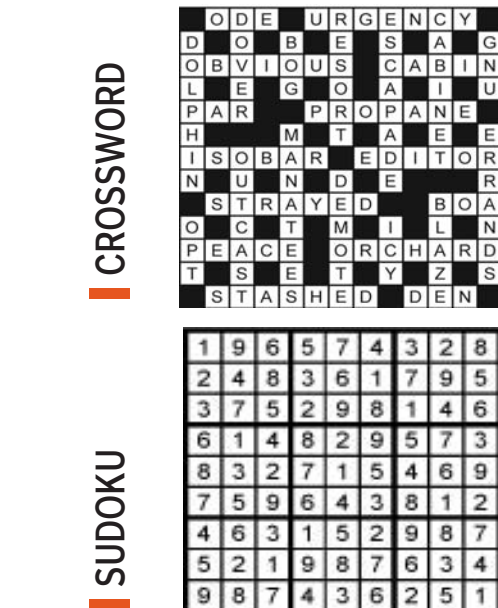
- Across
- 1 Earring site
 - 3 Bitterness
 - 9 Pokes fun at
 - 10 Common refrigerator
 - 11 Pass muster (4,3,5)
 - 13 Catches in the act
 - 15 Hit the jackpot
 - 16 Withered
 - 18 Book ending, at times
 - 22 Gussy up
 - 23 Felonious
 - 24 Manage
 - 25 Ogled
 - Down
 - 1 Medicinal lotion
 - 2 Damage
 - 4 Make-up guru
 - 5 Surmise
 - 6 Like some payments
 - 7 Hankerings
 - 8 Apartments
 - 12 Utilise again
 - 14 City in China
 - 17 Hibachi
 - 19 Place for a boutonniere
 - 20 African tribesman
 - 21 Rigging support

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



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

EXPO IN CITY

Artistes perform during the 18th edition of Toshali National Crafts Mela at Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday



Man held after son's kidnapping plot fails

3 MORE ROUNDED-UP IN THE SENSATIONAL PLAN TO BENEFIT A CHILDLESS COUPLE, CAUSE A RE-UNION



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: The Commissionerate Police arrested a man for faking the kidnap of his 11-month-old son to get rid of his wife, DCP Prateek Singh said here, Wednesday.

The police have also apprehended three others, including the first husband of the victim's mother, for their involvement in the crime.

The accused were identified as Subrat Sethi of Marthapur, Bishnu Prusty of Bhuban area in Dhenkanal district, Braja Kishore Nath and Sarat Mohanty of Madhupatna area in Cuttack.

Police Tuesday received a complaint from Subrat claiming some miscreants had snatched away his baby boy from near Patia Railway crossing. The City police soon swung into action and started searching for the baby by registering a case on the basis of Subrat's complaint.

However, later the police grew suspicious about Subrat when they found inconsistencies in his statements regarding the incident. During questioning, Subrat spilled the beans and revealed the kidnapping plot, said police.

"The boy's mother, Shantilata Maharana had married to one Bishnu around 10 years back. Following some marital disputes,

she eloped with Subrat around two years back. The boy was later born out of the relationship between Subrat and Shantilata," said DCP Singh.

Singh further said that the relationship between Subrat and Shantilata was going through rough patches since the last two months. Subrat was trying to part ways with Shantilata while Bishnu was planning to mend ways with her.

Subrat and Bishnu teamed up and hatched a plan over telephone around 15 days back to get rid of the child. Accordingly, Subrat orchestrated the kidnapping drama and handed over the child to Bishnu who later give him to the former's friend Sarat who was childless. As per plans, Subrat would have pressured Shantilata to return to Bishnu, police said.

Singh said after the accused confessed to the crime, a team of Mancheswar police rescued the child from Sarat's residence at Madhupatna in Cuttack. Police also arrested another friend of Bishnu, Braja Kishore who had arranged a vehicle that was used to transport the child.

Braja Kishore, Sarat and Bishnu work at the Forest Department saw mill in Khapuria area of Cuttack while Subrat is a house painter.

MUZZLING MEDIA, INTRUDING PRIVACY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: The Modi government's 46-page Telecommunications Bill, 2023 which was tabled in the Lok Sabha earlier this week - and passed with a voice vote amid almost empty Opposition benches Wednesday - has invited sharp criticisms from legal community, civil rights bodies and activists, though the industry has welcomed the legislation, quite expectedly.

While the concerns stem from the ground that the Bill allows the government to temporarily take control of telecom services in the interest of 'national security' and drops OTT in definition of telecom services, the non-auction route (through administrative assignment) for allocation of satellite spectrum is being dubbed by IMAI as an initiative towards transparency.

Nevertheless, an impugned provision of the Bill that allows the government to intercept or detain communications (press

messages), by journalists meant for publication in India, for 'public emergency' has been viewed as an attempt to muzzle open speech and press freedom.

The fears are not unfounded given the government action against platforms like X or BBC even before the introduction of the Bill. Calling the definition of 'telecom service' in the Bill 'ambiguous', the internet freedom foundation (IFF) was quoted by The Quint as stating that it exacerbates privacy invading provisions such as the obligation of any authorised entity, as notified by the Union government, to identify the person to whom it provides telecom services, through use of any verifiable biometric-based identification 'as may be prescribed.'

Tanu Banerjee, Partner at Khaitan & Co, told Orissa POST that while in the Telecom Bill 2022 internet-based communication services and OTTs were specifically included in the definition of 'telecommunication services', the 2023 Bill does not specifically include

TELECOM BILL



such online platforms.

"Many definitions in the Bill appear to be wide. In the event of inclusion of online platforms, these will be regulated at par with telecom companies, requiring authorisation from the government for operating in India; and being subject to the government's power to intercept, which in turn will dilute the benefits of encryption and raise concerns around user privacy," she said.

Noted lawyer and writer on democracy, Apar Gupta, termed the Bill as 'another action to cement authoritarian control over

the rights of ordinary citizens'.

He said its impact will be felt directly as there is a clear power for the Union government to regulate and license services such as WhatsApp, Signal, and Gmail, and may enable the government to weaken privacy and increase snooping in future.

He was apprehensive about the likelihood of KYC requirements for OTT applications like WhatsApp. "This may mean another attempt by the government to force people to use Aadhaar as the single point of sign-up (mandatory) despite the Supreme Court in KS

Puttaswamy clearly stated this was impermissible," he said in a post on X.

Journalist and digital rights activists Nikhil Pahwa said the Bill is a pro-telco and anti-internet legislation.

He said a cursory glance at the Bill makes it clear that the definition of 'message' applies to email, cloud, SAAS and streaming. While messaging platform WhatsApp has challenged interception of online messaging and calling, the government has apparently sought to bypass the bar under IT rules by cleverly defining messaging, telecommunications and telecommunication services under the Bill.

On the provision authorising the government to take over an online service for 'national security, friendly relations with foreign States, or in the event of war', Pahwa, in a post on X said, "Reminds me of China's regressive intelligence law. Remember: national security is not defined in law, and even the SC doesn't want to go there..."



ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଏବଂ ଶିକ୍ଷୟିତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କର ରାଜ୍ୟସ୍ତରୀୟ ପ୍ରଶିକ୍ଷଣ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ

PICTURE PERFECT: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian, School and Mass Education Minister Sudam Marndi, department Commissioner-cum-Secretary Aswathy S and Chief Secretary PK Jena at the state-level training session of 4,166 newly-appointed secondary school teachers in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Advertisement for recruitment of Safai Karmachari Cum Sub-Staff And/ Or Sub-Staff 2024-25 by Central Bank of India. Includes contact details and website information.

No Cov case detected in state last week: Govt

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: The state government Wednesday said the state hasn't reported any Covid case over the past week, amid an uptick in infections in various parts of the country.

The government is on alert and strengthening its surveillance system, they said.

According to NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr VK Paul, 21 cases of Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 have been detected across the country so far

Kerala, Goa and Karnataka have reported some cases of new variants of Covid-19. Though the new variant is not dangerous, the Centre has asked us to remain alert, enhance testing and strengthen surveillance

NIRANJAN PUHARI | HEALTH MINISTER

seven days even after testing more than 3,000 samples. "We are prepared well. We are following Centre's advisory," Mohanty said.

"JN.1 variant has not been detected in Odisha so far. The government is keeping a watch on the situation and necessary guidelines will be issued if required. In case of detection of such a case, genome sequencing will be carried out," said Health Services director Bijay Kumar Mohapatra.

He appealed to people to go for Covid tests in case of related symptoms. The state has sufficient beds and logistics for treatment of patients, Mohapatra said.

As many as 21 cases of Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 have been detected across the country till now, NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr VK Paul said.

11 new camps to take on Maoists: DGP

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Odisha Police Wednesday said it will set up 11 new CRPF/BSF camps in remote areas of the state to take on the Maoists.

This was revealed by director general of police (DGP) Sunil Kumar Bansal after inaugurating the strategy conference on Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) here. "We have plans to set up 11 new COBs (Company Operation Bases) of CRPF/BSF in remote areas as Maoists may unleash violence to make their presence felt," Bansal said.

The DGP said the meeting also deliberated on police modernisation, infrastructure, building, logistics and other issues related to countering Maoists. He said the setting up of the new camps will make the battle against the Maoists more effective.

Bansal said police focus will be to deal with the challenge



from Kandhamal-Kalahandi-Boudh-Nayagarh (KKBN) and Nayanpuri divisions of the outlawed CPI (Maoist). "We hope the combined efforts by all the stakeholders will have a decisive advantage in the fight against the Maoists," the DGP said.

Bansal said there is also a challenge from the Chhattisgarh border which is difficult for its topography. "We have a cordial relationship with Chhattisgarh

Police and it will be beneficial for anti-Maoist operations," he said. Director (Intelligence) Sanjeeb Panda said the aim of the conference was to revisit the strategy and response to combat the problem effectively.

He emphasised that security forces must have a proactive approach against the Maoists in south-central Odisha, particularly in the districts of Kandhamal and Boudh.

The DGP said police focus will be to deal with the challenge from Kandhamal-Kalahandi-Boudh-Nayagarh (KKBN) and Nayanpuri divisions of the outlawed CPI (Maoist)

Panda appreciated the SPs of Koraput and Malkangiri for showing great leadership for containing the Maoist problem.

Apart from Bansal and Panda, ADG (Operations) S Dev Datta Singh, Intelligence DIG Anup Kumar Sahoo, Special Intelligence Wing (SIW) DIG Umashankar Dash, SPs of 10 Maoists-affected districts and other senior officials also attended the meeting.

At 5°C, G Udaygiri coldest in Odisha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Cold wave continues to sweep Odisha, with 14 places in the state recording minimum temperatures at or below 10 degrees Celsius. Mercury level plummeted to 5 degrees Celsius, the season's lowest, at G Udaygiri in Kandhamal, the regional centre of the India Meteorological Department said, Wednesday.

Phulbani at 7 degrees Celsius, Sundargarh's Kirei (7.5), Koraput (8), Angul (8), Kandhamal's Daringbadi (8.5), Keonjhar (8.6), Sundargarh's Rourkela (8.6) and Bhadrak's Ranital (9) are among the places where temperatures fell sharply with chilly winds blowing.

The twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack also recorded the season's lowest temperature as the mercury level dipped to 13 degrees Celsius each.

The temperature was 1.9 degrees C and 1 degree C below normal in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack respectively, it said.

Nat'l Handloom Summit Jan 4, 5

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Bargarh, the heartland of handloom, is all set to host National Handloom Summit 2024 January 4 and 5, an official said, Wednesday.

Addressing media, Bargarh Collector Monisha Banerjee said handloom exhibitors from across 20 states will showcase their craftsmanship at the two-day mega event, which is being organised jointly by the Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts department, Western Odisha Development Council and Bargarh administration.

She said the summit, which will be held on 4E model for Impact: Engage, Educate, Enable and Empower, will felicitate craftsmen for the talent.

"Bandha Kala (tie and dye), known for its intricate patterns

and vibrant hues and has earned Bargarh a distinct place on the global handloom map, will be among the highlights during the event," Banerjee pointed out.

Besides being a platform for display of handloom products, the summit will be a marketplace of opportunities. "The platform will enable interactions that will transcend geographical boundaries, resulting in signing of pacts that will drive the growth of the handloom industry," the Bargarh Collector pointed out.

Music and dance programmes will also be held during the two-day summit.

Bargarh Project Director, DRDA Aditya Goyal and Textiles Joint Director Director (Bargarh) Prasanna Kumar Gantayat were present during the press conference.

Akademi honour for Odia poet Ashutosh Parida

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 20: Eminent Odia poet Ashutosh Parida is among the 24 recipients of Sahitya Akademi Awards 2023, the organisation announced, Wednesday.

The awards, recommended by jury members in 24 Indian languages, were approved by the executive board of the Sahitya Akademi that met Wednesday under the chairmanship of its president Madhav Kaushik, the academy of letters said in a statement. The list includes nine books of poetry, six novels, five of short stories, three essays and one literary study.

Parida will receive the prestigious award for his Odia poetry 'Aprastuta Mrutyu'. While

Sanjeev will get the award for his Hindi novel 'Mujhe Pehchaano', English writer Neelum Saran Gaur has been selected for her book 'Requiem in Raga Janki'. Sadiqua Nawab Saher will receive the award for her book 'Rajdev Ki Amrai' in Urdu, while Swarnjit Savi has been selected for his book of poetry 'Mann Di Chip' in Punjabi.

Apart from Parida, other recipients of the awards in poetry include Vijay Verma (Dogri), Vinod Joshi (Gujarati), Manshoor Banihali (Kashmiri), Sorokkhaibam Gambhini (Manipuri), Gaje Singh Rajpurohit (Rajasthan), Arun Ranjan Mishra (Sanskrit) and Vinod Asudani (Sindhi).

Apart from Gaur, Sanjeev and Saher, writers such as



Swapnamay Chakrabarti (Bengali), Krushnat Khot (Marathi), and Rajasekaran Devibharathi (Tamil) have been awarded for their novels.

Short stories by Pranavjyoti Deka (Assamese), Nandeswar Daiman (Bodo), Prakash S



Parienkar (Konkani), Taraceen Baskey (Turia Chand Baskey) (Santali) and T Patanjali Sastry (Telugu) got their respective writers the award.

Lakshmiha Tolpadi (Kannada), Basukinath Jha (Maithili) and Judhabir Rana

(Nepali) will receive the prize for their essays, while EV Ramakrishnan will be awarded for his literary study in Malayalam.

The awards are selected on the basis of unanimous selections made by the jurors or selection made on the basis of majority vote.

The awards relate to books first published during the five years immediately preceding the year of award - between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2021.

The authors and poets will receive the award in the form of a casket containing an engraved copper-plaque, a shawl and an amount of ₹1 lakh at a ceremony March 12, 2024 at Kamani Auditorium.

ROURKELA DIARRHOEA OUTBREAK

Pradhan seeks intervention of Union Health Minister

At least ten persons were killed by diarrhoea outbreak, while more than 1,000 persons are undergoing treatment in the hospitals in Rourkela

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan sought personal intervention of Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya for immediate facilitation of Central assistance to Rourkela to control the recent outbreak of diarrhoea.

In the letter written Wednesday, Pradhan said, "I am writing to seek your personal intervention regarding the urgent need for Central assistance to Rourkela and nearby affected areas in Odisha to control and address the recent outbreak of diarrhoea."

He said, "The severity of outbreak of diarrhoea in Rourkela and the potential risk it poses to public health is alarming. At



least eight deaths reported and over 600 individuals currently undergoing treatment. The disease is suspected to be caused by water contamination, leading to severe health complications among the affected populace."

"Keeping in mind the welfare of the people of Rourkela and nearby areas, I seek your personal intervention in immediate facilitation of central assistance to Rourkela and other affected areas in Odisha, for controlling and addressing the diarrhoea outbreak."

At least ten persons were killed by diarrhoea outbreak, while more

As many as five places have become hotspots for the infective disease. Those places include Daily Market, Nala Road, Kishan Tola and Udit Nagar

The disease is suspected to be caused by water contamination, leading to severe health complications among the affected populace

than 1,000 persons are undergoing treatment in the hospitals in Rourkela. Patients suffering from diarrhoea started arriving at the hospital December 10 and the number of patients kept rising over the next few days.

The increase in number of diarrhoea patients in the city has raised serious concerns. As many as five places in the city have become hotspots for the infective disease. Those places are Daily Market, Nala Road, Kishan Tola and Udit Nagar.

Meanwhile, Commissioner of Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) Commissioner Subhankar Mohapatra Tuesday said that the diarrhoea situation is currently under control and claimed to bring normalcy back to Rourkela in 2-3 days.



EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS: Members of Odisha Sales Representatives' Union hold a demonstration as part of nationwide strike at Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, seeking fulfillment of their 8-point charter of demands

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Nilima Mishra, resident of Gopinath Complex, Flat- 404, Kuha, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751002, M-8895943799 declare by this affidavit No.68AA893784 Dt.11.12.2023 that in my Passport, vide No.L7029928 issued by Regional Passport Authority, in which my name is reflected as Nilima Mishra instead of Nilima Mishra. I declare that Nilima Mishra & Nilima Mishra is one and same person, who is myself.

I, Dibakar Dash, S/o Late Kashinath Dash, resident of Gopinath Complex, Flat No. 404, Kuha, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751002, M- 8895907773 declare that in my Passport vide No.K4996582 issued by Regional Passport Authority, in which my father's name is reflected as Kashinath Dash instead of Kasinath Dash. I declare that Kasinath Dash & Kashinath Das is one and same person, who is my father.

I, Basanti Kumari Raulo, W/o Lingaraj Raulo, R/o Kamapalli, Berhampur, Pin-760004, Odisha declared by this affidavit No. 9783, Dated- 19.12.2023, that from now onwards I shall be known as Basanti Kumari Raulo instead of Kumari Raulo.

LOST

28.11.2023: Kulamani Hota of Singabadi Village under Khandapada police station of Nayagarh district, father- Jayakrishna Hota, on his way from Singabadi to Bhubaneswar, his Kabala bag fell unexpectedly. It is stated in the complaint letter that this Kabala belongs to Premlata Hota as Kabala No.318/06. In this regard, Kulamani Hota has written a complaint to Khadapada police station. If any sympathetic person gets this Kabala bag to contact mob. 9777534770.

14th edition of nat'l safety conclave held



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: 14th edition of National Safety Conclave (NSC), the flagship event of Institute of Quality and Environment Management Services (IQEMS) was organised here, Wednesday.

The event was held in association with Institute of Public Enterprises, Hyderabad and Odisha State Productivity Council. The Conclave was supported by Ministry of Labour and Employment, Govt. of India and Ministry of Labour and ES, Govt. of Odisha.

NSC Chairman Vinod Kumar gave the welcome address. IQEMS CEO and Convener Debabrata Panigrahi delivered the thematic address. He opined that vision Zero is commitment intended for creating and sustaining safe and healthy work atmosphere.

The conclave was inaugurated by chief guest, RS Gopalan, Commissioner cum Secretary, department of

Labour and Employee's State Insurance. Addressing the gathering, Gopalan said Odisha is endowed with vast resources of minerals. It occupies a prominent place in the country as a mineral rich state.

"With new Industrial policies, Odisha is going to be one of the favoured investment destinations for domestic and international Companies. In this scenario, it is very important to create awareness among employees and employers to reduce accidents, injuries, illness and loss of human lives in mining, industry and construction sector," he said.

Vision Zero is a concept that aims to eliminate all work related fatalities, severe injuries and illness. Mission Possible in workplace refers to the set of initiatives to be designed to make certain goals achievable within the working environment. Both concepts un-derline the importance of prioritizing safety and setting attainable goals at workplaces.

Enterprise Odisha 2024 in Jharsuguda from Jan 19

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) will hold the 24th Edition of Enterprise Odisha in Jharsuguda from January 19 to 21, 2024, in partnership with state government and various industry associations.

Speaking at the curtain raiser of the Enterprise Odisha, Industries department Principal Secretary Hemant Sharma, Wednesday, said, "For the first time, it was decided to organise the flagship programme of CII in alignment with government of Odisha at Jharsuguda as the government is giving importance to expand industrialisation of the region."

"Due to the cooperation of the state government, many industrial houses have announced to set up their projects in places such as Sambalpur, Bargarh and



Kalahandi," he said.

"State-level single window meetings are being held every month. At least 4-5 projects sanctioned in each meeting are going to be implemented in districts like Kalahandi, Nabarangpur and Nuapada," he added.

IPICOL and IDCO Managing Director Bhupendra Singh Poonia said, "We would like to

thank CII for organising this event in Jharsuguda for the first time. Through this programme, investors within the state will be able to know about the opportunities available in different parts of the state."

More than 200 exhibitors, 100 CEOs and CXOs and 20 PSUs will participate in the three-day exhibition-cum-conference.

More than 200 exhibitors, 100 CEOs, CXOs and 20 PSUs will participate in the three-day exhibition which is expected to receive over 4,000 visitors

The exhibition is expected to receive over 4,000 visitors. Large and medium enterprises of the state, service sector bodies, national organisations of repute and various government departments will participate in the programme to showcase their strength and solutions.

It will showcase products and services in technology, sustainability, renewable energy, logistics and infrastructure, security solutions, manufacturing, defense and food processing sectors.



AGAINST KILLING: CPI (M) activists stage a protest at Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, urging Israel to stop genocide in Palestine

'Respect your mother tongue'

Bhubaneswar: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat Wednesday urged people to converse in their mother tongue and respect it, instead of promoting foreign languages like English. Bhagwat, while addressing a gathering at an event of the 'Akhil Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad' here, said people in the country have stopped using their mother tongue. "Here in our country, there are a lot of issues on the use of mother tongue. We have stopped using our mother tongue. As a result, we have to refer to English dictionaries to understand the meaning of our own 'granths' (books)," he said. "Today, we have felicitated several writers of different Indian languages. But, our mother tongue will get real respect, if we start using it," he said. Speaking about literature, the RSS chief said it should be written for the benefit of society and not for entertainment or any harm to mankind. "Literature should be written to make a person responsible," he said.

State govt to promote non-violent silk production under 5T

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Silk is the strongest and fastest natural fiber in the world. In India, four types of silks are produced, namely Eri, Mulberry, Tasar and Muga. Eri and Tasar farming has been going on for many years in our state. In a controlled climate and clean atmosphere, the above crop is cultivated by the farmer in his own house or paddy field.

Previously, in order to remove the thread from the cells produced by Eri Worm Farming, the cells had to be boiled in hot water, thereby killing the living insects that were dormant in the cells. So we had to sacri-

fice the lives of millions of innocent silkworms for growth of the garment industry through a violent process.

Realizing the uncompassionate approach towards the silkworms, the state government decided to start a pilot project for production of non-violent silk under 5Ts initiatives in the year 2022. In this endeavour, attempts were made to plant castor trees and cultivate Eri silk for the development and growth of the textile industry. In this, about 700 Eri farmers were adopted for promotion of Castor based Ericulture to allow the inno-



cent silkworms to complete their natural life cycle without being killed with hot water.

Similarly, under the second year pilot project, more than 2,000 Eri farmers in 12 districts of

the state have been engaged and their produced cocoons have been processed through non-violent methods.

The 4 basic cycles adopted in the above pilot process are, 1- Cultivation of high quality castor as the host plant, 2- Rearing of Eri silkworms, 3- Allowing the cocoons produced by the silkworms to complete their life cycle (butterflies) in the natural system, 4- Production for non-violent sacred silk for clothing and cosmetics by using the silk shells left by the silk moth.

Today, in our fastest way to produce sacred silk, we have saved the lives of a millions of

silkworms and the products produced are more popular in the form of 'Karuna Silk'. For the first time, Gita GobindPatta prepared by 'Karuna Silk' has been given to Shree Jagannath Temple, Puri. The government has decided to promote non-violent silk production and name this natural silk brand as 'Karuna Silk' in coming days.

The above initiative of the government is expected to help the livelihood of sericulture farmers, spinners and weavers in the days to come and our state's 'Karuna Silk' is expected to hold its place in the world market.

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YEAR OF

2023 saw a plethora of conflicts with the animal kingdom. Throughout the year scary stories of animal attacks surfaced and visuals went viral. Fear of crocodiles panicked people and they spent sleepless nights as jumbos rampaged. Lives were lost and blood spilt – sometimes human, and sometimes of the animals– as we intruded further into their territories. The year also witnessed some royal stories of the Bengal Tiger... Orissa POST presents a flashback of the epic encounters & chilling conflicts as we lived among the animals...

ANIMALS

MAN-EATER OF KHARIAR

Villagers living on the edge of Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary in Nuapada district, erstwhile Khariar principality, spent the entire year under tiger terror: Since January, complaints kept coming that a tiger was killing livestock in the villages.

February 4 evening, Senapati Majhi, 36, had gone to his paddy field when a leopard that had sneaked close to Hirapur village attacked and grievously injured him, but he managed to escape.

Reports of the first human kill surfaced after the mutilated body of a 65-year-old woman Sanmati Barik was recovered in Jalmadei village in March. Sanmati had gone to fetch firewood when the big cat dragged her into the forest. It was presumed, owing to the size and gravity of wounds, that she was preyed on by a Bengal tiger.

Finally the reality came to light, when the man-eater leopard, a male over 8 years old, was caught on a trap camera March 29 night.

For months together, the leopard went on a cattle killing spree. Forest officials advised villagers to stay indoors after sunset. Things came to such a pass that people feared to go outside even during the day.



October 30 evening, seven-year-old Dambaru was playing in front of his house in Katingpani village when a leopard dragged him into the forest before his mother's eyes. After searching for several hours, villagers found the half eaten body in the nearby jungle.

Pressure mounted on the Forest department to contain the menace. The same week, Rameswari Majhi, a former ward-member of Siliariabaha village fell prey to the leopard. On the same day, November 4, locals managed to save an eight-year-old from the jaws of the man-eater.

During that night, Forest department was promptly alerted after the formidable feline was spotted atop a building. A team of five officials arrived at the scene and set up a net leading to the

- FEBRUARY 4:** Senapati Majhi injured in leopard attack near his paddy field
- MARCH 19:** 65-year-old woman Sanmati Barik mauled to death while fetching firewood
- MARCH 29:** Pictures of the man-eater leopard caught on camera traps
- APRIL-OCT:** Leopard goes on a cattle killing spree
- OCTOBER 30:** 7-year-old Dambaru dragged into forest before mother's eyes
- NOVEMBER 4:**
 - Rameswari Majhi of Siliariabaha village falls prey to the man-eater
 - Villagers save 8-year-old Nilakantha Baraha of Kodapali village from the leopard's jaws
 - Big cat trapped in net by forest officials, after five hour long operation
- NOVEMBER 8:** Tiger relocated to animal rescue centre in Sambalpur zoo

man-eater's capture November 4 night after five long hours of operation.

Irate locals pelted stones and attacked the trapped animal with sticks. Subsequently, Forest personnel managed to pacify the agitated locals. The leopard was relocated and kept in a small cage.

The man-eater leopard was shifted from Khariar to the animal rescue centre in Motijharan, now Sambalpur zoo. It has been kept far away from human contact to bring down its aggression.

On the other hand, after the capture, locals alleged that a female leopard on the prowl has been roaring occasionally, perhaps without getting the company of the male partner.

Similipal Tiger Reserve, the only place on earth where genetically mutated Royal Bengal tigers with distinctive dark stripe patterns are found, boasts of sheltering more than 10 such black big cats. Black tigers were first officially recorded in the forests of Similipal in 1975-76.

According to wildlife experts, the reserve, an isolated landscape as it does not have contiguity with other tiger reserves, offered little scope for tigers to mate with big cats of neighbouring reserve. This has led to in-breeding (mating among themselves) and thus the offspring developed genetic mutation in the form of black

MELANISTIC MUTANTS

pigmentation called 'melanism'. This has important implications for tiger conservation as such isolated and inbred populations are prone to extinction over even short periods of time.

After 3 decades, the death of a rare black tiger was reported this year in Odisha's Similipal tiger reserve. Carcass of the melanistic male big cat was found in the core areas of the reserve May 1. According to experts, death of a male tiger will definitely affect the breeding of tigers, thereby impacting population of the rare animals in their lone habitat in the whole world.

Forest department said the three-and-half-year-old tiger died due to a territorial fight with another male as indicated by the scars on its body.

Some wildlife experts also expressed doubt over infighting angle as the injuries were not clear enough to suggest even prima facie infighting. As the tiger was found dead close to a water source, there is every likelihood that it had been poisoned.



LOST & FOUND ODISHA ATTRACTED SIGNIFICANT ATTENTION THIS YEAR WITH FREQUENT SIGHTINGS OF THE MELANISTIC TIGERS AND LEOPARDS GOING VIRAL ONLINE



NOV 29: Pictures of two rare melanistic leopards, commonly called black panther, surfaced online after Principal Chief Conservators of Forests (PCCF) Susanta Nanda shared the pictures on his X handle. But he did not name the forest where the rare animal was spotted. Forest officials spotted the black leopards in two separate jungle locations through camera traps installed for the ongoing tiger census.

AUG 3: A melanistic tiger was caught in camera trap while marking its territory in Similipal. Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer Ramesh Pandey shared a video of this melanistic tiger on Twitter.

DEC 2: Pair of pseudo-melanistic tigers captured in camera traps.

JUMBOS IN JEOPARDY

The plight of India's heritage animal, the imperilled elephant, is soul ravaging. The double-edged sword of man-elephant conflict cut deeper this year with at least 68 jumbo deaths in Odisha. Reports of jumbo fatalities cropped up almost every week throughout the year from every nook and corner of the state.

In 2022-23, as many as 83 elephants died in the state with many of the deaths resulting from electrocution. The deaths have been caused due to diseases, electrocution, train hits, road accidents, poaching and poisoning.

As per information gathered, March 2023 has been the worst for elephants in the last 3 years with seven pachyderm deaths in state. Such abysmal figures prompted Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to write a letter to his cabinet colleague Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav in March, expressing deep concerns about the increasing number of deaths of elephants and seeking the Centre's intervention in this matter.

It seems that there is no end to the ongoing human-animal conflict in Odisha as the eastern state has reported the country's highest number of human

68+ JUMBOS PERISHED



casualties in elephant attacks during the past three years despite being home to lower number of elephants compared to Karnataka, Assam, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

As many as 1,578 people died in elephant attacks in India between 2019-20 and 2021-22, of which the highest 322 such deaths were reported from Odisha, according to a statement by Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav, in Parliament during its last session.

Human casualties in encounters with wild elephants registered a 50 per cent jump in the first three months of 2023-24, with 57 deaths compared to 38 deaths in the same period last year. The months of April, May and June, when human-elephant encounters are typically at their peak, have been the most lethal this year in past 10 years. The sharp rise suggests that this year the human deaths could easily outnumber the 146 human casualties of last year.



King goes the extra mile to settle in Odisha

The incredible odyssey of a male Royal Bengal Tiger, which traversed an impressive 2,000 km, roaming across four states in over five months, in search of a home and a mate, left the forest officials and wildlife enthusiasts in awe.

Word spread in November when it was sighted in the majestic Mahendragiri mountains of Gajapati district, where tiger sightings had never been recorded before. The king was out to explore new territory.

The clandestine expedition of the tiger unfolded in September when it was first captured by a trap camera within the Parlakhemundi forest division.

The image was sent to the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) for mapping, and they confirmed that the camera-trapped image matched with a tiger previously photographed in the Tadoba landscape under Bramhapuri forest division of Maharashtra's Vidarbha.

The tiger likely journeyed through Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh before arriving in Odisha. The road distance alone spans 700 km, implying that the tiger navigated through forested areas, venturing into new territories, and the actual distance covered might surpass 2,000 km. The initial report of the tiger's movement surfaced near Gunupur in Rayagada district in July 2023.

The tiger's route took it to Andhra through the Parvathipuram Manyam district in August, later proceeding to Srikakulam. In September, the tiger once more approached the bordering region of Odisha, re-entering the state. For two months, the tiger oscillated between the two states.

This may perhaps be the second-longest tiger dispersal in the country. It must have crossed many hurdles including water bodies, ravines, mines, agricultural fields, roads, and even human habitats.

Yet, there is no record of the animal attacking humans. What makes this journey remarkable is that, this tiger was not radio-collared. The unique pattern in its stripes paved the way to understand and track its journey. The emphatic presence of the apex predator also raised the prospect of Mahendragiri getting the biosphere reserve tag.



KILLER CROCS OF BHITARKANIKA

Bhitarkanika National Park, the second-largest mangrove forest in India, is known as the most successful saltwater crocodile conservation programme taking the reptile's population from 94 in 1975 to 1,793 in 2023. These included 20 whitish individuals.

However, for the pride of Odisha, the villagers living on the periphery of Bhitarkanika and riparian residents of the connecting rivers pay dearly with their lives each year. Saltwater crocodiles are among the most aggressive of all crocodilians and highly territorial.

Experts on the species say the park has reached a saturation point, forcing the ferocious

reptiles into human habitations.

The then-Union Ministry of Forest and Environment in 1991 had directed the state forest department to stop crocodile rearing programme in Bhitarkanika. A high population density means higher incidents of conflict with humans. The focus should now be to check human-crocodile conflict.

Evidently, bloody man-crocodile conflicts have become a frequent occurrence, especially during the rains, in Kendrapara as well as in adjoining Jajpur and Bhadrak districts.

At least six lives were lost this year within just two and half months from June till August. Most human fatalities in crocodile attacks go unreported or



as missing cases. Locals say the real figure is way more alarming. Tragedy struck on first day of Raja festival, when crocodile dragged 10-year-old Ashutosh Acharya into the river in front of his mother and sister.

The spine chilling scene of a crocodile devouring a woman went viral on social media in the month of August. The deceased woman Jyotshna Jena, wife of Anam Jena, was dragged into the Birupa river when she washing utensils at Palatpur village under Bari block of Jajpur district. The video which was captured by an eye-witness spread like wild fire on the internet, giving people goose bumps.

A TIMELINE OF CROC ATTACKS

- JUNE 14:** Ashutosh Acharya, 10, of Nimapur killed by a crocodile in front of his mother and sister
- JUNE 21:** Sitarani Das of Hatiagadi village dragged into river
- JUNE 29:** Crocodile kills Gangadhar Tarai of Ghagaradia in Brahmani
- JULY 26:** Amulya Das, 56, a sadhu living in Kulasahi devoured, only his head was found
- AUGUST 16:** Jyotshna Jena, 35, dragged into Birupa river at Palatpur village
- AUGUST 31:** Abhay Rout, 65, of Rajpur village killed



The fly that touches honey cannot use its wings; so too the soul that clings to spiritual sweetness ruins its freedom and hinders contemplation.

SRI AUROBINDO



Values at Bay

Seventy-five years ago, United Nations member states meeting in Paris adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was not a binding law, only a statement of principle. But it was the first declaration to embed an ancient moral ideal of human equality into the new architecture of international law established in response to the genocidal nationalism that had left so much of the world in ruins after World War II.

This new moral universalism asked us to turn our backs on our instinctive partiality for members of our own tribe. It asked us to look past salient differences – race, creed, gender, class, national origin, language – and contemplate our shared humanity. But many at the time wondered whether we were capable of such a radical experiment. As Hannah Arendt observed in 1948, “It seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man.”

The defenseless prisoners of Auschwitz-Birkenau had discovered that their claims as human beings – to pity and decency, let alone to rights – meant nothing to their tormentors. Only if such defenseless people had a state to protect them, Arendt argued, would they be safe. The universal human being in all of us would have “the right to have rights” only if we all enjoyed the protections of citizenship.

Until 1989, the declaration’s utopian hopes were confined largely to the West. Former colonial peoples had never been part of the original negotiations that led to the declaration, and in the early decades of the Non-Aligned Movement, they generally resented Western criticism of their new regimes.

Meanwhile, nation-states across the Soviet empire contested the UN declaration’s legitimacy outright. The USSR and its satellites had abstained from the original vote, believing that the socialist rights they advocated were superior to the individual rights enshrined in the declaration. Only after the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 did it become possible to believe that the whole world had at last embraced moral universalism.

Of course, such optimism seems hopelessly naive today, given the situation in Ukraine, the Middle East, Sudan, Myanmar, and elsewhere. The legal architecture built after 1945 to prevent the recurrence of our barbarous past appears to be in ruins. Russia’s war on Ukraine violates the UN Charter itself; Hamas’ own founding charter explicitly calls for the elimination of the Jewish people; and Israel’s bombardment of Gaza seems cruel and unwise – even if it skirts accusations of war crimes under the Geneva Conventions.

But to blame this state of affairs on previous and current leaders may mask a larger truth: that the moral universalism of human rights asks more of most human beings than they can manage. Anyone who is not Palestinian, Jewish, or Israeli ought to find moral universalism a relatively easy discipline; yet consider how the world has divided into rigid camps as the Gaza catastrophe has unfolded.

For those living through the current nightmare, exhibiting a universalist empathy seems like a non-starter. On one side, a people who live with the ancestral memory of the Holocaust cannot be expected to feel anything but dread after Hamas’ atrocities October 7. To seek revenge – or at least to re-establish deterrence with an overwhelming military response – is only too human. On the other side, a people who are descendants of refugees driven out of Mandate Palestine in 1948, and who have now been under continuous bombardment for weeks, cannot be expected to relate to any pain or fury other than their own.

If there is a lesson in all this, it is not to jettison the moral intuition that underpins human rights. Look closely and you will find that compassion and empathy are as resilient as cruelty and vengeance, even among those trapped in the cauldron of war. You will see Israeli and Palestinian moral universalists still committed to peace with justice. They are the ones who vindicate the sentiment underlying the Universal Declaration.

A remarkable feature of this catastrophic conflict, stretching back to 1948, is that there has never been a shortage of moral universalism on either side. The real problem is not the absence of empathy or compassion among those caught in the conflict (though recent events have certainly sapped these moral resources). Rather, it is the presence of malignant, murderous spoilers on both sides. The fate of two leaders who did make peace – Israel’s Yitzhak Rabin, killed by a Jewish extremist; and Egypt’s Anwar el-Sadat, killed by Islamist fanatics – has been a powerful deterrent even for those who know that peace is the only viable path for their people.

Unless we concede that Rabin and Sadat’s shared vision died with them, the moral writ of the Universal Declaration remains valid in its insistence that all human beings suffer alike. Peace can still be achieved through the mutual recognition of pain and loss, but not until the spoilers on both sides – the settlers rampaging the West Bank and driving Binyamin Netanyahu’s government toward annexation and expropriation, and the jihadist militants who want nothing but to destroy Israel – are beaten.

By itself, moral universalism commits us simply to recognise the humanity of others and the reality of their suffering. The Universal Declaration tells us we should respect the rights of others and ensure that they are not violated. But it does not tell us how. For that, we must engage in politics, where hard choices impose themselves.

That brings us back to Arendt’s critique of moral universalism – that in the absence of a state with the authority to recognise and uphold rights, a person is “nothing but” a human being. By this logic, the two-state solution in the Middle East is the only path to peace and justice, because statehood is the only guarantor of universal human rights. Only through two states can the spoilers be defeated – and the moral universalism of the UN declaration finally win out.

The writer is Professor of History and Rector Emeritus of Central European University in Vienna. @PROJECTSYNDICATE

FOCUS SOCIETY

PSYCHOLOGY OF COLONIALISM

Much has been written about the social, historical and economic effects of colonialism. Scholars have credibly argued that colonial subjugation has a prominent role to play in the degradation of stable economies of colonised societies. Capitalism came with the advent of the industrial revolution, which resulted in a devastating blow to colonised society while resulting in unprecedented growth on the imperial powers. Colonialism was not a passing historical fad. It cannot be reduced to a mere isolated historical event. Over half of the contemporary world bore the brunt of it, while its effects continue to percolate. Colonialism was, in fact, premised on an ideology. It was justified and rationalised through elaborate arguments. The fact that it’s an ideology can be glimpsed through recent works of history coming out of Britain which argue that it was the British Empire which created a global economically robust community, including volumes of Niall Ferguson.

The encounter between the coloniser and the native population is mediated and sustained through violence. In descriptive terms, the state is defined by its monopoly on violence and since the imperial powers control the state, they have the methods of violence at their hands. Given the inherent illegitimacy of the colonial state, violence is used indiscriminately against the natives to oppose all forms of opposition. Unlike divisions in a capitalist society, which is practiced implicitly through institutions, the divisions in a colonised society are stark and clear. The colonial power doesn’t merely exploit, it dehumanises the native population and attempts to deliberately destroy native culture. This is exemplified by the British



Colonialism was, in fact, premised on an ideology. It was justified and rationalised through elaborate arguments

education system in India. The Whig politician Thomas Babington Macaulay was behind the introduction of English institutional education in India. Macaulay argued that “a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.” Indian languages were dismissed as being crude without any literary merit. Thus, Indians were to be educated in the superior language of English. The ancient texts of India were denounced as being full of “monstrous superstition.” The purpose of colonial education was to form a class of interpreters. These interpreters would be Indians in blood and colour but English in morals, opinions and tastes.

This seemed to be precisely what happened, as evidenced through the writings and letters of nationalist figures like Jawaharlal Nehru, MK Gandhi and Subhash Bose, all of whom wrote and read proficiently in the language of the coloniser. Indian social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy uncritically accepted the colonial association of polytheism with superstition and argued instead that Hinduism was originally monotheistic. Such simplistic

cleavage was both a reaction to colonial stereotypes as well as an internalisation of Victorian morality. The criminalisation of homosexuality was a product of the institutionalisation of Anglican morality. Nevertheless, the natives continue to profess opposition to same sex marriage based on Victorian morality. Pre-colonial India was not only tolerant of queer relations but actively celebrated it. Contemporary debates on the Uniform Civil Code in India are also reflective of the lingering effects of colonialism. Before the advent of the British, India had a diversity of laws and rules regarding marriage and adoption. These were flexible and not fixed in stone. Before 1937, Indian Muslims were largely governed by laws that were not very different from their Hindu counterparts. This was changed through growing demands from the clergy and the feudal lords for an orthodoxy suitable to their economic and patriarchal interests. Thus, the Shariat Act was brought into existence through persistent demands from the Muslim League, which at this point was in no manner the representative of Indian Muslims. The Shariat was, however, not in concordance to the

Islamic orthodoxy. Au contraire, it recognised adoption, preserved the economic power in opposition to Islamic principles while creating a psychological division between the two communities. The British were happy to comply owing to their interest in dividing and standardising India’s diverse communities.

Why does the colonised accept the ways of the coloniser? The philosopher Albert Memmi argues that the colonised has no choice but to accept the morals of the coloniser in a society profusely filled with colonial institutions. The need to belong is only human. While the coloniser no longer exists in explicit forms in post-colonial societies, their institutions, laws and schools continue to function. Thus, the colonised continues to believe implicitly in the inferiority of her culture and literature long after the coloniser has departed. The collective memory of native culture has been replaced by colonial norms.

Yet, as Frantz Fanon points out, this sentiment cannot last. The dehumanising and degrading psychological effects of colonialism eventually give way to liberation. It is merely a stage and the natives eventually realise that they’ve been indoctrinated, that they’re human beings after all. It is only at this point that a truly national identity must be constructed, and native culture reclaimed while denouncing colonialism. This form of decolonisation will not be closed to European or Western influences. Instead, it will take what’s valuable in the European mould while proclaiming and protecting the cultural rights of the natives.

The writer is an author and a student at Jindal School of International Affairs. Views are personal.

SPECTRUM FOOD PRODUCTION

Quest for sustainable farming

Increasing agricultural productivity is undoubtedly a national goal, more so as India is thinking of emerging as a major producer in this field. With the standard of living improving, the variety in food consumption is also showing a healthy trend. But with the increase in population, the need for higher productivity is critical keeping in view the future requirements. In fact, FAO estimated that by 2050, the world will need to produce almost 50% more food, feed and biofuel, than it did in 2012. It projected that to feed a world population of 9.3 billion in 2050 food production in developing countries must double from that in 2005.

Though this projection may change considering the ground reality and the availability of land and water, which are already stumbling blocks, production undoubtedly needs a big boost. Climate change may also add significantly to the pressure on availability of natural resources for farming. Additionally, is the crucial factor of reducing emissions and ensuring green strategies in farming, one of the key issues discussed in COP28, which wanted reduction “in methane emissions globally” by 2030. This has the potential to impact India severely with its increasing num-

ber of livestock and huge paddy cultivation.

A closer look suggests that the need for increasing yield in a populous country like India was realised long back by the renowned agricultural scientist, MS Swaminathan. Agricultural scientists since his time have suggested certain measures which include double cropping, better rotation of crops, fighting plant diseases and pests.

Though on the institutional front, the government has been trying in a limited manner to solve the problems of agriculture through land reforms and, on the technological front, a modest beginning has been made in motivating farmers to use improved implements, seeds, chemicals, manures, much more needs to be done. Small farmers at the grassroots need training and support, which regrettably is not forthcoming from the local administration.

The tenet of environmental sustainability inevitably necessitates the need for ensuring higher levels of food production without expansion in cropland through deforestation. Thus, resource use efficiency must be the focal point of attention in the coming years as it will be logically impossible to attain food as also nutrition security for a growing popula-

tion with a sustainable footprint. This has been well understood and, as per available figures, just around 11% of overall increase in crop production in the last half a century can be attributed to the expansion of cropland area.

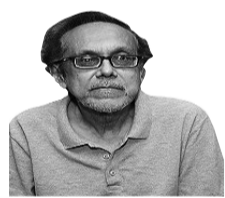
Experts have opined that developments in biotechnology are increasingly being seen as essential to the cause of sustainability, whether in terms of climate change mitigation or the reduced use of nitrogenous fertilisers in growing cereal crops. Though the potential of technology cannot be doubted, the effect on soil fertility remains a big question.

Another crucial aspect is the nutritional aspect, more so because a considerable part of the Indian population is vegetarian. A recent study found that India’s rice and wheat varieties have lost essential health-friendly minerals and accumulated toxic elements, showing a decline in grain nutrient make-up that they say remained largely neglected. According to the study, the concentration of essential elements including calcium, iron and zinc in grains from present-day cultivated rice and wheat varieties are between 19 to 45% lower than in grains from the 1960s. However, present-day wheat grains have lower levels

of arsenic and chromium than wheat from the 1960s, as per the study published in the journal Scientific Reports.

While technology is imperative in boosting productivity, there is need to consider the environmental aspect and synergy with nature. In India, there are innumerable small peasants who have a critical role to play in sustainable agricultural growth through use of natural fertilisers, local production-consumption cycles, energy and technological sovereignty. Indigenous knowledge can be equally effective though not as much as integrative science, but the former could be more sustainably superior if a harmonious relationship has to be developed with nature.

Farming can’t be made high cost and capital intensive as a significant number of farmers are small and resort to traditional methods of cultivation. Alternative agriculture is no doubt the need of the day, and this must incorporate the country’s traditional knowledge and practices, combined with appropriate low-cost technologies. Policymakers need to keep this in mind along with the backdrop of protecting nature, reducing emissions and ensuring sustainability. A holistic strategy will help in the long run.



Dhurjati Mukherjee

WHILE TECHNOLOGY IS IMPERATIVE IN BOOSTING PRODUCTIVITY, THERE IS NEED TO CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND SYNERGY WITH NATURE

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1898: Radium discovered by Marie and Pierre Curie. Having recently discovered polonium, future Nobel Prize winners Marie and Pierre Curie discovered the radioactive chemical element radium, a silvery white metal that would be used to treat cancer.
- 1937: ‘Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs’ released. The movie made by Walt Disney Productions was the world’s first full-length animated feature film and it was based on a German fairy tale of the same name by the Brothers Grimm.
- 1965: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination adopted. The human rights convention was adopted by the United Nations’ member states and was put into force January 4, 1969. It attempts to eliminate racial discrimination in the world.
- 1995: Palestinians take control of Bethlehem. Israeli troops withdrew from the city under the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip signed in September 1995. The city was under a British mandate from 1920 to 1948, and then it was captured by Jordan during the Arab-Israeli War in 1948. Most recently, it was taken over by Israel during the Six-Day War in 1967.

Imminent threat

Sir, The global climate crisis is no longer a distant concern but an imminent threat, evidenced by the surging temperatures, escalating greenhouse gas emissions, and profound impacts on communities worldwide. The Earth’s average temperature has already surpassed pre-industrial levels by 1.46 degree Celsius, signaling a swift acceleration of the problem. This trajectory is alarming, with projections indicating further increases in the near future. The primary culprit behind this crisis is the surge in greenhouse gas emissions, predominantly stemming from the burning of fossil fuels, trapping heat within the atmosphere and exacerbating the global warming phenomenon. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C is pivotal to avert catastrophic consequences. However, the current trajectory seems to surpass this critical threshold, necessitating urgent action. The UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stresses the need for a 40% reduction in emissions within this decade to maintain hopes of achieving the 1.5°C target. Unfortunately, prevailing policy measures fall short. This calls for an immediate shift in strategies and a unified global effort. To combat this crisis, multifaceted approaches are indispensable. Transitioning away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy sources is crucial for curtailing emissions. Governments must implement robust climate policies that incentivise sustainability, foster innovation, and drive emission reductions.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Troubled animals

Sir, Sloth bears that are mainly found in tropical forests of India, Nepal and Sri Lanka are threatened by urban activities, hunting and human intrusion. Land cultivation around forest areas has contributed to sloth bears moving to unprotected, residential areas in search of shelter, food and water. Corridor interference and climate change have hit the bears hard because the animals are opportunistic feeders. Their principal diet consists of termites and ants; destruction of forests can be devastating for them. Efforts are on to protect the bears through wide-ranging measures. Radio-collaring of select sloth bears over a period to further understand their home range, distribution and movements are being undertaken in some districts of Karnataka. Scat, foraging and pugmarks are important clues that give away their movement.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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MUKHYAMANTRI MATSYAJIBI KALYAN YOJANA TURNS SAVIOUR

Kalahandi set to become fishing hub

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, Dec 20: Kalahandi district, once infamous for starvation deaths and child sale, is experiencing a turnaround in its fortune through fish cultivation.

The district is soon going to be a major fishing hub in the state with Mukhyamantri Matsyajibi Kalyan Yojana turning into a boon for the fish farmers.

The scheme was launched by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on the occasion of World Fisheries Day aimed at the welfare of state's fishermen. The scheme, an amalgamation of 16 programmes, is destined to change the fate of fish farmers.

16 welfare programmes for the fishermen will be implemented under the scheme at a cost of ₹448 crore this financial year.

The scheme aims at improving the financial condition of over 1



lakh fishermen residing in the state. The main objectives of the scheme include increased fish production, creation of employment, women empowerment and holistic growth of the state's economy.

Sources said that fish farmers are showing great interest to reap the benefits of the scheme by taking up fish cultivation.

quirement of fish is 33,000 metric tonne in Kalahandi district the current production stands at 30,000 metric tonne.

The fish harvested in Kalahandi is transported for sale to various districts including the neighbouring district of Bolangir as well as Chhattisgarh.

On the other hand, fishermen in the district managing to produce 50 crore fingerlings is a worthy achievement which has brought a good name for the district.

The Government Fisheries Farm at Bhawanipatna, Jodabandha (Lanjigarh), Bhatarajar (Junagarh), Koksara, Golamunda, M Rampur, Baldhiamal, Bayasagar and Gadijor at Dharmagarh have been working towards breeding of quality and healthy fingerlings.

The Fisheries officials are drawing farmers towards fish farming through Matsya Pokhari

Yojana and biofloc schemes. There have been instances where farmers have earned subsidies to the tune of crores.

Scholarships are being provided to the meritorious wards of fishermen for higher studies while women self-help group members are being urged to take up fish farming in biofloc method. It is monetarily rewarding as it gives them financial assistance under Mukhyamantri Matsyajibi Kalyan Yojana.

Moreover, interested farmers are given 100 per cent subsidy which runs up to 41 lakh under Odisha Integrated Irrigation Project for Climate Resilient Agriculture by joint effort of the state government and World Bank.

It is hoped that Kalahandi will create a record in fish cultivation and breeding of fingerlings if government assistance continues to be available to the farmers.

ONMEB revises schedule for postponed GNM exam

AS PER THE REVISED PROGRAMME, THE EXAMINATION WILL NOW BE HELD JANUARY 5 AND 6

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hatadihi, Dec 20: The Odisha Nurses and Midwives Examination Board (ONMEB) has published a revised schedule for the GNM examination after the test scheduled for December 18 and 19 was postponed due to alleged leak of question papers.

The development came after Orissa POST published a report highlighting the abrupt postponement of the GNM examination and how the decision is affecting the students, December 18.

The examination had started from December 11 and was scheduled to end December 19. However, the board suddenly published a notice December 17 and postponed the GNM examination scheduled for December 18 and 19. The abrupt postponement of the examination sparked outrage and concern among the students appearing in the examination.

Concerned over publication of the report, two days later, the ONMEB in a letter-959/NEB-03/2023, dated December 20 has published a revised programme to conduct the postponed examination of two days, Wednesday.

As per the revised programme, the examination will now be held January 5 and January 6 for two days. The board's move to publish the revised programme in such a short period has drawn appreciation from various quarters. However, the board is yet to



take any action on the issue and is tight-lipped on how the question paper got leaked and who all are involved.

When contacted, ONMEB Secretary Basanti Behera said the examination for the GNM course had been postponed as the question papers prepared by the board and those leaked were found same during verification.

OP IMPACT

"We are trying to conduct the examination at an early date in view of the future of the students," she said.

However, she remained silent when questioned about missing action on the question paper leak. She said that the higher authorities will take a call on the issue.

Retired teacher and senior citizen Ganesh Prasad Karsharma in a post on 'X' has lodged a complaint with the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary demanding a probe on question paper leak and sought stringent action against the culprits.

BJP state executive member Alok Sethi alleged that attempts are being made to suppress the question paper leak issue and demanded a proper probe and action against the wrongdoers.

GIRL KILLED IN FREAK MISHAP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Dec 20: A girl's head was severed after her neck accidentally got stuck in a harvester at a paddy yard in Khataganta village under Kalyansinghpur police limits in this district, Wednesday.

The victim was identified as Banita Tiaka, daughter of Dhania Tiaka in the village. On being informed, Kalyansinghpur police reached the spot and launched an investigation. The incident has sent shockwaves in the area.

The freak accident occurred when the deceased's father Dhania was using a harvester to cut the paddy with his daughter Banita. However, Banita's neck accidentally got stuck in the machine. As the machine was in operation, her head was severed of her body in no time.



SCIENCE EXPO: Students displaying their science projects at an art and science exhibition at St. John's School in Sambalpur, Wednesday

FILE PHOTO

Diarrhoea cases will recede in 2 to 3 days: Shalini Pandit

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 20: Shalini Pandit, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, state Health and Family Welfare department and Director, Urban Health Mission, along with Director, Public Health, Niranjn Mishra Wednesday made a whirlwind tour of Rourkela to take stock of the diarrhoea situation in the Steel City, which has already claimed 13 lives and left hundreds affected.

Speaking to the media here at Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH) she said cases are not increasing anymore. "The situation is improving gradually. Our IC activities have helped us. Besides, the water purification and food checking activities have been stepped up," Pandit said.

Regarding the new cases, she said, "New cases are arriving but those are not serious. They are getting stable through simple IV intervention and getting stable. The situation will be resolved within the next two to



three days."

"Diarrhoea cases occur either due to water or food. Now the cases are coming from scattered areas. For that, we have initiated epidemiology and microbiology studies. The community medical department of Sundargarh Medical College and Hospital has already started the study," she said.

A team from SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack will arrive Wednesday to study the situation." Meanwhile, a team from Regional Medical and Research Centre (RMRC) from Bhubaneswar will also do the study to get to the root of the problem, she informed.

To meet the situation 10 PHCs have been made operational 24x7

from Wednesday. "We have adequate IVs, antibiotics and oxygen along with para-medical staff and doctors to man those PHCs all through the day and night," said the director.

She further informed that any acute patient can walk into any private hospital. The payment will be made either from the BSKY or the CMRC.

Before interacting with the media she conducted a review meeting at RGH where representatives of all hospitals including private were present. Then she went around the wards to check the conditions there.

Traces of cholera were found in the 19 samples out of the 39 sent for medical verification. Most of the deceased had renal failure due to acute dehydration. Rourkela ADM Subhankar Mohapatra Tuesday hinted at the traces of E.coli bacteria and Vibrio cholera, which is the typical sign of cholera. This was also confirmed before by Dr. Sudharani Pradhan, director in charge of RGH.

POLICE ARREST TWO IN GOLD LOOT CASE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 20: Police here cracked the jewellery loot case, which took place December 15 with the arrest of two youths, Wednesday.

The accused were identified as one Abhiraj Soni alias Prince and his cousin Ayush Raj Prasad. Both the accused are in their late twenties. They had looted a worker of the jewellery store Pradip Soni, who had returned from Kolkata with 857 grams gold ornaments worth ₹52 lakhs.

Abhiraj alias Prince had accompanied Pradip from the station in the latter's scooter. The duo was accosted near the Kali Temple of Railway Colony during the wee hours. Pradip was stabbed several times and Prince received only minor injuries as he fell down from the scooter. The owner of the shop, Sambhunath Sahu lodged a complaint with the police.

During the investigation, police found Prince's activities suspicious. When probed further, police became sure about his involvement. First, they caught hold of Prince and during interrogation, he confessed to his involvement and soon his younger cousin was arrested. Police recovered gold worth ₹30 lakh from their possession. The search for the rest three accused is going on and police are conducting raids at different places.

Paradip Port achieves 100 MMT cargo handling in shortest time in its history

THE PORT IS POISED TO SET AN ALL TIME RECORD CARGO HANDLING OF MORE THAN 145 MMT IN THE CURRENT FISCAL

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 20: Paradip Port has proved its efficiency and achieved yet another 100 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) of cargo handling in the shortest time in its history.

Port sources Wednesday said it has once again repeated the feat by crossing the 100 MMT mark, seventh year in succession and achieved cargo throughput of 100.28 MMT December 18 last in the current fiscal.

Notably, in FY 2022-23 the coveted mark of 100 MMT was achieved January 9, 2023. The record was achieved in 22 days in advance -- in 262 days in current fiscal -- against 284 days in last financial year, by exhibiting 9.64 per cent growth in total cargo throughput.

The port is poised to set an all time record cargo handling of more than 145 MMT in the current fiscal.

Outbound iron ore and pellet has shown remarkable 69.03 per cent growth in comparison to previous fiscal. Last fiscal, it amounted to 10.56 MMT over the same time period, whereas till December 18, it stands at 17.85 MMT in current fiscal.

Coastal Thermal Coal handling constitutes about 30.38 per cent of total cargo volume handled at the port. The port has also registered remarkable improvement in the key performance parameters.

Berth productivity stands at 32,689 MT per day per ship, which



is the highest among all major ports of the country.

The vessel turn-round-time is recorded as 42.01 hours as against 47.60 hours during the corresponding period of the previous year.

Similarly, Pre-Berthing Detention is 1.18 hours as against 1.73 hours, during the corresponding period of the previous year.

The port is emerging as a coastal shipping hub of the country and started coastal shipping of thermal coal to west coast, for

Maharashtra based power plants for the first time in history.

The port plans to expand coastal shipping of thermal coal to other regions on the west coast.

The port's commitment to operational excellence, coupled with strategic improvements in cargo handling, has positioned it as a key player in catering to the growing needs of the industry.

Paradip Port Authority Chairman PL Haranadh has congratulated all officers and employees, the user industries, stevedores, steamer agents, trade unions, PPP operators for such amazing accomplishments in the ability of the port to serve them.

He also appreciated the support of government authorities like Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (GoI), Odisha government, Indian Railways, Customs and other departments for their continued support.

Table with 4 columns: Sl. No., Name of the Lone / Guarantors, Date and Amount of Demand Notice, Description of Property. Includes details for multiple properties and their owners/guarantors.



People dressed as Santa Claus row during a Christmas regatta along the Grand Canal in Venice, Italy



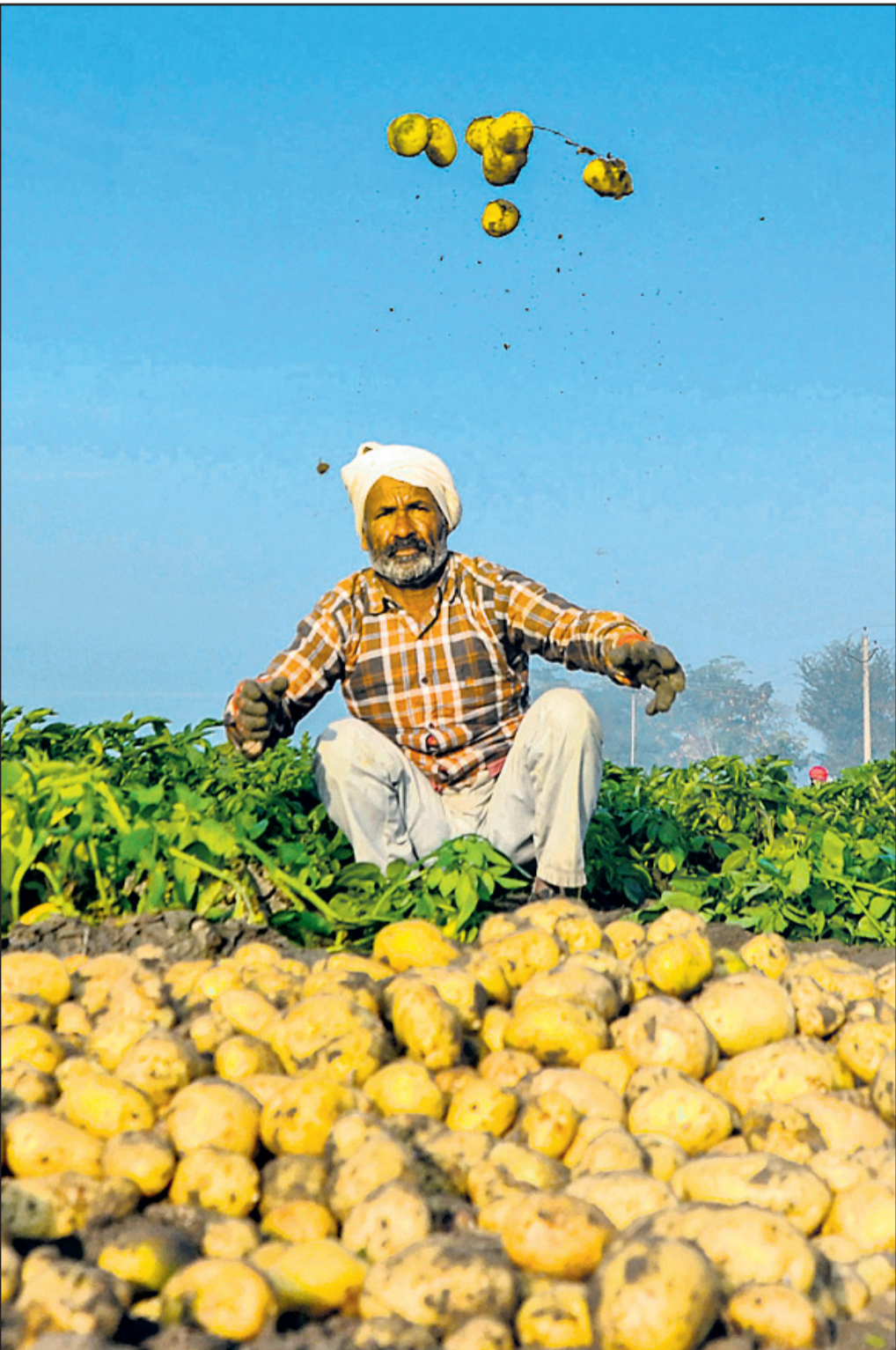
Delhi Police personnel detain Indian Youth Congress (IYC) activists during 'Sansad Gherao' protest march against the Central government over the issue of unemployment in New Delhi



Residents shift to safer place from a flood hit area in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu



Tourists in traditional Indian attire pose for a photograph at the Taj Mahal complex, a day before 'world saree day' in Agra, Uttar Pradesh



A farmer harvests potatoes on a cold winter morning on the outskirts of Amritsar, Punjab



President Droupadi Murmu during an interaction with Ikat handloom weavers of Pochampally village in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, Telangana



Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft fly past during an air show at the Jodhpur Polo Season 2023, at Polo Ground in Jodhpur, Rajasthan AP/PTI/REUTERS PHOTOS

national

of the day quote

The offices of the President, Vice President and Speaker, are Constitutional offices whose dignity & decorum must never be lowered. In mocking these high offices, we are plumbing the depths of parliamentary conduct & only ridiculing ourselves. We must always use only parliamentary & democratic means to express dissent & disagreement

M VENKAIAH NAIDU | FORMER VICE PRESIDENT

We have witnessed an unprecedented revolution in the field of health. Today, health is being linked with development for the first time in the country. In fact, there's a widespread sentiment of 'Healthy Nation, Wealthy Nation' created in the country

ARJUN MUNDA | UNION MINISTER

Our 150 MPs have been thrown out and there is no discussion about that in the media... No discussion on Adani and on Rafale. France has said that investigation is not being allowed. There is no discussion on that, there is no discussion on unemployment

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Man mows down three with minivan

Amravati: A man allegedly killed an elderly couple and their daughter-in-law by hitting them with his minivan over an old enmity in Maharashtra's Amravati district, police said Wednesday. The incident took place at around 8 pm Tuesday in Nachona village, Superintendent of Police Vishal Anand told PTI. The accused and the victims were neighbours and had a dispute, according to police. They had a quarrel Tuesday over some issue, the official said. While the victims were standing on a road in front of their house, the accused allegedly rammed his mini van into them, he said.

Gangster killed in encounter

Chandigarh: An arrested gangster was killed in an exchange of fire with the Punjab Police while he was trying to flee in Amritsar's Jandiala Guru area Wednesday morning, officials said. Amritpal Singh (22), arrested Tuesday, was taken to Jandiala Guru for the recovery of two kg of heroin. He fired at the police team from a pistol hidden there while in handcuffs and tried to flee, they said.

Lok Sabha approves Telecom Bill 2023



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: A Bill allowing the government to temporarily take control of telecom services in the interest of national security, and providing a non-auction route for the allocation of satellite spectrum was approved by the Lok Sabha Wednesday.

The Telecommunications Bill, 2023, which was passed by a voice vote after a short debate, also allows the Centre to take possession of a telecom network in case of any public emergency or in the interest of public safety.

Most of the opposition members did not attend the House following their suspension. The bill, piloted by Communications Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, provides for stopping transmission and intercepting messages in case of public emergency, in the interest of the public, to prevent incitement for committing offence.

According to the Bill, the press messages of correspondents accredited to the Centre or state governments shall not be intercepted or detained unless their transmission has been prohibited

under rules applicable for public emergency, public order etc. The bill provides for the allocation of spectrum to satellite communications companies through the administrative method, Vaishnaw said.

The provisions of the Bill, it may be mentioned, are in line with the demand of global satellite services companies and reject the argument made by domestic telecom players Jio and Vodafone Idea for allocation of spectrum for commercial use through the auction route.

As per the Bill, "the central government shall assign spectrum for telecommunication through auction except for entries listed in the First Schedule for which assignment shall be done by administrative process."

The first schedule has 19 cases for which spectrum will be assigned through the administrative process including global mobile personal communication by satellites, national long-distance and international long-distance services, mobile satellite services, VSAT, In-Flight and maritime connectivity, BSNL and MTNL.

ED summons Tejashwi, Lalu

While Tejashwi has been asked to depose December 22, Lalu Prasad has been asked to appear December 27 to record their statements under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: The Enforcement Directorate has summoned Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav and his father and RJD chief Lalu Prasad for questioning in the railways land-for-jobs money laundering case probe, official sources said Wednesday.

While Tejashwi (34), has been asked to depose before the federal probe agency at its office in Delhi December 22, Prasad (75), has been asked to appear next week December 27 to record their statements under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The ED has once questioned Tejashwi for about eight hours



in this case April 11 but this is the first time it has summoned Prasad for joining the probe.

The summons comes following the questioning of an alleged "close associate" of the Lalu Prasad family, Amit Katyal. He was arrested by the ED in November.

The alleged scam pertains to the period when Prasad was the railway minister in the UPA-1 government. It is alleged that from 2004 to 2009, several people were appointed to Group "D" positions in various zones of

Dhankhar mimicry row takes centrestage

The political row broke out after Kalyan Banerjee derisively mimicked Dhankhar during the Opposition's protest on the stairs of Parliament Tuesday against the suspension of MPs, drawing strong condemnation from the ruling BJP. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was seen making a video of the performance by Banerjee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: The controversy over a TMC MP mimicking Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar took political centre-stage Wednesday with the issue playing out both inside and outside Parliament and



President Droupadi Murmu joining Prime Minister Narendra Modi in expressing dismay.

As Dhankhar, also the Rajya Sabha chairperson, said in the House that he would not tolerate any insult to Parliament or the constitutional post of vice president, TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee said he did not intend to hurt anyone with his act in the Parliament complex Tuesday.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee backed her party colleague, and the Congress slammed what it termed the government's "desperate attempt" to divert attention from the unprecedented suspension of over 140 MPs by raising the matter.

The political row broke out after Kalyan Banerjee derisively mimicked Dhankhar during the opposition's protest on the stairs of Parliament Tuesday against the suspension of MPs, drawing strong condemnation from the ruling BJP. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was seen making a video of the performance by Banerjee. Expressing their solidarity with Dhankhar, ruling party members, including ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, Piyush Goyal and Nitin Gadkari, participated in Question Hour proceedings in the Rajya Sabha while remaining standing till Dhankhar urged them to take their seats after about 10 minutes.

Responding to the president's post, the Rajya Sabha chairperson thanked Murmu for her kind words and the timely reminder that basic courtesies must always remain. "I am committed to upholding Constitutional principles till my last breath. No insults can prevent me from doing

so," Dhankhar posted on X.

The Vice President's Secretariat also put out a post on X. The BJP alleged that it is not just the vice president, the Constitution, farmers and Jat community, have been insulted through the act. The Congress alleged the "entire Modi ecosystem" is now being galvanised on the "so-called mimicry non-issue" while it remains silent on how a BJP MP "facilitated entry of two intruders" into Lok Sabha and on the suspension of over 140 MPs. The opposition party said a "desperate attempt" is being made to divert attention from the unprecedented suspension of MPs by raising this issue.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh slammed the prime minister for the criticism over the mimicry issue and alleged that Narendra Modi, while bidding farewell to Hamid Ansari, who was retiring as vice president and chairman of Rajya Sabha after a long 10-year tenure, mocked Ansari, reducing his identity to his religion.

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER BARIPADA FOREST DIVISION INVITATION FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement Email: dfo.baripada@odisha.gov.in 2nd Corrigendum Notice to Tender Call Notice No. DFO-BPD-PRO. EXP-05/2023-24 No.MM-385:In continuation to Bid Identification No. DFO-BPD-PRO. EXP-05/2023-24 of Corrigendum Notice No.1 & Corrigendum Notice No.2, the date of tender opening is revised i.e. 02.01.2024 at 11.00 AM instead of 02.01.2023 at 11.00 AM. All others terms and conditions are remained unchanged. Sd./- Divisional Forest Officer Baripada Forest Division OIPR-08065/11/0013/2324

SAMBALPUR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION Notice No.1152/SMC, Date 20.12.2023 NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) No.C-2169:Sealed Applications are invited for "Selection of Consulting Firm for Establishment of Horticulture Project Management Unit at Sambalpur Municipal Corporation, Sambalpur" in conformity with the Terms & Conditions of the detailed RFP notice in a two-cover. Please refer to Website www.smcsambalpur.nic.in & www.sambalpur.nic.in for complete details and downloading the document. The document shall be available on the website from 20.12.2023. The Last date & time of submission of proposal is 11.01.2024 till 5.00 PM. For any queries please contact sambalpurm.hud@nic.in. The Authority reserves the right to cancel any or all the Bids without assigning any reason thereof. Sd./- Commissioner Sambalpur Municipal Corporation OIPR-13122/11/0066/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA WATER CORPORATION OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER, WATCO DIVISION, SAMBALPUR Phone No.:(0663)-2412135, Email Id:eephdsbp@gmail.com NOTICE INVITING TENDERS NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement Bid Identification No.GMWATCOSBP-16/2023-24, Dt.14.12.2023 01. Name of the Work : 1 No. Work 02. Type of Bid : Single Bid System 03. Estimated Cost : Rs.10.52 Lakhs 04. Period of Completion : 3 (Three) Calendar Months 05. Date & Time of availability : From 11.00 AM of dt.21.12.2023 to of bid document in the portal 5.00 PM of 01.01.2024 06. Last date/time of receipt of : 5.00 PM of 01.01.2024 bids in the portal 07. Date & Time of opening of : At 11.30 AM of 02.01.2024 technical bids 08. Name and Address of the : General Manager, Officer Inviting Bid WATCO Division, Sambalpur Brooks Hill, Near Stadium AT/PO-Motijharan Dist-Sambalpur-768001 Further details can be seen from the website http://tenders.or.nic.in or www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Sd./- General Manager WATCO Division, Sambalpur OIPR-13247/11/0024/2324

GOVT. OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, GAJAPATI AT/PO:PARALAKHEMUNDI, DIST: GAJAPATI PHONE NO:06815-222365, e-mail:eemi_gajapati@yahoo.co.in e-Procurement Notice No.1896, Date:13.12.2023 BID IDENTIFICATION NO.MIDGJP-02/2023-24 No.A-1044:The Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Paralakhemundi on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate bid in Single Cover System in ONLINE MODE for the construction of following works as detailed in the Detailed Tender Call Notice (D.T.C.N) from the eligible class of contractors. 1. Name of the work: Improvement to MIPs under "R.R. & R Scheme" and "Imp. to Tanks & MIPs Scheme -2023-24." 2. No of works: 18 Nos. (Eighteen) 3. Estimated cost: Varies approximately from Rs.10.91 Lakhs to Rs. 49.82 Lakhs. 4. Period of completion: 06 (Six) Calendar months. 5. Date and time of availability of bid documents in the portal: from 10.00 Hours of 26.12.2023 to 17.00 Hours of 04.01.2024. 6. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal: 17.00 Hours of 04.01.2024. 7. Date of opening of Bid: 11.00 Hours on 05.01.2024. 8. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid: Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Gajapati, AT/PO- Paralakhemundi, Dist- Gajapati. PIN-761200. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in. Sd./- Superintending Engineer MI Division, Gajapati, Paralakhemundi OIPR-32013/11/0003/2324

Experts allay fears, cite low public health risk

AS PANIC SPREAD AND COVID CAME UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT AGAIN, EXPERTS STEPPED IN TO SAY THERE IS NO NEED TO PANIC - AVAILABLE TREATMENTS ARE EFFECTIVE, THE INFECTION IS MILD AND ALL VIRUSES MUTATE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: India Wednesday reported 21 cases of the JN.1 Covid variant, a development that is neither surprising nor particularly worrying, scientists said while allaying fears but also advising adherence to existing precautionary measures.

The announcement about the increasing numbers of the new sub-variant, detected in three states, came with the Union Health Ministry reporting 614 new Covid infections, marking the highest daily count since May 21. "As it happens with most respiratory viruses, including the influenza viruses, the circulating viruses keep changing.

Therefore, a sub-variant of SARS-CoV-2 is not a surprise at all," Chandrakant Lahariya, a senior consultant physician and public health expert, told PTI. The SARS-CoV-2 virus is circu-



lating in all settings, he said. According to official sources, 19 cases of JN.1 have been traced in Goa and one each in Kerala and Maharashtra. Over the past two weeks, 16 deaths related to Covid-19 were recorded with the victims having serious co-morbidities. Based on the available evidence, the additional global public health risk posed by JN.1 is currently evaluated as low, WHO said. "Despite this, with the onset of

Yashoda Hospitals, agreed. He said JN.1 is a new sub-lineage of BA.2.86, an offshoot of the Omicron variant.

Adding a note of reassurance, Vinod Scaria, senior consultant at Mumbai's Vishwanath Cancer Foundation, said the JN.1 variant has possibly been in circulation in India as early as November 2023.

JN.1 was first detected in Denmark and Israel in late July 2023. According to WHO, current vaccines continue to protect against severe disease and death from JN.1 and other circulating variants of SARS-CoV-2. The global health body added that it is continuously monitoring evidence and will update the JN.1 risk evaluation as needed. The US Centers for Disease Control and

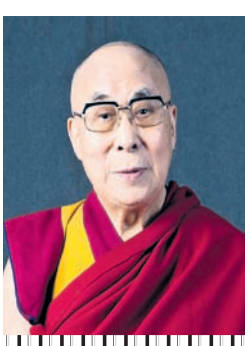
Prevention (CDC) said earlier this month that the subvariant JN.1 makes up about an estimated 15 to 29 per cent of cases in the US as of December 8. Last week, China detected seven infections of the Covid sub-variant.

Experts advocate a balanced perspective while dealing with new variants of SARS-CoV-2. Lahariya stressed the importance of continued vigilance and adherence to existing precautionary measures against JN.1, including the use of masks, maintaining hand hygiene, social distancing, avoiding crowded or poorly ventilated areas, and following proper cough etiquette.

The WHO Tuesday, classified JN.1 as a separate variant of interest (VOI) from the parent lineage BA.2.86. It was previously classified as VOI as part of BA.2.86 sublineages

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is working on genome sequencing of the new JN.1 variant of SARS-CoV-2, Union Health Ministry officials said

against JN.1, including the use of masks, maintaining hand hygiene, social distancing, avoiding crowded or poorly ventilated areas, and following proper cough etiquette.



Bodhichitta, the mind of enlightenment, is a very precious practice that gives inner strength. Because of Bodhichitta, Buddha became enlightened THE DALAI LAMA | TIBETAN SPIRITUAL LEADER

JACQUELINE MOVES COURT

Bollywood actor Jacqueline Fernandez Wednesday moved a Delhi court seeking directions for immediately restraining alleged conman Sukesh Chandrasekhar from issuing any communication pertaining to her, directly or indirectly, to media



international

of the day quote

This is the most dangerous year in the military-security landscape on the Korean Peninsula. The US-South Korean military exercises and the US deployment of nuclear-powered submarines and other nuclear assets have raised a nuclear war danger

We know we're facing a more challenging and complex world. Close security and defence relationships we have with our only ally, Australia, is very foundational for New Zealand

Imran Khan sahib wants to inform that he will be contesting elections from at least three constituencies of Pakistan

KIM SONG | AMBASSADOR, NORTH KOREA
CHRISTOPHER LUXON | PM, NZ
ALI ZAFAR | BARRISTER, PAKISTAN

SHORT TAKES

China earthquake toll rises to 131

Beijing: The death toll in the powerful 6.2-magnitude earthquake that jolted a mountainous region of northwestern China late Monday night has risen to 131, local authorities said Wednesday. A total of 113 people were killed in the Gansu, while the death toll in the neighbouring Qinghai province in the Himalayan region has risen to 18 from 14 Tuesday, with 16 others still missing in the quake, the deadliest in nine years. Over 700 hundred people were injured in both provinces. Qinghai province is adjacent to the Tibet Himalayan region, which is prone to frequent earthquakes due to the shifting of continental plates.

'Child bride' hanged in Iran

Tehran: Iran Wednesday hanged a woman convicted of murdering her husband, whom she married while still a child, a human rights group said, defying an international campaign for clemency. Samira Sabzian, who had been in prison for the past decade, was executed at dawn in Ghezel Hesar prison in the Tehran satellite city of Karaj, the Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) group said. It said she was a "child bride" who had married her husband at the age of 15 and had been a victim of domestic violence, according to relatives.

PREZ RACE Colorado SC bars Trump

IN A LANDMARK RULING, COLORADO SC DISQUALIFIES EX-PREZ TRUMP FROM PRESIDENCY IN THE STATE OVER JAN 6 INSURRECTION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Dec 20: The Colorado Supreme Court has ruled that Donald Trump cannot run for president next year in the state because of his role in the attack on the US Capitol in 2021 and ordered the exclusion of his name from the state's Republican presidential primary ballot.

The disqualification of the 77-year-old former president Tuesday was based on the Constitution's 14th Amendment, which says officials who take an oath to support the US Constitution are banned from future office if they "engaged in insurrection."

Trump is currently the front-runner in the Republican Party's nomination process for the race for the White House in 2024. Trump's campaign has vowed to appeal against the "flawed" ruling by the Supreme Court of Colorado in the US Supreme Court.

The Colorado Supreme Court upheld a trial judge's decision that Trump engaged in the January 6, 2021, insurrection and also overturned her conclusion that the ban does not apply to the presidency.

The landmark decision from the divided top state court marks the first time a court has found Trump ineligible to return to



The decision from a court whose justices were all appointed by Democratic governors marks the first time in history that Section 3 of the 14th Amendment has been used to disqualify a presidential candidate, which bars officials who have engaged in "insurrection or rebellion" from holding office

the White House due to his conduct surrounding the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, CBS News reported.

Never before has a court determined that a presidential candidate is disqualified under the Civil War-era provision clause, it said.

The state high court stayed its ruling until January 4 — a day before the deadline for the state secretary to certify the candidates for Colorado's March 5 primary election.

The 4-3 ruling by the seven-member Colorado Supreme Court does not apply outside of the state.

"President Trump's direct and express efforts, over several months, exhorting his supporters to march to the Capitol to prevent what he falsely charac-

terised as an alleged fraud on the people of this country were indisputably overt and voluntary," the justices wrote.

"Moreover," they wrote, "the evidence amply showed that President Trump undertook all these actions to aid and further a common unlawful purpose that he himself conceived and set in motion: prevent Congress from certifying the 2020 presidential election and stop the peaceful transfer of power."

"[W]e conclude that because President Trump is disqualified from holding the office of President under Section Three, it would be a wrongful act under the Election Code for the Secretary to list President Trump as a candidate on the presidential primary ballot," the ruling stated.



I am confident that the US will not let us down and that what we have agreed with the US will be fulfilled
VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYI | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

KUWAIT'S NEW EMIR SWORN IN

Sheikh Mishal al-Ahmad al-Sabah has been formally sworn as Kuwait's emir before parliament to begin his rule over the wealthy Gulf monarchy. The new emir, who took over after the passing of his half-brother, Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Sabah, Saturday, took the oath of office during a special session of the National Assembly Wednesday



Israel, Hamas working toward new ceasefire

After more than 10 weeks of heavy Israeli bombardment and fierce urban combat, 20,000 Palestinians have lost their lives

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, Dec 20: Hopes rose Wednesday that Israel and Hamas may be inching toward another truce and hostage release deal in the Gaza war, following secret talks and as the head of the Palestinian Hamas group visited Egypt.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu late Tuesday told relatives of some of the remaining 129 captives held in Gaza since the October 7 attacks that his spy chief was working on efforts to "free our hostages".

"I have just sent the head of Mossad to Europe twice to promote a process to free our hostages," the premier told them. "I will spare no effort on the subject, and our duty is to bring them all back."



Mossad director David Barnea held a "positive meeting" in Warsaw this week with CIA chief Bill Burns and Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, a source familiar with the talks told AFP, asking not to be named.

Talks were ongoing "with the aim of reaching an agreement around the release of the re-

UN FAILS AGAIN

United Nations: The Security Council's adoption of a new UN resolution to spur desperately needed aid to Gaza has been bogged down by two issues important to the United States: a reference to a cessation of hostilities and putting the UN in charge of inspecting trucks to ensure they are actually carrying humanitarian goods. A vote on the Arab-sponsored resolution, first postponed from Monday, was pushed back again until Wednesday as council members continued intense negotiations to avoid another veto by the United States.

maintaining hostages in Gaza in exchange for a truce and the potential release of Palestinians held in Israeli prisons," said the source.

The Qatar-based chief of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, Wednesday travelled to Egypt, traditionally a key mediator between Israel and the Palestinians, for talks with intelligence chief Abbas Kamel.

A source close to Hamas, also speaking on condition of anonymity, said the talks would focus on stopping the war and "to prepare an agreement for the release of prisoners (and) the end of the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip".

President Isaac Herzog also said Israel was "ready for another humanitarian pause and additional humanitarian aid in order to enable the release of hostages".

New rules on hosting migrants by EU

THE EUROPEAN UNION STRUCK A MIGRATION DEAL BREAKTHROUGH AFTER YEARS OF TALKS WHICH SEEKS TO CUT NUMBERS

REUTERS

Brussels, Dec 20: The European Union reached agreement early Wednesday on new rules designed to share out the cost and work of hosting migrants more evenly and to limit the numbers of people coming in.

Representatives of the European Parliament and of EU governments reached an accord after all-night talks on EU laws collectively called the New Pact on Migration and Asylum that should take effect next year.

The laws cover screening irregular migrants when they arrive in the European Union, procedures for handling asylum applications, rules on determining which EU country is responsible for handling applications and ways to handle crises.

Migrant arrivals in the European Union are way down from the 2015 peak of more than 1 million, but have steadily crept



up from a 2020 low to 255,000 in the year to November, with more than half crossing the Mediterranean from Africa to Italy or Malta.

Previous efforts to share out the responsibility of hosting migrants have foundered because eastern EU members in particular were unwilling to take in people who had arrived in Greece, Italy and other countries.

Under the new system, countries not at the border will have a choice between accepting refugees or paying into an EU fund.

The screening system envisaged will seek to distinguish between those in need of international protection and others who are not.

People whose asylum applications have a low chance of success, such as those from India, Tunisia or Turkey, can be prevented from entering the EU and detained at the border, as can people seen as representing a threat to security.

Refugee rights groups have said it will create what amounts to prison camps at the EU's borders.

How drugs are sold in online gaming chatrooms

WITHIN DRUG CIRCLES IN THE US, THE ELECTRIC PLUG EMOJI MEANS "DEALER", A SMALL PALM TREE MEANS "MARIJUANA" AND A KEY STANDS FOR "COCAINE"

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Strasbourg, Dec 20: Narcotics police the world over are sprucing up their video game skills, as cartels go increasingly online to sell drugs and recruit dealers.

"Cartels have been incredibly tech savvy over recent years, reaching vast audiences," Benjamin Shultz, foreign malign influence analyst at Deloitte, told a Council of Europe meeting.

"The Sinaloa Cartel has a Twitter account with almost 200,000 followers and they tend to post nearly daily, engaging and posting images and other contents that glorify what they do," he said. The account has



since been shut down.

To bring greater attention to the role of online gaming in the drug trade, the Council of Europe's Pompidou Group, which works on international drug issues, held a forum in Mexico City December 19 and 20.

Online games such as "Grand Theft Auto" or "World of Warcraft" provide perfect cover for cartels to discreetly sell drugs or find personnel.

Emoji conversations "The darknet has been de-

creasing in popularity for cartels, law enforcement has gotten pretty good at getting into the darknet, whereas video games garner really untapped resources and are very unmonitored," Shultz said.

The games' internal messaging systems are extremely difficult to intercept, particularly when traffickers communicate with emoticons or emojis.

An entire conversation can be carried out with symbols, avoiding any suspect words that could trigger attention.

Within drug circles in the United States, the electric plug emoji means "dealer," a small palm tree means "marijuana," and a key stands for "cocaine."

Mexican police were the first to notice the practice, with an early case involving three adolescents aged 11 to 14 who were recruited while playing "Garena Free Fire" and offered \$200 a week to be lookouts in Mexico City.

The three were arrested just before boarding a bus that their recruiter had bought them tickets for.

'Not an isolated phenomenon'

"This type of transaction and dealing is still much more common on Instagram or Snapchat, and most of the cases with video games have been localised near the US-Mexico border," Shultz said.

"In Europe video games are very unregulated, they're not monitored so this could be

very well percolating under the surface," he added.

Thomas Kattau, deputy executive secretary of the Council of Europe's Pompidou Group, said "it is a global issue, and the idea is you need to have a forum where we can make law enforcement and governments aware of the phenomenon."

"Mexico is the country that has taken the lead on this issue and brought it to the attention of law enforcement," he said.

"And now we have seen similar things occurring in the UK and other countries, and therefore we see it is not an anecdotal, isolated phenomenon, but something which is quickly replicating."

Shultz and Kattau suggest better education both for parents and their children about the risks of online games, as well as greater efforts by game developers to reinforce protections, above all by using artificial intelligence to improve surveillance software.

In online games, users can connect with almost anyone, teenagers can talk to strangers, and there are not many controls

BENJAMIN SHULTZ | FOREIGN MALIGN INFLUENCE ANALYST, DELOITTE

Ukraine may mobilise another 5 lakh for war

REUTERS

Kyiv, Dec 20: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday the military had proposed mobilising 450,000-500,000 more Ukrainians into the armed forces in what would mark a dramatic step up of Kyiv's war with Russia.

The Ukrainian leader told his end-of-year news conference it was a "highly sensitive" issue that the military and government would discuss before deciding whether to send the proposal to parliament.

Zelenskyy said he wanted to hear more arguments in favour of mobilising the additional people before backing such a move. "This is a very serious number," he said.

Ukraine has been at war with Russian troops since February 2022. Both sides treat their casualty numbers as a state secret, but US officials estimate that hundreds of thousands have been killed and wounded.

Ukraine's troop numbers are not known, but it has said in the



past it has around 1 million people under arms. Russia has been expanding its army during the war and said Tuesday it planned to boost its ranks to 1.5 million service members.

"I said I would need more arguments to support this move. Because first of all, it's a question of people, secondly, it's a question of fairness, it's a question of defence capability, and it's a question of finances," Zelenskyy said.

Ukraine, which initially saw tens of thousands of volunteer fighters queuing up to defend their country from Russia's invasion, is now trying to conscript more men to replace those currently at the front.

business

of the day note

Foxconn has submitted its application under the modified scheme for setting up of semiconductor fabs in India for the establishment of semiconductor fab in the country

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR | MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND IT

India is expected to be surplus in coal production by the year 2025-26 except for some high quality coal and coking coal required for steel sector and ICB plants

PRALHAD JOSHI | COAL AND MINES MINISTER

As professionals and companies alike are placing the long-due focus on sustainability, fitness, and mental health; job roles in these sectors will be in demand

AKSHAY MUNIAL | FOUNDER AND CEO, HERO VIREO

SHORT TAKES

Jio leads user base

New Delhi: Reliance Jio added 34.7 lakh mobile subscribers in September, cementing its lead in the competitive telecom market, while Airtel's wireless subscriber tally rose by 13.2 lakh, according to monthly data put out by Trai. Vodafone Idea lost 7.5 lakh mobile subscribers during September, dragging its wireless user tally to 22.75 crore. Reliance Jio gained 34.75 lakh wireless subscribers in September, and its user base climbed to 44.92 crore, as per data by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai). Rival Bharti Airtel spruced up its mobile subscriber tally to 37.77 crore in September, having added 13.2 lakh users during the month.

Relief for Biyani

New Delhi: The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) Wednesday quashed regulator Sebi's order banning Future Retail chairperson Kishore Biyani and some other promoters from the securities market for one year in an insider trading case. Dismissing the Sebi's order, the appellate tribunal said that the entities did not trade in the shares of Future Retail Ltd (FRL) on the basis of unpublished price sensitive information (UPS) relating to demerger as such information was already in public domain through multiple media reports.

DOMS dream debut

New Delhi: Shares of pencil maker DOMS Industries Ltd made a dream stock market debut Wednesday and ended with a huge premium of over 68 per cent against the issue price of ₹790. The stock listed at ₹1,400 on both BSE and NSE, reflecting a jump of 77.21 per cent from the issue price. During the day, the stock zoomed 81.55 per cent to ₹1,434.25 on the BSE. Shares of the company finally ended at ₹1,330.85, up 68.46 per cent.

New Alibaba CEO

Hong Kong: China's Alibaba Group says its CEO Eddie Wu will head its core e-commerce business, as the company seeks to drive growth and fend off fast-growing online shopping rivals like Pinduoduo. Wu is replacing Trudy Dai, a longtime Alibaba executive who was one of the founding employees of the company. Alibaba's chairman Joe Tsai said in an internal letter dated Wednesday that Dai will help set up an asset management company aimed at improving returns on capital and "enhance shareholder value."



The Indian Telecommunications Bill 2023 will serve as a strong enabler for the larger digital ecosystem and, in particular, the innovative OTT apps and satellite sectors in the country

TV RAMACHANDRAN | PRESIDENT, BROADBAND INDIA FORUM

SAHARA SAGA: GOVT TO MOVE SC

The government will approach the Supreme Court again to get more funds from the Sahara Group, as three crore investors have sought a refund of ₹80,000 crore stuck with the company's cooperative societies



Bears rattle market

Sensex, Nifty go into tailspin after hitting fresh all-time high levels; tank over 1%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Equity investors became poorer by ₹8.91 lakh crore Wednesday as markets came under a bear attack, with the benchmark Sensex falling almost 931 points after hitting its fresh all-time high level. Erasing all its early gains, the 30-share BSE Sensex crashed 930.88 points or 1.30 per cent to settle at 70,506.31 points. The index opened higher and later gained 475.88 points or 0.66 per cent to hit its all-time high of 71,913.07 points.

However, broad-based selling pulled down the benchmark to the day's low of 70,302.60 points.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies eroded by ₹8,91,729.43 crore to ₹3,50,19,998.87 crore.

"Redemption was seen across the sectors, and even mid and small-cap stocks came under the grip of a strong bear hammering," Prashanth Tapse, Senior Vice President (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Among the Sensex firms, Tata Steel fell the most by 4.21 per cent. NTPC, Tata Motors, HCL Technologies, Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India, Power Grid, Tech Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro and JSW Steel also declined.

HDFC Bank emerged as the only gainer from the pack.

In the broader market, the BSE small-cap gauge fell 3.42 per cent and mid-cap index de-



Markets were on a record-setting spree for a while and have been in an overbought zone, so hiccups were expected in the form of profit-taking which came to the fore today

PRASHANTH TAPSE | SENIOR VP(RESEARCH), MEHTA EQUITIES

All the indices ended lower, with utilities tumbling 4.65 per cent, telecommunication plummeting 4.36 per cent, power declining 4.33 per cent, services falling 4.20 per cent, metal (3.57 per cent), commodities (3.51 per cent), industrials (2.85 per cent), capital goods (2.83 per cent) and consumer discretionary (2.55 per cent). A total of 3,177 stocks de-

Equity investors become poorer by ₹8.91 lakh crore in single day

clined while 658 advanced and 86 remained unchanged.

"The domestic market saw a sharp and abrupt sell-off in the second half, despite the positive trend in global peers. This is attributable to profit booking from the recent sharp rally stretching valuations of mid- and small-cap stocks. The recent uptick in crude prices prompted investors to book profits," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

The BSE benchmark had climbed 122.10 points or 0.17 per cent to settle at 71,437.19 points Tuesday. The Nifty had gained 34.45 points or 0.16 per cent to 21,453.10 points.

RBI introduces card tokenisation facility

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 20: The RBI Wednesday introduced a Card-on-File (CoF) token facility at the level of banks and other institutions to provide convenience for cardholders to get tokens created and linked to their existing accounts with various e-commerce applications.

At present, a CoF token can only be created through the merchant's application or webpage.

For a CoF, a token is a 16-digit number unique for a combination of card, token requestor and merchant. Through tokenisation, the actual card details are replaced with token credentials that can be used only with the intended merchant.

"It has been decided to enable Card-on-File Tokenisation (CoFT) directly through card-issuing banks/institutions also. This will provide cardholders with an additional choice to tokenise their cards for multiple merchant sites through a single process," the RBI said in a circular.

Generation of CoF tokens for a card, through the card issuer, can be enabled through mobile banking and internet banking channels. In October, the RBI had said tokenisation has improved transaction security and transaction approval rate.

The RBI introduced CoFT in September 2021 and began implementation from October 1 last year. The circular further said CoFT generation should be done only on explicit customer consent, and with Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA) validation.

Aligning inflation with 4% target far from assured: RBI

Annual retail inflation rose to 5.55% in November from 4.87% in the previous month due to higher food prices

REUTERS

Mumbai, Dec 20: The Indian central bank's objective of aligning inflation with its 4% target on a durable basis is far from assured and a failure to do so could risk economic growth, the bank said in its latest bulletin published Wednesday.

"On a real-time basis, inflation is hurting discretionary consumer spending and this, in turn, is holding back top-line growth of manufacturing companies as well as their capex," the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its 'State of the Economy' article.

"If inflation is not brought back to the target and tethered there, there is a strong likelihood that growth may falter."

Annual retail inflation rose to 5.55% in November from 4.87% in the previous month due to higher food prices, the latest data showed.

Projections indicated that inflation will go up further from the September-October 2023 average inflation rate of 4.9% before it can come down, the RBI said.

The article also added that



RBI Bulletin pegs India's FY25 GDP growth at 6.0% against official view of 6.5%

softer inflation data has engendered a "hypermetropia" among some stakeholders - an irrational long-sightedness where inflation forecasts gravitating towards the 4% target in the distant future are clearly sighted while near-term spikes due to food price volatility are blurred.

The RBI reiterated the need to remain vigilant and ready to act as per the evolving outlook.

On the growth front, however, the central bank sounded a tone of cautious optimism and said internal models indicated that growth is likely to be sustained in H2:2023-24 and 2024-25 despite some moderation.

Evidence from high-frequency indicators points towards sustained strength in demand conditions, the central bank said.

GLOBAL YIELD PRESSURES

Firms' \$ bond issuance hits 14-yr low

Total foreign currency borrowings at \$22.13bn, highest since 2014

REUTERS

Mumbai, Dec 20: Indian companies' fundraising via dollar bonds hit a 14-year low in 2023, as elevated global yields discouraged borrowers who moved to securing foreign currency loans instead.

Corporates have raised \$4.1 bln via six dollar bond issues so far in 2023, according to data shared by LSEG Workspace, marking the lowest since 2009, when annual fundraising totalled \$1.6 bln.

"Throughout 2023 global interest rate environment was not favourable and the cost of raising dollars hedged into rupees was comparatively higher than (accessing) domestic liquidity, so Indian issuers chose to borrow locally," said Sameer Gupta, head of India and South East Asia debt capital market at Deutsche Bank.

Multiple rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve and anticipation of prolonged higher rates



The total borrowings reached \$22.13 billion, the highest since 2014. Historically it has always been a cycle... We have always seen this trend between either the loan market being more active or the bond market

SHOAIB AHMED | DIRECTOR, ANZ

drove an increase in bond yields worldwide.

Instead, Indian companies leaned on foreign currency loans, which are benchmarked to floating interest rates. The total borrowings reached \$22.13 billion, the highest since 2014, according to data.

Apart from loans denominated in US dollars, Indian firms have availed \$2.15 billion in yen-denominated loans so far this year, up from \$643 million last year, Refinitiv data shows.

Corporates are happy to do a loan which is a floating rate instrument, said Shoaib Ahmed, director of debt capital markets at ANZ.

Reliance Industries was among the largest borrowers in the foreign currency loan market this year, having raised over \$8.5 bil-

lion as of October, data showed.

Lenders, including REC, Canara Bank and Shriram Finance raised foreign currency debt, with others like the State Bank of India exploring plans to raise funds early next year, according to multiple bankers.

Companies like Adani Ports and SEZ have sought to reduce their overseas debt by repurchasing their existing dollar notes.

"We have also seen that companies have bought back bonds, using money raised in INR market, effectively substituting some of the debt with cheaper or retiring debt," ANZ's Ahmed said.

Bankers expect an increase in dollar bond issuance in 2024 as global bond yields ease, with the volume of foreign currency loans likely declining.

TIDBITS

Toshiba delisted after 74 years

Tokyo: Toshiba was delisted Wednesday after 74 years on the Tokyo exchange, following a decade of upheaval and scandal that brought down one of Japan's biggest brands and ushered in a buyout and an uncertain future. The conglomerate is being taken private by a group of investors led by private equity firm Japan Industrial Partners that also includes financial services firm Orix, utility Chubu Electric Power and chipmaker Rohm. The \$14 billion takeover puts Toshiba in domestic hands after protracted battles with overseas activist investors that paralysed the maker of batteries, chips, and nuclear and defence equipment.



₹254cr: Bill to RIL for Metro name



Mumbai: Reliance Industries has paid Rs 254 crore to Metro AG in the financial year ended September 2023 for using the German retailer's brand name in India after acquiring its wholesale chain in the country a year ago. Metro AG is providing certain transitional services and licences as part of the transaction to enable the new owner to operate the business. As part of the sale of Metro India, a licence payment of Rs 28 million (Rs 254 crore) received in advance for using the Metro brand is recognised in the financial year, Metro said in its latest annual report. Last December, Reliance Retail Ventures, a unit of RIL, bought Metro Cash & Carry India for a total cash consideration of Rs 2,850 crore.

5 India tyre makers in global top 30 list

New Delhi: Five Indian companies featured among the top 30 tyre manufacturers globally, according to a report by Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA). In the 'Tire Business Magazine's 38th Global Tire Report' by ATMA based on revenue in 2022, Apollo, MRF, JK Tyre, CEAT, and Balkrishna Industries (BKT) from India featured in the top 30 list. As per the report, Apollo is at the 13th position and MRF at the 14th, JK Tyre at 19th, CEAT at 22nd and BKT at 27th in the top 30 list. Michelin, Bridgestone, Goodyear, and Continental continue to occupy the top four spots, the report said.



Wars raise profit outlook for US defense industry in '24

LOCKHEED MARTIN, GENERAL DYNAMICS AND NORTHROP GRUMMAN SHARES ARE FORECAST TO RISE BETWEEN 5% AND 7% OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

REUTERS

Washington, Dec 20: When the Pentagon pulled the world's biggest defense contractors into a meeting to tell them to ramp up production shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine, one CEO hesitated, saying they did not want to be stuck with a warehouse full of rockets when the fighting stopped, according to three people familiar with the discussion.

Nearly two years later, big defense firms are singing a dif-

ferent tune, with several expecting strong demand in 2024 as the US and its allies load up on expensive weaponry and munitions with an eye on what they perceive as more aggressive actions from Russia and China.

The math is simple. For example, to meet demand for missile defenses, production of Patriot interceptors for the US Army - a projectile fired at an incoming missile with the aim of knocking it down - will rise from 550 to 650 rockets per year. At around \$4 million each, that's a potential \$400 million annual sales boost on one weapons system alone.

Since increasing production volumes of older systems is always more profitable than the high investment costs associated with ramping up production of new systems, stronger demand will flow quickly to the corporate bottom line.

Shares of the biggest defense companies, which have handily beat the benchmark S&P 500 stock index for the last two years,



are expected to keep rising, according to Wall Street estimates.

Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics and Northrop Grumman shares are forecast to rise between 5% and 7% over the next 12 months, while the S&P is seen making limited gains.

PATRIOTS AND ROCKET MOTORS

Patriot systems production can be broken down to show how sales of basic items will impact a range of companies. To start, RTX manufactures the

radars and ground systems, and Lockheed Martin manufactures the latest generation interceptor missiles.

RTX boosted launcher and control system production to 12 units a year. A launcher and radar together cost around \$400 million each.

Boeing has said over the next few years it will increase its Huntsville, Alabama, factory production capacity for sensors that are used to guide Patriot missiles by more than 30%.

US weapons stockpiles were not full before Russia invaded Ukraine. Adversaries are seeing our stockpiles starting thin and being depleted. As a result, demand is being driven by Chinese aggression, fear about Russian aggression and to support allies in the Middle East

ERIC FANNING | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, US AEROSPACE INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

Another strong demand signal can be seen in the backlog of solid rocket motors which are used by the vast array of arms in high demand since Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The US has two main rocket motor makers, Northrop Grumman, and L3Harris Technologies, which both said they have seen demand increase.

Northrop said much of the increase is due to demand for its rocket motors and warheads in the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (GMLRS) which are heavily used in Ukraine.

GMLRS are GPS-guided rockets with 200-pound (90kg) warheads. Lockheed Martin makes 10,000 of the missiles per year and is increasing production to 14,000. They have an average cost of \$148,000 each according to Army documents and more than 6,100 have been sent to Ukraine so far, according to a Reuters analysis.

An executive at a rocket motor maker said the administration of President Joe Biden prioritized munitions in its 2024 Pentagon budget request. He expected a boost to order backlogs once contracts came through following the passage of the \$886 billion defense policy bill known as the NDAA, or National Defense Authorization Act. It was approved by Congress last week and Biden is expected to sign it into law.

EYES ON TOP ORDER Nehra backs Gill to come good



Ruturaj Gaikwad (L) and Tilak Varma would be keen to end their poor form if they find their places in playing XI, Thursday

Paarl (South Africa), Dec 20: With a similar storyline of faltering opening combination running through the first two matches, India's hopes of registering their second ODI series triumph in South Africa will revolve around a sturdy start from the openers in the third and final match here Thursday.

India's lone ODI series win in the Rainbow nation came in 2018, and for an encore they require a robust beginning from Ruturaj Gaikwad and B Sai Sudharsan as a pair. Sai Sudharsan has been impressive in his two outings in the series so far, notching up 55 and 62. But Gaikwad could not support him from the other end.

The right-hander fell for five

MATCHDAY
India vs South Africa
3rd One Day International
Time: 4:30 pm
Telecast: Star Sports Network
Stream: Disney+Hotstar

and four as India's first-wicket alliance ended at 23 and four at Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth.

In contrast, South African openers Tony de Zorzi, who cracked his maiden century, and Reeza Hendricks milked 130 runs to kill the chase.

Similarly, Tilak Varma, who showed some early promise in his career, seemed to have tapered off a bit in the last couple of months. The elegant left-hander who packs a punch strug-

gled to touch his peak in the home T20I series against Australia and the struggle seemed to have followed him to South Africa as well. The Hyderabad batter is yet to hit his peak here.

It is important for Gaikwad and Varma, unless he is replaced with uncapped Rajat Patidar for tomorrow's match, to rediscover their range because India no longer have Shreyas Iyer in the middle-order to shore up the innings. The 30-year-old Patidar usually bats at No.4 for Madhya Pradesh.

Iyer had joined an inter-squad match to prepare for the upcoming Test series after the first one-day. However, these top order batters can draw some solace from the Boland Park pitch, which often tends to lean to-

wards batsmen. The Port Elizabeth pitch had a bit of uneven bounce on it, particularly in the first innings, but the Paarl deck often offers true bounce and carry, helping batters to free their arms and go through the shots without any inhibitions.

It might also nudge the think-tank to give another chance to free-hitting Sanju Samson, who got out for 12 in the last match, and the Kerala cricketer donning the big gloves at Port Elizabeth could be an indication of that.

India also have a tiny concern in their bowling department ahead of the third ODI. Mukesh Kumar is yet to pick up a wicket in two matches, and the pacer needs to slip into his striking armour sooner than later.

The Bengal man found the going tough once Proteas opener Tony de Zorzi bludgeoned him through the on-side with mighty hacks.

Arshdeep Singh and Avesh Khan did the perfect demolition job in the first match, and the former continued to be thrifty in the second match as well. So, it is imperative for Mukesh to find his rhythm with the new ball and pick up a wicket or two upfront to keep South Africa on the backfoot.

The team management might also think of giving a match to veteran leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, whose tour to SA will end on the morrow. He had shown a streak of good form in the recent Vijay Hazare Trophy for Haryana.

But it remains to be seen whether the management can convince either Kuldeep Yadav or Axar Patel to move away for Chahal. Both Kuldeep and Axar have been selected for the Test series and the spin duo would want to have as much game-time as possible against their names.

From a South African perspective, the performance of left-handed De Zorzi might have filled them with the hopes of finding an ideal, long-term replacement for Quinton de Kock.

Fast bowler Nandre Burger too was fiery with the new ball and the Proteas will hope for him to give another hustle round to the Indians.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: Gujarat Titans head coach Ashish Nehra admitted that it will be tough to replace a multi-faceted player like Hardik Pandya but banked on Shubman Gill to shoulder the responsibility of leading the side in next year's IPL.

Pandya recently returned to Mumbai Indians and has been appointed as the skipper of the five-time champions.

"To replace a player like Hardik Pandya is difficult considering his talent and experience. We have seen how he (Gill) has shaped up in the past three-four years. He is 24-25 years of age but he has a good head on his shoulders," Nehra said in a virtual post-auction press meet on Tuesday night.

The former India pacer said the franchise will back Gill irrespective of the results in the next edition of the IPL. "We believe in him. That is why we made him captain. I am not someone who will always go by results. Yes, results are important but when you come to captaincy you have to look at other things also. We are confident that Gill is the right person (for captaincy)," Nehra added.

The Titans battled intensely in the auction room in Dubai to buy Mitchell Starc before Kolkata Knight Riders purchased the Australian pacer for a record Rs 24.75 crore. Nehra wasn't surprised at the big paycheck which Starc attracted.

"There is nothing like being over priced in the IPL. Everybody knows what Starc can do. He is a proven player. We needed a fast bowler and every team had different strategies. We have to be satisfied with what we have. For a bowler like Starc, I don't think that is a surprise," he said.

Boucher happy with pacers MI head coach Mark Boucher was delighted at the pace attack that they have managed to assemble from the auction. Mumbai signed South African quick Gerald Coetzee, who had a fine ODI World Cup recently, and Sri Lanka's left-arm pacer Dilshan Madushanka Tuesday.

"We made the decision to go for him (Coetzee) because he is a young, up and coming superstar, while Madushanka is a three-phase bowler. He (Madushanka) swings the new ball and has good change ups at the death. I'm sure he'll add a lot of value to our team," said Boucher.

PONTING EXCITED

Delhi Capitals bought aggressive England middle-order batter Harry Brook for Rs 4 crore and head coach Ricky Ponting said he was excited at the prospect of working with him.

"I am excited about working with Harry Brook. He's one of the most talented international cricketers at the moment. He was our number one priority in this year's auction and we managed to acquire him at a great figure," said Ponting.

SIRAJ RCB'S 'LEAD BOWLER'

Royal Challengers Bangalore head coach Andy Flower pinned his hopes on experienced Mohammed Siraj to lead the side's pace battery in the next IPL. "Siraj will lead the attack and him being fit and firing is going to be very important for us. I think we've got some really skillful young Indian bowlers there, who are going to be growing with us," Flower said.

Flower said Australian all-rounder Cameron Green will add meat to RCB's batting order. "Cameron Green gives us that power somewhere in that top five, though we haven't decided exactly where he is going to bat," he added.

Odisha FC defeat Gokulam Kerala FC

Odisha FC secured their second successive win in the Indian Women's League (IWL) beating defending champions Gokulam Kerala FC 2-0 at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday. Goals from Pyari Xaxa and S Lynda Kom put OFC above Kickstart FC on top of the 7-team table on goal difference. The eves are yet to concede a goal in the tournament.



Odisha FC players celebrate a goal during their match against Gokulam Kerala FC.

INDIA SIGN OFF WITH WIN OVER FRANCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Valencia (Spain), Dec 20: Captain Harmanpreet Singh and Jugraj Singh struck a brace each as the Indian men's hockey team beat France 5-4 in their fourth and final match to notch up their lone win in the five-nation tournament here Wednesday.

Jugraj scored in the 20th and 60th minutes while Harmanpreet found the target in the 25th and 56th minutes. Vivek Sagar Prasad



(16th) struck once. India thus ended their largely disappointing campaign with a win. They had

lost all their earlier three matches in the tournament - 0-1 to Spain, 2-7 to Belgium and 2-3 to Germany.

Griezmann writes name in Atletico's record books in draw with Getafe

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Dec 20: Atletico Madrid failed to make history of its own on a night Antoine Griezmann tied Luis Aragones as the club's all-time top scorer. Griezmann scored twice Tuesday to tie Aragones on 173 goals, but Atletico conceded a stoppage-time equaliser in a 3-3 draw with Getafe that ended the club's record-tying 20-game home winning streak.

Borja Mayoral converted a late penalty kick to help Getafe rally from two goals down against 10-man Atletico, which was trying to win 21 in a row at home in all competitions for the first time ever. It had last won 20 consecutive matches as a host in 2013. Getafe had handed Diego Simeone's team their last setback at home in a 1-1 league draw in February.

Griezmann scored his 172nd goal with Atletico in the 44th minute and then tied Aragones' record by converting a 69th-minute penalty kick.

Atletico's fans chanted Griezmann's and Aragones' names after the France forward hit the top corner with a right-footed shot from the penalty spot at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium. Aragones reached his mark in 370 matches, while Griezmann needed 364 games with the club.

The draw lifted Atletico to third place in the league standings after 17 matches. It has the same 35 points as defending champion Barcelona. Girona remains the surprise leader with 44 points, two more than second-place Real Madrid.

Mayoral had evened the match for Getafe with a goal in the 53rd before Alvaro Morata put the hosts ahead again with a header in the 63rd. Oscar Rodriguez scored Getafe's second goal in 87th and Mayoral netted the equaliser by converting the penalty three minutes into stoppage time to keep Atletico from earning the milestone victory. Atletico played a man down from the 38th after Stefan Savic was sent off with consecutive yellow cards.

Shuttlers Satwik, Chirag confirmed for Khel Ratna

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 20: The Sports Ministry Wednesday put its stamp on the nominations for the annual sports awards, confirming the prestigious Khel Ratna honour for badminton players Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty and the Arjuna award for 26 sports persons, including pacer Mohammed Shami.

The awards will be conferred on the athletes by President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan January 9. Chirag and Satwik are Asian Games gold medallists, World Championships bronze winners and Commonwealth Games silver medallists.

On the other hand, Shami, 33, had a spectacular run in the ODI World Cup, where India finished

second-best, losing to Australia in the final. Shami was the leading wicket-taker in the World Cup, with 24 wickets to his name in seven outings.

The athletes were nominated for the awards by a government panel December 13. The ministry also cleared five coaches for Dronacharya award in the regular category and three in life-time category.

The Major Dhyana Chand Award in the life-time category will be conferred to three persons. Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar is the recipient of the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy 2023, while Lovely Professional University, Punjab and Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra are the first and second runner-ups.

ARJUNA AWARDS FOR 2023: Ojas Pravin Deotale (archery), Aditi Gopichand Swami (archery), Murali Sreeshankar (athletics), Parul Chaudhary (athletics), Mohamed Hussamuddin (boxing), R Vaishali (chess), Mohammed Shami (cricket), Anush Agarwalla (equestrian), Divyakriti Singh (equestrian dressage), Diksha Dagar (golf), Krishan Bahadur Pathak (hockey), Sushila Chanu (hockey), Pawan Kumar (kabaddi), Ritu Negi (kabaddi), Nasreen (kho-kho), Pinki (lawn bowls), Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar (shooting), Esha Singh (shooting), Harinder Pal Singh Sandhu (squash), Ayhika Mukherjee (table tennis), Sunil Kumar (wrestling), Antim (wrestling), Naorem Roshibina Devi (wushu), Sheetal Devi (para archery), Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy (blind cricket), Prachi Yadav (para canoeing).

DRONACHARYA AWARD (regular category) for outstanding coaches: Lalit Kumar (wrestling), RB Ramesh (chess), Mahaveer Prasad Saini (para athletics), Shivendra Singh (hockey), Ganesh Prabhakar Devrukhkar (mallakhamb).

DRONACHARYA AWARD (life-time category) for outstanding coaches: Jaskirat Singh Grewal (golf), Bhaskaran E (kabaddi), Jayanta Kumar Pushilal (table tennis).

DHYANA CHAND AWARD for lifetime achievement: Manjusha Kanwar (badminton), Vineet Kumar Sharma (hockey), Kavitha Selvaraj (kabaddi).

City on course for high five in 2023

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), Dec 20: Manchester City set aside struggles at home to ease past Urawa Red Diamonds 3-0 in the Club World Cup semifinals and are one game away from a fifth title in 2023.

The champions of Europe have never lost to the champions of Asia at a Club World Cup and it never looked likely on a balmy evening in the Red Sea port city Jeddah Tuesday.

After it took Man City until first-half stoppage time to score from an own goal by defender Marius Hoibraten, Mateo Kovacic and Bernardo Silva struck with shots in a seven-minute spell early in the second half against the Japanese team. Man City now will be favoured to beat Fluminense of Brazil in the final Friday.

Guardiola's team keep finding respite in international games during an untypical run in the Premier League where the defending champions have won just one of their last six games while leaking late goals.

A winning Club World Cup debut followed City closing out a perfect six-match winning streak in their Champions League group this month. City also added a UEFA Super Cup title in August to their storied trophy treble last season of Champions League, Premier League and English FA Cup.

City needed some help to score first Friday when Hoibraten diverted goalward a pass across the goalmouth by Matheus Nunes



Chelsea enter League Cup semifinals

LONDON: Chelsea's faltering first season under Mauricio Pochettino could yet be saved by the English League Cup. The London club reached the semifinals by beating Newcastle 4-2 in a penalty shootout Tuesday, with the game only getting that far thanks to a goal by Chelsea winger Mykhailo Mudryk in the second minute of stoppage time that made it 1-1 at Stamford Bridge. Newcastle right back Kieran Trippier was at fault for that goal and he was one of two visiting players to fail to score his penalty. Chelsea are languishing in 10th place in the Premier League despite having spent more than USD 1 billion on players in the last three transfer windows and having no European competitions to disrupt their schedule. Fulham have reached that stage for the first time in its 144-year history. Fulham, another team from west London, also needed a penalty shootout to advance and this one lasted longer, with defender Tosin Adarabioyo eventually netting the clinching kick for a 7-6 win. The game finished 1-1 in regulation at Goodison Park, with Everton substitute Beto scoring in the 82nd to cancel out an own-goal by Michael Keane.

that was unlikely to find another of the six midfield players in the starting lineup.

With Erling Haaland still ruled out by a foot injury,

the faces of City stars Haaland and Kevin De Bruyne sitting in the main stand were broadcast on the screens. Neither will play in the final.

In the 52nd, deep-lying midfielder Kovacic exploited the space left vacant where Haaland would be to surge forward and shoot after collecting Kyle Walker's long pass.

It was shooting practice for City seven minutes later when Bernardo scored with the help of a slight deflection after goalkeeper Shusaku Nishikawa pushed away Nunes' first effort.

Come Friday, another Europe vs South America final — the 13th in 19 editions — will decide the last Club World Cup title in the current format that began in 2005.

Guardiola also opted to leave Argentina forward Julian Alvarez on the bench.

The biggest cheers during a lackluster first half came when