



Breaking stereotypes

Actor Prachi Desai reflects on being perceived as too pretty for substantial roles

LEISURE | P2



We're not stopping: Israel

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu vows to keep fighting in Gaza until Hamas is destroyed, defying global calls for a ceasefire

INTERNATIONAL | P10



PLI schemes fetch ₹95K-cr

The Central government's production linked incentive (PLI) schemes have led to investments of over ₹95,000 crore till September

BUSINESS | P11



Candid confession

Head coach Rahul Dravid says India need a bit of luck to end 31-year wait for a Test series win in South Africa

SPORTS | P12

Top IDCO official in Vigilance dragnet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 26: Vigilance sleuths Tuesday conducted searches at multiple locations linked to IDCO Chief General Manager (CGM) Saroj Kanta Mohanty on charges of amassing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

On the basis of a warrant issued by the Special Vigilance Judge in Bhubaneswar, the anti-corruption wing sleuths, comprising 10 DSPs and six inspectors, raided the senior OAS officer's properties in Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and Jajpur, apart from his office premises (cabin) in Bhubaneswar.

Following the raids, the sleuths found documents of a 3-BHK flat in Sailashree Vihar area here, two 3-BHK flats in Cuttack and a double-storey building at Brahmabarada in Jajpur belonging to Mohanty.

At least 10 plots, mostly in prime localities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, and a four-wheeler were also found in Mohanty's name. Searches were on when reports last came in.

Mohanty joined service in 1997. He had served as Barang tehsildar and Cuttack sub-collector before taking over as the IDCO CGM, said a source.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Why are you taking so much effort, sir? Write anything. Nobody is going to read. It'll be passed in seconds

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	71336.80 ↑ 229.84
NIFTY	21441.30 ↑ 91.90
DOLLAR	83.18 ↑ ₹0.01
EURO	91.58 ↓ ₹0.07
GOLD	₹63,137 ↑ ₹183
SILVER	₹75,590 ↑ ₹204

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	27.6°C	26.6°C
Min Temp	16.0°C	15.5°C
Humidity	91%	89%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FOG/MIST IN THE MORNING



SMILE PLEASE: A tiger climbs a wall of a house in a village of Pilibhit district, Uttar Pradesh, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

Blast near Israel embassy

No one injured; police recover 'abusive' letter addressed to Israeli ambassador near explosion site in New Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 26: A blast occurred near the Israel embassy in the Chanakyapuri diplomatic enclave here Tuesday evening. No one was injured in the incident and an 'abusive' letter addressed to the Israeli ambassador was found near the site, officials said.

After the police control room (PCR) received a call about a 'loud sound' from Jindal House behind the embassy at 5:53 pm, teams of Crime Branch, bomb disposal squad, dog squad and forensic department were rushed to the spot, they said.

An almost three-hour-long search operation was carried out in the area. A National Investigation Agency (NIA) team also examined the site, they said.

The explosion and the recovery of the letter is a grim reminder of the 2021 blast near



the embassy in which some cars were damaged. The NIA had probed the case. Security has been high around the Israel embassy since the war between Israel and Hamas began earlier this year, security officials said.

Soon after the explosion, which took place in a green belt area outside the Central Hindi Training Institute near the embassy, teams of Delhi Police's Special Cell, bomb disposal squad and Fire department rushed to the spot. Later, a team of the NIA examined the site, a senior police officer said.

When contacted, Israeli embassy spokesperson Guy Nir said, "We can confirm that around 5:48 pm, there was a blast in close proximity to the embassy. Delhi Police and the security team are still investigat-

THREAT EMAIL TO TOP BANKS

Mumbai: A threat mail sent to the Reserve Bank here about 11 bomb blasts in Mumbai Tuesday sent police into a tizzy, but no suspicious object was found at these locations, including the RBI central office building and two other banks. The e-mail was sent from the id khilafat.india@gmail.com on the RBI governor's email id at around 10:50 am threatening bomb blasts at the RBI new Central Office building, Fort, HDFC House in Churchgate, and ICICI Bank Tower in Bandra-Kurla Complex at 1:30 pm, a police official said.

Threatening execution of blasts, the sender demanded that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and RBI governor Shaktikanta Das resign from their posts immediately and release a full statement about the disclosure of the 'banking scam', as per the FIR. "11 bombs are planted at different locations in Mumbai and explosions will take place at 1.30 pm at the RBI new Central Office building, Fort, HDFC House in Churchgate, and ICICI Bank Tower in Bandra-Kurla Complex. All the 11 bombs will blast one by one (sic)," it said.

ing the situation." Deputy Chief of Mission (Israel) Ohad Nakash Kaynar said, "All our diplomats and workers are safe. Our security teams are working in full cooperation with local Delhi security and they will investigate the matter further." Police sources said a typed letter addressed to the Israeli ambassador was found near the explosion site behind the embassy premises.

The one-page 'abusive' letter in English has been sent to the forensic lab to check for fingerprints, they said. An officer said no traces of burnt explosives were found at the spot. In February 2012, a bomb was planted under an Israeli embassy car here, injuring a diplomat's wife.

Vinesh Phogat writes to PM, returns awards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 26: World Championship medalist Vinesh Phogat Tuesday returned her Khel Ratna and Arjuna awards to the government protesting against the election of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh-loyalist Sanjay Singh as the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president, the wrestler wrote in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Vinesh's decision comes days after Olympic medalist Bajrang Punia and Deaflympics champion Virender Singh Yadav returned their Padma Shri awards. "I am returning my Major Dhyanchand Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award," Vinesh announced through a letter that she posted in her X (formerly Twitter) account.

On Thursday (December 21), Sanjay Singh was elected as the president of the WFI after the panel led by the close aide of Brij Bhushan won 13 of the 15 posts.

The wrestlers had demanded that no close associate of Brij Bhushan should enter the WFI administration.

WFI ROW



Following the election, Rio Olympics bronze medalist Sakshi Malik announced that she would quit the sport.

However, the Sports Ministry had later suspended the newly-elected panel for not following the provisions of its own constitution while taking decisions and also asked the IOA to constitute an ad-hoc panel to manage the affairs of the sports body.

In suspending the fresh panel, the government cited its 'hasty announcement' of organising the U-15 and U-20 nationals 'without following due procedure and not giving sufficient notice to wrestlers' for preparations.

Meet the 1st Hindu woman to run in Pak elections

SAVEERA PRAKASH, A DOCTOR BY PROFESSION, FILES HER NOMINATION FOR PROVINCIAL POLLS IN RESTIVE KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA PROVINCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Peshawar, Dec 26: Saveera Parkash has become the first woman from the minority Hindu community to run in the provincial elections in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

A doctor by profession, Parkash, 25, filed her nomination papers Friday for the general seat of PK-25 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Buner district, her father Om Parkash said, Tuesday.

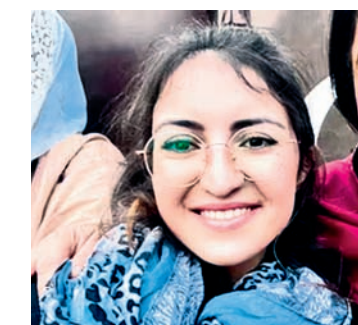
Om Parkash said his daughter filed a nomination for the general seat PK-25 constituency of the KPK Assembly from the mountainous Buner district as a

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate. She has also filed papers for a seat reserved for women in the KPK Assembly.

Parkash filed the papers at the request of the provincial leadership of the party Senator Rubina Khalid. She will formally get a party ticket during a PPP rally in Buner, Wednesday.

"She is a serious candidate and will contest the upcoming elections due for February 8 on a general as well reserved seat," said Om Parkash, a recently retired doctor who had been an active member of the party for the past 35 years.

According to local politician Saleem Khan, who is affiliated



with the Quami Watan Party, Parkash is the first woman from Buner to have submitted her nomination papers to contest the upcoming elections from the general seat.

Parkash completed her MBBS from the Abbottabad International Medical College in 2022 and is also the general secretary of the PPP women's wing in Buner.

Parkash said she wanted to follow in her father's footsteps in working for the area's poor.

She said she had submitted her nomination papers December 23 (Friday).

Parkash emphasised her desire to work for the welfare of women in the area to ensure a safe space for them and to help them attain their rights.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province which borders Afghanistan is a stronghold of

the Pakistani Taliban terror group, blamed for a series of attacks on security forces.

She said women have been "suppressed and neglected", especially concerning the development sector.

"Serving humanity is in my blood," she said, citing her medical background, highlighting that her dream to become an elected legislator stemmed from having experienced poor management and helplessness in government hospitals as a doctor.

According to the ECP's recent amendments, a five per cent inclusion of women candidates is mandatory on general seats.

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KAMAR DE LOS REYES DIES AFTER BATTLE WITH CANCER

Actor Kamar de los Reyes, renowned for his roles in *One Life to Live* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops II*, passed away at the age of 56 in Los Angeles, as confirmed by the family. The announcement, made by Lisa Goldberg, a publicist for de los Reyes' wife, Sherri Saum, revealed that he succumbed to a short-lived struggle with cancer.

BLACKPINK'S LISA MAKES K-POP HISTORY ON INSTAGRAM

Girl k-pop group BLACKPINK's youngest member, Lisa, has etched her name in history as the first-ever K-pop idol to gather a staggering 100 million followers on the social media app Instagram. Lalisa Manobal is a Thai rapper, singer, and dancer.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Today will be a difficult day full of action. You may not agree with your friends about trifling matters, but you will love it. You will complete all work that has been pending, which will give you relief. Ganesha says it is an optimistic day.

TAURUS

Be careful, says Ganesha. All your calculations and conclusions, plans and moves are likely to go haywire. Time and again, you could fail and, ultimately, get frustrated. Even simple and obvious things are likely to get you worked up. Knowing that you are basically gentle, benign and large hearted, your friends and elders will rally round and provide you the help and advise you need.

GEMINI

You know where you are headed, and will redouble your efforts to reach your goals today. You are full of energy and enthusiasm, which helps you to achieve all your targets. You will receive unexpected gains owing to your hard work. Bountiful success will be yours at the end of a hard day's labour, says Ganesha.

CANCER

Sentimentalism will be hinder your path of success. So, says Ganesha, give up too much sentimentalism. It can be quite a hazard in the future. You will win over people with the force of speech and polite approach.

LEO

You will be able to influence people with your co-operative and accommodating attitude today. You will have discussions on various topics with people who come into contact with you. You will also come into contact with people who share the same mental wavelength as you do, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

Today you may understand the utter uselessness of your dogged efforts and feel extremely anxious about success eluding you constantly. However, Ganesha advises you not to lose hope, but to re-energise your mind, give a boost to your curiosity and pay attention to long-term goals.

LIBRA

Ganesha says that today you will get worried over petty matters and be tense. To get mental peace keep yourself occupied with religious or spiritual activity. Along with that if you go to some religious place you will gain mental peace, which will stay with you for a long time.

SCORPIO

You may be in a mood to build castles in the air today, says Ganesha. You may be caught up in a whirlpool of thoughts and nostalgia. However, you will soon realise that the time once gone, never comes back and so, you make up for the lost time by beginning the new chapter of your life from today itself.

SAGITTARIUS

You rule your hear today, predicts Ganesha. You are likely to become an expert in reading people's mind. Everything is fair in love and war, is what you believe! Win over your sweetheart and set out on a journey toward destination unknown, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN

You are busy as a beaver. It is extremely difficult for you to think for yourself as you are all tied up by the demands of your work. You want to be creative, but again, the workload will not let you have that freedom, says Ganesha. You have learnt the art of time management. So, you have properly lined up your priorities and success is waiting for you.

AQUARIUS

You will hit the bull's eye, today. From the smallest to the biggest, all of your plans will turn into reality. Don't get disheartened if there are some obstacles on your path; you are fully armed to face the challenges and come out triumphant.

PISCES

For those looking for a promotion at the work-place, now is the time to ask for it. Freelancers could find interesting projects falling into their laps. Businesses are likely to see a surge in profits. No conflicts in personal life are indicated.

Prachi on breaking beauty stereotype

Mumbai: Actress Prachi Desai, who is currently seen in the webseries *Dhootha*, feels that earlier she was considered to be too pretty for meaty parts in projects.

In an interview with media, she stated that she was often considered too pretty, and many a time when she was given a shot for something interesting, they probably thought she was too pretty to pull it off.

According to her, an actor can want to and wish to do a lot of things, but at the end of the day, it is the director's and writer's imagination that pulls you out of the boxes that have been created. The actress expressed that now she feels that at least most of them can see that they can do a lot more with her as an actor.

Prachi explained that having a certain screen presence—having that innocence and sweetness—probably stops people from making casting

choices that can be considered unconventional.

The actress concluded that now filmmakers are very open to doing something unconventional, so even if you don't look

anything like the character in the box looks, they know that you can pull it off with your individuality. However, the good news is that things are changing for the better.

AGENCIES



'DAD TOOK ADRENALINE SHOTS TO REMAIN CONSCIOUS AT SHOTS'

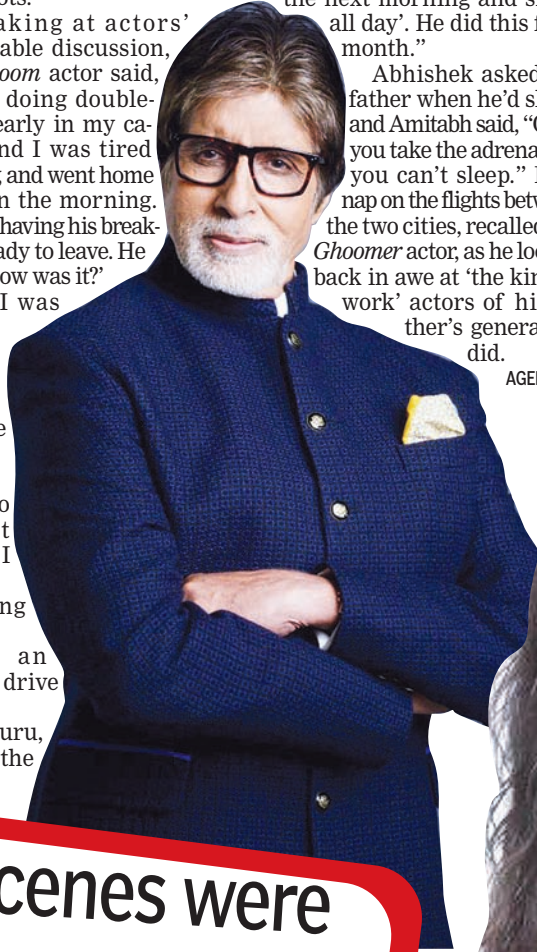
Mumbai: Actor Abhishek Bachchan looked back at how the film industry has changed in the two-plus decades that he's been an actor and recalled how his father, Amitabh Bachchan, was able to shoot *Deewaar* and *Sholay* at the same time in different cities and took adrenaline shots.

Speaking at actors' roundtable discussion, the *Dhoom* actor said, "I was doing double-shifts early in my career, and I was tired one day and went home early in the morning. He was having his breakfast, ready to leave. He said, 'How was it?' I said I was very tired. Very casually, he said, 'We used to do a lot of this. I was shooting *Sholay* about an hour's drive from Bengaluru, where the

Ramgarh set was. We would shoot all day, I would pack up, take an hour's drive to Bengaluru airport, take a flight to Mumbai, go straight to Ballard pier, where we were shooting the climax of *Deewaar*. I would shoot all night, come back home, take a shot of adrenaline, fly back to Bengaluru the next morning and shoot all day'. He did this for a month."

Abhishek asked his father when he'd sleep, and Amitabh said, "Once you take the adrenaline, you can't sleep." He'd nap on the flights between the two cities, recalled the *Ghoomer* actor, as he looked back in awe at 'the kind of work' actors of his father's generation did.

AGENCIES



KAT TALKS ABOUT HER SHOWBIZ IDOLS

Mumbai: Actress Katrina Kaif opened up about her early days and how Malaika Arora inspired her to be a model.

During the promotion of her upcoming film *Merry Christmas*, she shared, "When I first started out in Bombay (Mumbai), my ambition was to be a model. My idols were Madhu Sapre and Lakshmi Menon, they were the supermodels of that time, and even Malaika (Arora). She was into modelling at that time. They were the women I ever looked up to."

She said, "At that point, I used to make a list of all the big ad agencies or all the ad agencies that were there in Bombay. I used to hop onto a taxi and go to them one by one. I have done many fake sabun (soap) ads and I always got the sabun ads."

On the work front, Katrina was last seen in *Tiger 3*.

AGENCIES



SSR's intimate scenes were too much for me: Ankita

Mumbai: Actress Ankita Lokhande in the latest episode of 'Big Boss 17' was seen talking about how she could not handle her former boyfriend and late star Sushant's intimate scenes in films such as *Shuddh Desi Romance* and *PK*.

While talking to co-contestants Abhishek Kumar and Ayesha Khan in the house, she

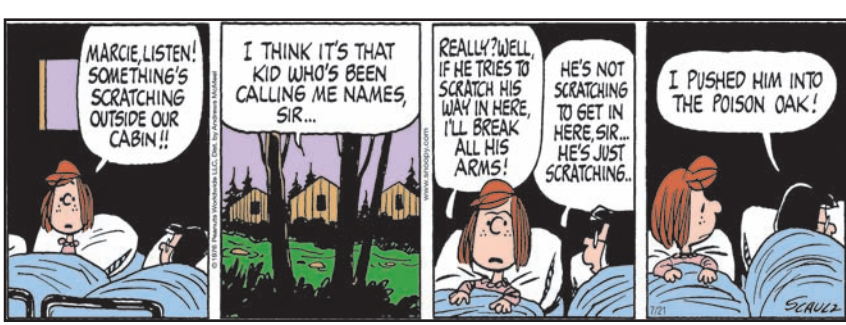
spoke about the kiss scene with Anushka in the film: "When I watched *PK*, mujhe chakkar aa gaye the." She also shared that she was upset and broke down when she saw him having multiple intimate scenes in *Shuddh Desi Romance*.

"We went to watch the film. He booked the entire theatre hall in Yash Raj Studios. There was nobody except me and him. Because he couldn't watch it with anyone because he knew I would lose it." She mentioned that she scratched his hand and added: "He even ran away from the hall and I watched the full film alone and after watching all the scenes I cried so much after reaching home. Even he cried."

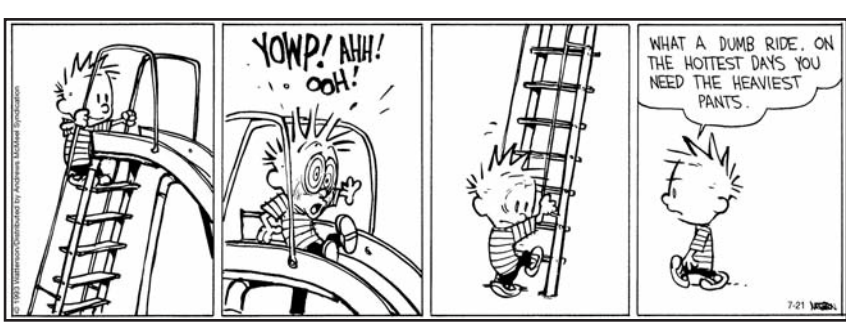
IANS



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

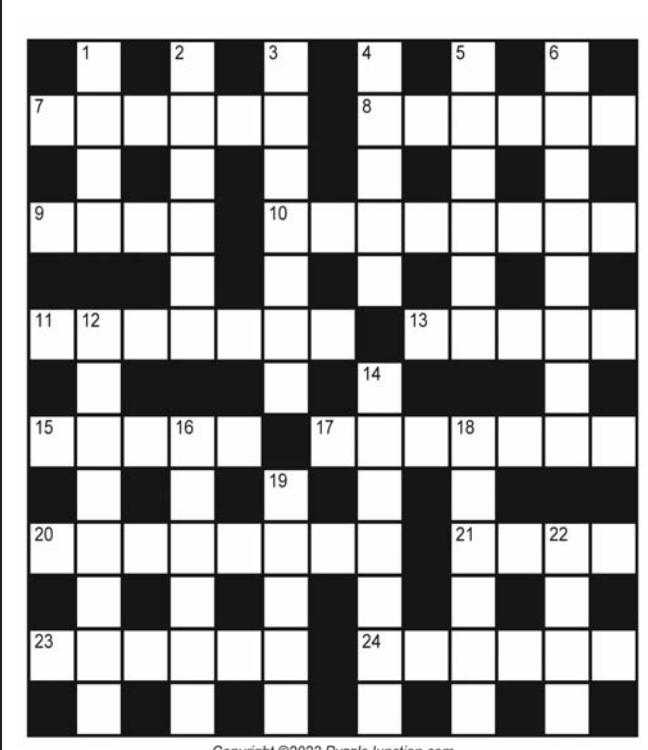


BREVITY



FUN post

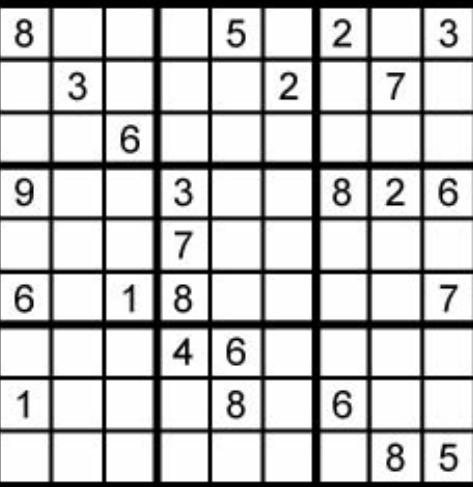
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Canal site
 - 8 Seizes
 - 9 Malt kiln
 - 10 Zambezi River waterfall
 - 11 When angry, take this
 - 13 Practical joke
 - 15 Fidgety
 - 17 Tankards and tenders
 - 20 Don Quixote, e.g.
 - 21 Peak
 - 23 Cattle pen
 - 24 Ambrosia
 - Down**
 - 1 Pop's Lady
 - 2 Stumble
 - 3 Save
 - 4 Duck hunter's call
 - 5 Comic's forte
 - 6 Elective
 - 12 Figure of speech
 - 14 Drawing away
 - 16 Empty-bellied
 - 18 Meagre
 - 19 Bird of Jove
 - 22 Flair

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

ODIA GIRL SHINES

Saranya Samantaray, a Class IX girl from St Joseph's High School, Bhubaneswar, bagged the title of Mission Dream 2023-24 runner-up organised in Kolkata recently. In a beauty pageant with many contestants, 14-year-old Saranya bagged the title after clearing several rounds. In addition, she also won the subtitle of Miss Outstanding



BJD'S 27TH FOUNDATION DAY

Odisha on path of prosperity: Mishra



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 26: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has given good governance and Odisha is on the path of development during the last 24 years, BJD vice president Debi Prasad Mishra said on the occasion of BJD's 27th Foundation Day. He further said that 26 years ago Naveen Patnaik along with several other erstwhile Janata Dal (JD) leaders founded the Biju Janata Dal (BJD). The BJD as a regional party has all along been claiming that it is fighting for the genuine demands and alleged wrong treatment meted out to the people of Odisha by the

subsequent Central governments. On this occasion, thousands of party leaders and workers across the state Tuesday took pledge to build a 'Nabin' (new) Odisha. The founder president of BJD and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik offered floral tribute at the statue of his late father Biju Patnaik, in whose name the regional party was named. The BJD was formed December 26, 1997, after the demise of Biju Patnaik in April that year. The party leaders and workers at the BJD state headquarters 'Sankha Bhavan' took oath rededicating themselves to work selflessly for the state and its people, said Mishra.

"I take pride in being a disciplined member of the BJD. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is the architect of Odisha's development and I will act as a soldier to take the state's developments to new heights. I will fight for the legitimate demands of the state. I take the pledge to work for building a prosperous, empowered and self-respecting new Odisha," the members read out at the function. The foundation day of the BJD was observed in all blocks, urban local bodies (ULBs) and 147 Assembly segments with blood donation camps, plantation drives and other social activities. A cycle rally from 'Anand Bhawan' (Naveen Patnaik's birthplace) in Cuttack to Sankha Bhavan in Bhubaneswar was organised. The BJD has been in power in Odisha since 2000 and Naveen Patnaik has been the Chief Minister for five consecutive times. Though the BJD formed its first government in the state along with BJP, the regional party later severed its ties with the saffron party before the 2009 state assembly elections and won 103 seats independently in the 147-member Odisha Assembly. The BJD increased its representation to 117 in the 2014 elections and won 112 seats in the 2019 elections.



CALL FROM LORD'S ABODE: A delegation including members of Srimandir Managing Committee, senior officials of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration and district administration met Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at Naveen Niwas in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, and invited him for the inauguration of the Srimandir Parikrama project scheduled for January 17

State's Cov tally climbs to 3

Fresh case detected in Khurda; samples of all 3 patients sent for genome sequencing to ascertain presence of JN.1 variant



Bhubaneswar, Dec 26: With the detection of a new COVID-19 case, the case load of Coronavirus infection in Odisha has gone up to three, a Health department official said, Tuesday. The third case was reported from Khurda district, Monday while the earlier two cases were reported from Cuttack district, said Bijay Mohapatra, Director of Health Services. "All three patients are having mild symptoms and are under treatment at their homes. Their condition is stable", he said. Mohapatra said the samples of the three patients have been sent for genome sequencing to

ascertain the presence of the JN.1 variant. The health officials are analysing the travel history of all three patients. There was no travel history of the first two cases while the process is to study the travel history of the third patient, he said. "We are strengthening our surveillance system. I appeal to all to go for Covid test, if anyone develops Covid-19 related symptoms," said the Health Services director. Meanwhile, across the country, 412 fresh cases of COVID-19 have been recorded, while the number of active cases of the infection has gone up to 4,170, the Union Health ministry said, Tuesday. The death toll due to the

India's JN.1 cases rise to 69

New Delhi: With six more cases of COVID-19 sub-variant JN.1, the number of infection of the new variant reported in the country have risen to 69, official sources said, Tuesday. Most of these patients are currently in home isolation and there was no increase in hospitalisation rates, they said. NITI Aayog member (Health) V K Paul had said last week that the new variant was being closely investigated but he stressed on the need for states to ramp up testing and strengthen their surveillance systems.

viral disease was recorded at 5,33,337 with three new fatalities reported from Karnataka in a span of 24 hours, according to the ministry's data updated at 8 am. India's Covid case tally currently stands at 4,50,09,660.

CM invited for heritage project inauguration

Bhubaneswar, Dec 26: A delegation of Srimandir Managing Committee, servitors and officials Tuesday presented the invitation of the temple heritage corridor project to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for the inaugural ceremony to be held January 17 next year. The 50-member delegation presented the first invitation of the 'Srimandir Parikrama' (temple heritage project) to Lord Lingaraj here this morning. "As per our tradition, we have invited Lord Lingaraj for the inauguration of the Srimandir Parikrama project. Senior servitors of Jagannath temple and Lingaraj temple performed the rituals as per our tradition," said artist Sudarsan Pattnaik, who is a member of the Srimandir Managing Committee.

Five nabbed for assault in City

Bhubaneswar, Dec 26: Commissionerate Police has claimed to have arrested 5 persons for allegedly assaulting and giving death threats to a person for filing a complaint over a matter related to property disputes. According to reports, the accused, Pradipta Sahu, Rashmi Ranjan Parida, Ajit Mohanty, Satyabrata Behera and Samir Barik, thrashed the complainant Manas Kumar Behera and robbed him of gold jewelry and cash in an attempt to forcefully claim ownership of his land property, said an official at Chandrasekharpur police station. DCP Prateek Singh said a complaint was lodged by Manas at Chandrasekharpur police station December 2, alleging that he was assaulted by some members of a security company who threatened him to vacate his property. Singh further said that Manas, who runs a private construction company, received a call from the accused persons and was asked to come near his property at Damana. Upon reaching the place, the accused took him inside a room and assaulted him with an iron rod. They also took away cash worth ₹22,750 and gold jewelry, including a bracelet and two gold rings. The accused were booked under Section 395 of IPC and were produced before a local court, Tuesday.

Mother's School holds annual day at Pahala

Bhubaneswar, Dec 26: To commemorate the rich history and diverse culture of India, Mother's Public School, Pahala celebrated its maiden annual day with the theme 'Folklore in Motion,' here Tuesday. The audiences were treated to a variety of traditional music, starting from the melodious folk songs of West Bengal to the Garba beats of Gujarat, the soulful lyrics of Malayali songs, vibrant Bhangra and rhythmic Sambalpuri. "Every performance filled the audience with a feeling of wonder and pride to be born in an incredible land like India. The audience was enthralled by a serene unity song to show that merit lies in having a united spirit," said a parent attending the event. In their addresses, the guests encouraged the students to excel in everything they take up. Ajay presented the annual report of the school, which was followed by distribution of prizes to high achievers in various fields of sports and academics.



POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Detained for 2 hrs in City: Sarangi to CM

Bhubaneswar: Senior BJP leader and Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi alleged that she was detained for two hours by a group of people in Laxmisagar area here under her Lok Sabha segment. Expressing anguish over the incident, Sarangi wrote a letter to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday raising questions on alleged indifference towards her security during visits. "I had gone to Ward No-43 on the invitation of residents to hold a meeting when some antisocial elements stopped my car and prevented me from proceeding to the meeting spot on Monday evening. I sat in the car waiting for the police to control the situation for two hours," Sarangi wrote in her letter. A scuffle broke out between Sarangi's supporters and those protesting her visit, said sources.

Epileptic teen seizure-free after pioneering brain surgery

Angus Bain, 17, has successfully undergone a life-changing laser brain surgery that cured him of his seizures. Bain has been suffering debilitating epileptic fits at least once a week since he was four-years-old. In October, doctors at the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People in Edinburgh, removed the brain tissue that had been causing him seizures for the past 13 years. Ten weeks later, Bain has not had a single incident. "I've never had such a long period not having a seizure, it's an amazing relief. I'm so happy," Bain was quoted as saying to BBC Scotland News.



normal life," Jothy Kandasamy, consultant neurosurgeon at the Hospital, was quoted as saying. "For some patients, by replacing invasive neurosurgery with cutting-edge laser therapy, we not only dramatically reduce risks to these patients, but significantly reduce their recovery time too," Kandasamy told

DOCTORS AT THE ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN EDINBURGH, REMOVED BAIN'S BRAIN TISSUE THAT HAD BEEN CAUSING HIM SEIZURES FOR THE PAST 13 YEARS
THE INNOVATIVE LASER TECHNOLOGY -- KNOWN AS MRI-GUIDED LASER INTERSTITIAL THERMAL THERAPY (LITT) -- IS MINIMALLY INVASIVE AND CAN REACH THE CENTRE OF THE BRAIN

with Bain's epilepsy since he was four. He has been on lots of very heavy medication, had wires in his head, brain stimulation, so many tests and scans," said his mother Nicki Bain. "The build-up to him having a seizure would last a few days, then after the seizure it would take another couple of days for him to recover, so I don't think he's ever actually had a normal day." Nicki said her son's "future is looking so bright, and we're incredibly proud and excited for him." However, it may take a year before he can come off the strong medication he is on so his brain recovery from the surgery, the report said.

BBC. The surgery has been life-changing not just for Bain, but for the entire family. "Our lives have been consumed

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

BROKEN CONTINENT



Jan-Werner Mueller

EUROPEAN LEADERS STILL HAVE NOT FOUND A STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH THE PRESENCE OF A VETO-WIELDING PUTIN ALLY IN THEIR MIDST

In a major political victory for embattled Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, the European Council decided to open accession talks with his country recently. According to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, it was "a day that will remain engraved in the history of our Union." In fact, the real winner was Hungary's anti-EU Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán.

After threatening for weeks to block the decision, Orbán apparently relented by simply leaving the room so that the other leaders could come to an officially unanimous agreement. Not only will he still have plenty of opportunities to sabotage Ukrainian accession in the future, but he also managed to extort EU funds that the European Commission had been withholding over concerns about corruption.

Ironically, that outcome further reinforces arguments against European enlargement. After all, as the Hungarian government has demonstrated for all the world to see, once you are inside the European club, it seems nobody can force you to abide by the club's rules. The closer that Ukraine gets to joining, the louder will be the chorus reminding us that – contrary to all the treaties and moralistic rhetoric from European elites – there are no real limits on corruption and autocratisation within the bloc.

Everyone in the European Union understands that Orbán was playing hardball to unlock EU funds. He continuously spun out new reasons for not opening accession talks, citing everything from concerns about Ukraine's ethnic Hungarian minority to worries about corruption (which was especially rich coming from the leader of a kleptocratic autocracy).

Ultimately faced with the need to make what she called a "strategic decision," von der Leyen accepted cosmetic changes to the Hungarian judicial system. And yet the day before the Hungarian government was cleared, it introduced

a draconian law enabling it to hound NGOs in the name of "defending national sovereignty."

Not only did Orbán's extortion work, but what was praised as a crafty workaround will end up being extraordinarily costly for Europe as a whole. For that, Europeans can thank German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who came up with the idea of sending his Hungarian counterpart out for a coffee while the remaining 26 member-state governments voted.

Moreover, although starting accession talks is of major symbolic importance, it will not help Ukrainians get through the winter. Ukraine is still fighting for its survival against a Russian war criminal who has reaffirmed his aim of wiping it off the map. Orbán well knows that the 50 billion (\$55 billion) promised to Ukraine by the EU is especially critical now that congressional Republicans are throwing America's own commitments to supplying weapons and aid into doubt. Yet he made sure to have his coffee in the room when the chance presented itself to deny this life-sav-

ing support.

European leaders still have not found a strategy for dealing with the presence of a veto-wielding Putin ally in their midst. The complacent expectation that a relatively small country can always be incentivised to offer what political scientists call "loser's consent" may have been reasonable when the EU worked properly as a consensus-building machine on material issues. But those days are gone.

One approach might be for Europe to make Orbán's coffee breaks permanent. There is already a precedent for working around vetoes to reach agreements on issues such as the pooling of resources. In the early 2010s, British Prime Minister David Cameron learned the hard way that British opposition to EU responses to the euro crisis could indeed be circumvented.

The European Commission clearly is failing to live up to its role as "guardian of the treaties." As critics have been pointing out for years, all the talk of new "instruments" and "mechanisms" (note the tech-

nocratic vocabulary) obscures the real problem. What the EU lacks is not legal tools but a willingness to confront member-state governments that are bent on undermining the foundation of European integration: the rule of law.

To be sure, pretending that a problem is technical, rather than political, is sometimes a smart way to help conflicting parties save face. But Orbán does not want to save face. On the contrary, he is positioning himself as primus inter pares among a new cohort of European far-right populists. Unlike previous hardline Euroskeptics, the goal is not to leave the EU, but to exploit it to the hilt. As Orbán put it in a speech last month, the idea is to treat the European Commission president as "our employee," and to extract maximum national advantage. That sums up the right-wing populist platform for next year's European Parliament elections.

There might have been a time when the EU was strong enough to deal with a government that is gaining the benefits of membership without observing the rules. In the current context, some have found hope in the recent triumph of Poland's liberal opposition parties over the previous populist government. Might the people themselves solve the problem, by getting rid of anti-European far-right populists at the ballot box?

Unfortunately, such optimism overlooks the fact that Orbán's autocracy is now deeply entrenched, and that a continuous rot within institutions cannot be easily contained. Europe might still grow larger; but it will become ever more fragmented and incapable of resolute joint action. There will be a sprawling periphery where everyone knows that things are not really working as they should – and that nobody has the political will to fix them.

The writer is Professor of Politics at Princeton University.
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Love is the keynote, Joy is the music, Knowledge is the performer, the infinite All is the composer and audience.

SRI AUROBINDO



AI Anxiety

Last month marked the one-year anniversary of the release of ChatGPT, OpenAI's chatbot. As companies rush to incorporate the groundbreaking technology into their operations, many workers remain anxious that generative artificial intelligence – which tends to rely on large language models (LLMs) – will replace them. Ironically, this anxiety is shared by professionals who are trained to deal with it: therapists.

To be sure, generative AI services, of which ChatGPT, Google's Bard, and Meta's LLaMA are only the tip of the iceberg, will disrupt work as we know it today. Accenture estimates that language tasks account for 62 per cent of total work time in the United States, and that LLMs are likely to automate or augment 65 per cent of those tasks. Earlier this year, the US National Bureau of Economic Research published a study showing that access to a generative AI-based conversational assistant increased the productivity of customer-support agents by an average of 14 per cent.

Global health systems could also benefit from productivity gains, as many are contending with underfunded prevention programmes, overworked staff, and the rising costs of chronic diseases. This is especially true in the mental-health field, where providers have struggled to meet growing demand in the wake of the pandemic. According to a 2021 report by the OECD, 67 per cent of people had difficulties getting the mental-health support that they needed. Moreover, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that, in 2022, one in eight Americans regularly had feelings of worry, nervousness, or anxiety, while nearly half of US health workers reported often feeling burned out.

So, will generative AI revolutionise mental-health care by reducing therapists' workload, or even replace human therapists altogether? Can LLMs like ChatGPT or Bard "treat" us the same way?

Given that language and communication are the main tools of psychotherapy, one might assume that generative AI could easily automate treatment. Because these models can digest thousands of pages of therapy manuals, research papers, and clinical case studies faster than any human with a PhD, they could conceivably use this knowledge base to tailor psychotherapy for each patient.

But this aspiration (or fear) ignores how psychotherapy works and what makes it effective. Research shows that successful treatment depends mainly on two elements: "specific" and "common" factors. Specific factors are techniques such as relaxation exercises and exposures that psychotherapists intentionally use. For example, while a person can talk for hours about their arachnophobia, conquering their fear requires gradual exposure to spiders.

But the key to effective psychotherapy lies in common factors. These include genuinely human traits such as empathy and hope. They also encompass the actions – listening and sharing emotions and thoughts – that form the basis of human connection and are crucial to building a bond of trust between patient and therapist, without which psychotherapy is doomed to fail. Moreover, only within the confines of such a relationship can the two parties agree on expectations and goals – another important common factor.

Ultimately, both categories can help explain why psychotherapy may work in one case but not in another. For example, a distant and cold expert who selects the right technique will not be successful, nor will a kind and motivated therapist who addresses issues that are irrelevant to the patient.

As a board-certified psychotherapist who regularly sees patients, I do not believe that generative AI will automate the profession. Psychotherapy is a deeply human interaction, whereby two people meet to relieve one of them of personal distress. Despite the speed and ease with which LLMs can conjure text using natural language, they will not soon form connections with humans as we do with each other.

Moreover, psychotherapy offers a safe space – protected by professional confidentiality – to talk about feelings, vulnerabilities, and thoughts we might be too embarrassed, or ashamed, to discuss with another person. What is discussed in the therapy room remains there. The idea that we will be comfortable sharing intrusive thoughts, obsessions, and sensitive information with a system that may use any input to further improve its output is far-fetched. Even if data were anonymised, patients would still share sensitive health information with private companies on a large scale, which is fundamentally different from a face-to-face session with a single therapist.

Generative AI could, however, augment the work of therapists by making it easier to determine the most suitable techniques for each patient. More specifically, in complex cases, it could propose a list of personalised interventions from which to choose, nudging therapists in the right direction. One can also imagine an AI-enabled self-referral tool expanding access to mental-health services, especially for minority groups or those with communication needs such as plain language. All of these developments would aid therapy, not replace it.

Therapists need not fear generative AI, even though it has been hailed as a transformative innovation. According to the World Economic Forum, marriage and family therapists and mental-health counsellors are some of the jobs that are least likely to be transformed by LLMs. Instead, therapists working through their anxiety about being replaced by technology must take their own advice: face the fear head-on. What they would see is that AI fails to replicate our common humanity, the foundation on which psychotherapy is constructed.

The writer is a German board-certified psychiatrist/psychotherapist.
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Marc Augustin

The idea that we will be comfortable sharing intrusive thoughts, obsessions, and sensitive information with a system that may use any input to further improve its output is far-fetched

IN JEST THIS

Time for New Year resolutions



Melvin Durai

IF YOUR RESOLUTIONS FAIL, MAKE NEW ONES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THE FOLLOWING NEW YEAR

In just a few days, we'll be welcoming 2024. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you, dear reader, a Happy New Year!

A new year is a good time to make some changes and produce a new you. Of course, I don't mean this literally. I don't want you to change so drastically that your friends don't recognise you. I don't want you to start the year, for example, as a loud-mouthed, out-of-shape man, and end the year as a soft-spoken, fitness-obsessed woman.

Yes, it's possible to change that much within a year—especially with help from a surgeon. But for most people, drastic changes are unrealistic and difficult to maintain.

I've made many resolutions over my lifetime and succeeded only a few times. Along the way, I've learned some important lessons that I'd like to share with you.

1. Don't aim high—aim low. Aiming high is how most people fail. Some of them have never exercised in their lives, yet they somehow convince themselves that they're going to run for an hour a day, beginning on January 1. This usually results in a long line at the doctor's office on January 2.

First patient: "Ouch, my foot!"
Second patient: "Ouch, my back!"

Third patient: "Ouch, my wallet!"

Trust me, you are better off running for 10 minutes a day consistently than aiming for something longer and wishing you had married a doctor.

2. Make a real commitment. How do you do this? Well, think of what happens when two people commit to each other. They have a commitment ceremony, also known as a wedding. You don't have to have a ceremony, but

you can write your resolutions down and announce them to your friends and family at the New Year's party. This is also a good way to determine if your resolutions are realistic. If your friends say, "Good luck! You can do it!" you may want to aim lower.

3. Don't make 10 resolutions - make a maximum of three. It's easier to focus on a few changes at a time. Choose three resolutions that will make your life or someone else's better in some way, and make sure you break them down into simple, specific actions you can take every day. Don't resolve to "read a book every month." Resolve to "read 10 pages every day." Don't resolve to "have a better relationship with my wife." Resolve to "get my butt off the sofa and help my wife in the kitchen." Don't resolve to "be kind to strangers on the bus." Resolve to

"avoid picking my nose in public."

4. If your resolutions fail, make new ones throughout the year. You don't have to wait until the following New Year. You can do it at any time. You can do it on the first day of a new month, on your birthday, or even when you get a haircut. Every morning is an opportunity to pursue a better you; every night is a chance to say, "Damn it, I'll try again tomorrow!"

5. Don't give up. Remember: it's better to make a little progress toward your goals than none at all. If your resolution to run for 30 minutes a day crumbles, create another resolution right away to run for 20 minutes a day. If that fails, try 10 minutes a day. You will eventually be successful, even if you're running for just one minute a day—whenever your neighbour lets his dog run loose.

WISDOM CORNER

It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.
HENRY DAVID THOREAU

All our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing higher than reason.
IMMANUEL KANT

You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water.
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1801: After conquering Italy, Napoleon established the Republic of Lucca.

1831: Charles Darwin set sail on the HMS Beagle, beginning the voyage on which he would formulate his theory of evolution.

Red Sea crisis

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Sir, The situation in the Red Sea has evolved into a significant global concern due to the relentless attacks by Houthi militants on ships belonging to numerous countries. These repeated assaults, purportedly in support of the Palestinian cause, have created a disruptive environment in one of the world's most crucial trade routes. The Red Sea and the Suez Canal serve as vital arteries for global trade, facilitating the movement of around 20,000 ships annually, accounting for a substantial portion of global seaborne trade. The recent attacks, resulting in damage to vessels and disruption to shipping, have triggered widespread repercussions across the global supply chain. The gravity of this situation is accentuated by the sheer volume of trade impacted. Roughly 30% of the world's container volume, 9% of oil, and 6% of gas traverse this route, making any disturbance profoundly consequential. Notably, the attacks have prompted major shipping firms and oil producers like BP to suspend voyages through this corridor. Consequently, the detour around Africa, taken by over 300 vessels in the last week alone, has extended transit times by approximately 12 days. This detour not only adds to costs but also creates a container mismatch, particularly affecting shipments from China. In response, various efforts are underway to safeguard these vital trade routes. The US-initiated Operation Prosperity Guardian, supported by multiple nations, seeks to establish a secure passage for ships. India, deeply affected by these disruptions, has deployed naval vessels to protect its vessels and is exploring strategies to safeguard its supply chain.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

U-turn on hijab

Sir, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah abandoned the state government's plan to lift the ban on hijab in classrooms. Saturday, the Chief Minister maintained that the government was only contemplating such an idea, a day after saying that everyone was free to wear and eat whatever they want. This U-turn came even as the BJP fired barbs at the Chief Minister for the proposal, calling it an attempt to "sow the seeds of religious identity politics" in classrooms. The CM dithering on the issue shows him in a poor light.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

EMTCT lifeline for AIDS-hit pregnant women in Ganjam



POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 26: The implementation of the EMTCT programme in Ganjam district has proved to be a boon for the foetus in pregnant women affected by AIDS. Till now, since 2008, a total of 1,017 AIDS-affected pregnant women have been identified in the district, sources said Tuesday.

The programme, 'Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission (EMTCT)' has helped reducing transferring of the disease to the child in the womb. Sources informed that a number of measures are being taken by the Centre, Odisha government and various private agencies to combat the dreaded disease from spreading. Awareness programmes are being conducted at regular intervals so that people do not fall prey to the disease and AIDS-hit persons are not deemed outcasts in the district.

However, people continue to behave weirdly with AIDS-affected persons due to the stigma attached to the disease. A woman, when she becomes pregnant



after being afflicted with AIDS also endangers the child developing in her womb. It is in these cases that EMTCT has proved to be a lifeline, officials said.

The new treatment method has now turned out to be a lifeline for the yet-to-be-born. The number of AIDS infected newborn babies is slowly but surely decreasing in the district, officials pointed out.

Officials said that a total of 1,017 HIV-hit women have become pregnant from 2008 to December 2023 in Ganjam district. A total of 21 pregnant women were found HIV positive in 2023. The figures stood at 27 (in 2022), 33 (in 2021), 37 (in 2020), 38 (in 2019) and 28 (in 2018). These HIV-affected pregnant women are being provided

free treatment and medicines by the district AIDS Cell.

Officials pointed out that males affected with the disease are transmitting the disease to women as they are ignorant and have not been provided with proper sex education. "Most of the women infected by AIDS are because of sex without protection. Men lack knowledge about the disease and transmit it to their spouses as they do not take proper precautions," an official pointed out. "After the women become pregnant, they unwittingly transmit the disease to the foetus," he added.

The National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), a division under the Union Health and Family Welfare department has taken various measures to fight AIDS. The Odisha AIDS Control Society which functions under NACO is providing treatment and medicines to the infected women, free of cost, district cell officer Hemant Kumar Dash, informed. Any pregnant woman testing positive for AIDS is provided free medicines for six months. The chances of the child contracting AIDS becomes less than five per cent if the pregnant woman has properly taken the medicines, he added.

The rate of HIV positives is reducing in the district due to increasing awareness among the people while all women are being urged to undergo HIV test after becoming pregnant. The HIV test is available free of cost in all government hospitals, he added.



SCINTILLATING PERFORMANCE: Artistes take part in a dance routine as part of a cultural programme at a Krushi Mela held in Sambalpur, Tuesday

Govt official thrashes sarpanch

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Dec 26: Police detained Tuesday a sub-divisional officer (SDO) PWD, of Kantabanji for allegedly thrashing the sarpanch of Changria in this district. The accused has been identified as Siddharth Das while the victim is Sushil Guru. A video of the incident has gone viral on social media.

The incident happened when Guru visited 'Harishankar' Shrine to supervise the government work being done under the 5T initiative. It has been alleged that Guru complained of sub-standard work and misap-



propriation of government money. Hearing the complaints, a heated argument broke out between Guru and Das. The latter became furious and started

thrashing Guru in the open. Others intervened and separated the two. Locals however, informed the police, who arrived at the spot and detained Das.

Two separate cases (No-274/23 and 275/23) has been registered at Khaprakhol police station. A

complaint has been filed by Guru and one by Das. After the incident, tensions flared up in the locality as members of the Koshal Sena protested against Das. They threatened to protest Wednesday onwards if strict action is not taken against the errant SDO.

Man held after 28 yrs for murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 26: Personnel of the Chennai police with the help of local cops arrested a man from Gosani Nuagaon area Tuesday. The man who has been charged with the murder of his mother-in-law had been evading the cops for the last 28 years, Berhampur SP, Saravana Vivek M informed at a press conference here Tuesday. The accused has been identified as Harihar Patanjoshi, 50, a resident of this town.

Police said that, Harihar while working for an organisation in Chennai fell in love with local girl Indira in 1994. Both of them tied the nuptial knot the same year. However, the marriage soon turned sour as they had frequent altercations.

One day in 1995, Harihar and Indira had a heated argument. Harihar suddenly lost his cool and attacked Indira with a knife. Indira's mom trying to save her daughter also came under the brunt of Harihar's attack. In all, three persons suffered serious in-



juries, Indira, her mother Rama and Harihar's brother-in-law.

While undergoing treatment at a hospital in Chennai, Indira's mother Rama died August 9, 1995. A complaint was registered at the Adambakkam police station in Chennai in this regard.

Police registered a murder case and launched a manhunt to nab Harihar. However, they failed to arrest him as he apparently vanished into thin air. Since then police have been looking for Harihar. Finally, Chennai police got information that Harihar was staying in this town. A team from the police station arrived here and with the help of the local cops traced Harihar to his house. They raided the house and nabbed Harihar; the SP said.

Bloomberg officials happy with cold storage facilities

Rourkela's unique efforts to preserve products have attracted worldwide attention

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 26: Two senior officials of 'Bloomberg Philanthropy', Brook Smith and Aparna Ramanan recently took a tour of this city. They visited the cold storage facilities set up by the Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) in different parts of the city and also interacted with the beneficiaries. They also discussed various issues with RMC commissioner and members of the local SHGs.

The visit of the two officials assumes significance as this city had been named among the top 15



cities of the world, in the 'Bloomberg Mayors Challenger' survey in 2021 for its unique cold storage facilities. When the entire nation suffered the pangs of Covid-19, these cold storage facilities had come to the aid of small businessmen, farmers and also the women associated with the 'Mission Shakti' programme. For this unique project 'Bloomberg Philanthropy' had awarded the municipal corporation cash award of USD 1 million.

Initially the first of the cold storages was set up as a pilot project during the peak period of Covid-19 at VSS market in Chhend

locality. It was for fruit and vegetable vendors who needed a place to preserve their products. Seeing the success of the project, the RMC decided to set up such cold storage facilities at other places.

The 'Bloomberg Philanthropy' officials expressed satisfaction over how the cold storages have benefitted a large number of people. Among the other facilities they inspected were the ones at Traffic Gate, Panposh and Ambagaon market.

The two officials interacted with members of the different SHG groups and learned how they were managing those installations and how the facilities have helped in making their lives better. They also interacted with the farmers and small-time fruit vendors. All the meetings were extensive and proved productive to the beneficiaries, officials said.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

Namita Kumari Panda, W/o Artatrana Das resident of Village Udhura, Bhanjanagar, P.O.- New Udhura, P.S. Bellaguntha, Dist.- Ganjam, Pin- 761119, Odisha declare by this affidavit Nocf No.- 69, Date 31.10.2023 that now onwards I shall be known as Namita Das for all future purposes.

By Virtue of an affidavit before Notary, Malkangiri, I ABUDUL HAMID KHAN, S/o- Abdul Gafur Khan, At/p.o. - Kalimela, Dist.- Malkangiri, Odisha 764047, declare by this affidavit No.- 8788 dated 24.12.2023 that now onwards I shall be known as ABDUL HAMID KHAN for all future purpose.

Nature's gift 'Akhayasila' slowly gaining footfalls



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 26: The adage goes 'small is beautiful'. Hence, it may not be gigantic in size in comparison to its better-known sibling 'Khandadhar', but when it comes to beauty it is one of the best in Odisha. The small yet picturesque 'Akhayasila', is a small waterfall which is nature's scenic bounty in Sundargarh district.

The 'Akhayasila' waterfall is not far off from here. It is just 26km away from the 'Steel City' at Kaliaposh under Bisra block. No one is sure how the waterfall was christened 'Akhayasila'. Even the locals have no clue as to how the waterfall was named. "From my father I came to know the

name during my childhood and now I am 60 years old," said Kisan Munda, a local who stays nearby, while tending his goats.

The drive to 'Akhayasila' passes through Bondamunda and Bisra localities. The road conditions are bad, but one tends to forget the pain at the sight of the waterfall and the greenery surrounding it. "I forgot the horrendous road conditions once I saw the waterfall. The beauty is enthralling," said a visitor.

The place is not frequented by tourists. However, now the state Tourism department has plans to make the place an attractive destination for visitors. The final eight-kilometre stretch from Bisra railway bridge, has been black topped. 'Akhayasila'

"Plans to develop Akhayasila as an attractive tourist destination has been provisionally approved by the department"

NIRANJAN BEHERA - OFFICIAL

has plenty of parking spaces, so it is preferable to travel in cars, informed officials.

Tourism officer Niranjan Behera confirmed that development plans are on the anvil. "We have already sent a proposal to the department, and it has been provisionally approved. Now we are waiting for the allocation of funds so that development work begins," Behera stated.

Tourists are also waiting for the development of the place as a proper destination. "This monsoon I was at 'Akhayasila' with my friends and it looked alluring. The scenic beauty of the place is simply mind-blowing," said Manoj Satpathy, a resident

of Koelnagar. "Everywhere you can find greenery," he added.

The source to this waterfall is a small stream flowing into it. If one visits the place now, then one will find one small waterfall measuring just five feet feeding the main fall and reservoir. The main waterfall is approximately 15 feet in height. "During the monsoons there are several waterfalls as the sources of water increase," said Debi Das, who was picnicking here with his family members.

Presently there are no facilities for tourists other than the approach road and directions. However, locals are helpful in nature and they always provide a helping hand to those seeking directions. "If we misbehave or do something wrong then it will earn a bad name for us. Gradually 'Akhayasila' is becoming an attractive destination. It is helping the economy of people in its vicinity, informed a local resident.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, KALAHANDI

'e' Procurement Notice
 Bid Reference No. SE MID BPT - 09/2023-24
 E-mail: eemikdbpt@gmail.com

No. A-1085: Bid documents consisting name of Works, Estimated Cost, Cost of tender paper, EMD, time of completion, class of contractor, the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.

1 Name of the works	Civil Construction Work
2 No. of Work	02 (Two) Nos.
3 Estimated Cost	Varies from Rs.16.61 lakh to Rs.24.92 lakhs (Approximately)
4 Period of Completion	(Two) Calendar Months
5 Date and time of availability of bid documents in the portal	From 01.01.2024 (11.00 A.M.) to 10.01.2024 (5.00 P.M.)
6 Last date/time of receipt of bids in the portal	Dt. 10.01.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.
7 Date of Opening of Bid (Required)	Dt. 11.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M. onwards
8 Date of Transparent Lottery (if Required)	Dt. 17.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M.
9 Name and address of the OIT	Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Kalahandi, Bhawanipatna

**Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement market place <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>.
 Sd./- Er. Jagannath Mallik, Superintending Engineer
 OIPR-32007/11/0005/2324 M.I. Division, Kalahandi, Bhawanipatna

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. A-1082
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, SAMBALPUR

Phone No.: (0663) 2412791 (Off.), E-mail: eemispb@yahoo.co.in
 Date: 22.12.2023

e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
 BID REF NO.: SE, MID, SBP/10/2023-24

Name of Work	Civil Construction Works
No. of Works	08 (Eight) Nos.
Estimated Cost	Varies from approximately Rs.30.47 lakh to Rs.48.59 lakh for 08 Nos. of works (Rs.344.05 lakh)
Tender Paper Cost	Referred to DTCN
Period of Completion	Referred to DTCN
Availability of Bid through online	From Dt.09.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M. to Dt.22.01.2024 upto 05.30 P.M. through online (www.tendersorissa.gov.in)
Period of receipt of bid through online	From Dt.09.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M. to Dt.22.01.2024 upto 05.30 P.M. through online (www.tendersorissa.gov.in)
Date of opening of bid documents	On Dt.24.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M. onwards
Digital Signature Certificate of Bidder	The bidder must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of Class-II or Class-III

The detail tender call notice can also be seen in the DOVR website: <http://dowrissa.gov.in>.

Name and Address of the OIT : Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Sambalpur, At: Moliharan, P.O.: B.S.S. Nagar, Dist.: Sambalpur, PIN - 768001, Ph: 0663-2412791
 E-mail ID : eemispb@yahoo.co.in
 Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement market place <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>
 Sd./- 22.12.2023
 Superintending Engineer
 M.I. Division, Sambalpur
 OIPR-32036/11/0012/2324

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, JATNI, DIST.: KHORDHA
 Tel. No.: 0674-2490858, e-Mail: ori-jatni@nic.in
 Letter No. 6425 Dt. 22.12.2023

"e" Procurement Notice

No. i-545: Bid documents consisting of Work, Estimated Cost, Cost of Tender Paper, EMD, time of completion, class of contractors and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. website i.e. <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.

1. Tender Reference No.	: 19/PSJ/2023-24
2. Name of the Work	: Civil Construction works as mentioned in website
3. No. of works	: 12 Nos.
4. Estimated Cost	: As per DTCN
5. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	: As per DTCN
6. Period of Completion	: As per DTCN
7. Date & time of Bidding	: 27.12.2023 at 3.00 P.M.
8. Last date & time for receipt of bids in the portal	: 11.01.2024 at 5.00 P.M.
9. Bids received online shall be opened on	: 12.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M.
10. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	: O/o, Block Development Officer, Jatni

Further amendments, corrigendum or other communication regarding this letter will be available only on <https://tendersodisha.gov.in> and will not be published in print media.
 Sd./- Block Development Officer, Jatni
 OIPR-19263/11/0006/2324

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-DayalAgency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-98438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

A YEAR OF MISHAPS

36 KILLED IN DODA ROAD ACCIDENT
At least 36 people were killed and 19 injured when a bus carrying passengers skidded off a 300-foot gorge in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district.

36 DEAD IN INDORE TEMPLE TRAGEDY
On March 30, a steepwell cover in Beleshwar Mahadev temple in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, collapsed during the celebration of Ram Navami.

25 CHARRED TO DEATH IN MAHARASHTRA
At least 25 passengers were charred to death when the private bus they were travelling in caught fire after hitting a pole and a divider on Nagpur-Mumbai.

15 ELECTROCUTED IN UTTARAKHAND
Fifteen people were electrocuted and seven injured at a sewage treatment plant of the Namami Gange project on the banks of the Alaknanda in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand.

NINE KILLED IN BLAST
Nine people were killed and three others seriously injured in a blast at an explosives manufacturing factory in Maharashtra's Nagpur district.

10 VAISHNO DEVI PILGRIMS DEAD
At least 10 Vaishno Devi pilgrims, most of them from Bihar, were killed and 57 injured as the bus they were travelling in skidded off the road and rammed into the railing of a bridge before falling off it.

Israeli judicial reform
The 2023 Israeli judicial reform is a set of five changes to the judicial system and the balance of powers in Israel that was proposed in January; one of the five has been passed, in July.

DEADLY EARTHQUAKES
The year 2023 has witnessed several impactful quakes, leading to extensive damage and loss of lives. Turkey-Syria, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Morocco saw significant seismic activity.

PHYSIOLOGY / MEDICINE
Katalin Karikó, Drew Weissman, Pierre Agostini, Ferenc Krausz, Anne L'Huillier, Jon Fosse, Moungi G. Bawendi, Louis E. Brus, Aleksey Yekimov

A blip in Indo-Canada relations

The India-Canada diplomatic relationship turned frosty this year after Canadian PM Justin Trudeau claimed that there was a 'potential link' between the Indian government and the killing of a pro-Khalistan leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada earlier this year.

Historic move
Parliament approved a Bill for reserving one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women with the Rajya Sabha unanimously clearing it on September 21.

JUDEGA BHARAT JEETEGA INDIA
The BJP government has announced a new political alliance, the Bharatiya National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (BNDA), to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

It's 'INDIA' vs NDA
Setting the tone for their 2024 Lok Sabha campaign, 26 Opposition parties July 18 formed a coalition - Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) - to unitedly take on the ruling NDA.

Bihar caste survey out
The Nitysh Kumar government in Bihar October 2 released findings of its much-awaited caste survey months ahead of the 2024 Parliamentary elections, which revealed that OBCs and EBCs constitute a whopping 63 per cent of the state's total population.

Article 370 abrogation upheld
The Supreme Court December 11 unanimously upheld the 2019 revocation of Article 370 of the Constitution that gave special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

ECONOMIC SCIENCES
Claudia Goldin
PEACE
Narges Mohammadi
TOP HONOUR

PHYSICS
LITERATURE
CHEMISTRY
PARKASH SINGH BADAL
Five-time former Punjab Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal patriarch Parkash Singh Badal, who was admitted to a private hospital in Mohali over a week ago, died April 25.

CHEERS & TEARS

The year is set to say 'goodbye' leaving us with some bittersweet memories. The country took great strides in science, cinema, sports and diplomacy. The world continued to witness the horrific warfare between Russia and Ukraine and to add to the woes, bitter fighting broke out between Hamas and Israel.

Parliament horror
In a major security breach on the anniversary of the deadly 2001 Parliament terror attack, two persons December 13 jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the visitors' gallery.

Nightmare ends
Rescue workers November 28 pulled out all 41 workers trapped in Uttarakhand's Sikkya tunnel in a multi-agency rescue operation that hovered between hope and despair for almost 17 days.

Nine cheetahs dead
One more cheetah died at the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh August 2, making it the ninth felid to die since March, according to a statement from the state forest department.

TITAN TRAGEDY
The Titan submarine carrying five people onboard imploded in the North Atlantic Ocean June 18. The submersible was part of a deep sea extreme tourism mission to visit the 11-year-old wreck-age of the Titanic more than 12,000 feet underwater.

COVID SURGE AGAIN
The World Health Organisation has classified COVID-19 strain JN.1 as a separate "variant of interest" given its rapidly increasing spread but said that it poses a "low" global public health risk.

RAHUL BACK AS MP
Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was disqualified as an MP in March after a Gujarat court convicted him in a defamation case for his remarks on 'Modi' surname.

SHARAD YADAV
Veteran politician and former JDU chief Sharad Yadav died January 12 at a private hospital in Gurugram, family sources said.

MS SWAMINATHAN
MS Swaminathan, renowned agricultural scientist and the driving force behind the nation's 'Green Revolution', passed away September 28.

'No' same-sex marriage
In a setback to gay rights activists, the Supreme Court October 17 refused to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage, saying there was "no unqualified right" to marriage with the exception of those that are recognised by law.

Sisodia arrested
The CBI February 26 arrested Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in connection with alleged corruption in the formulation and implementation of the now-scrapped liquor policy for 2021-22.

Atiq gunned down
In a shocking incident, gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf were shot dead in Prayagraj April 15, in the presence of the police and in full glare of the media.

New Parliament inaugurated
Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new Parliament building May 28. Several Union Ministers were present on the occasion.

SPACE RACE: TRIUMPHS, FAILURES
Chandrayaan-3
2023 has been very significant as far as space exploration and research is concerned. There is no doubt that the year is historic for India as Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully landed Chandrayaan-3 on the south pole of the moon.

NASA's Psyche mission to metal asteroid
Psyche mission aims to study a metal-rich asteroid with the same name, which is located in the main asteroid belt between Jupiter and Mars.

OOMMEN CHANDY
Senior Congress leader Oommen Chandy, who served as the Chief Minister of Kerala twice, died July 18 in Bangalore.

PERVEZ MUSHARRAF
Pakistan's former president General Pervez Musharraf, who seized power in a coup in 1999, has died February 23 at aged 79.

NEWS IN PICTURES
The coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla took place May 6 in London.

An aerial view of a flood-affected area in Thoothukudi district, Tamil Nadu. Following Cyclone Mischang, four districts-Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Kanyakumari and Tenkasi received excessive rainfall leading to flood like situation in these areas.

India achieved a milestone by successfully organising the G20 summit in New Delhi. The big takeaway for India was the agreement on an economic corridor linking India, Gulf countries and Europe.

A drone picture shows lava spewing from the site of the volcanic eruption north of Grindavik, Iceland, December 19.

At least 30 people lost their lives and 100 were injured after the Hazara Express derailed in southern Pakistan August 6.

The Opposition in Bangladesh, led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), is currently engaged in large-scale protests demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government.

Riot police clashed with protesters over the French government's reform of the pension system March 23 in Paris. Over 1 million protesters demonstrated across France after the government pushed pension reform through Parliament without a vote.

PERVEZ MUSHARRAF
Pakistan's former president General Pervez Musharraf, who seized power in a coup in 1999, has died February 23 at aged 79.

MANDATE 2023

Senior BJP leader and the tribal face of the party, Vishnu Deo Sai, took oath as the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, after the saffron party returned to power after a gap of five years by unseating Congress in the Assembly elections.

Congress legislature party leader A Revanth Reddy was sworn in as Chief Minister of Telangana at a glittering ceremony which was attended by top Congress leaders, including Sonia Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge.

Mohan Yadav, the BJP legislature party leader and MLA from Ujjain South, took oath as the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh. Jagdish Deveda (MLA from Malhargah in Mandasaur) and Rajendra Shukla (legislator from Rewa) were sworn in as the Deputy Chief Ministers by the Governor.

Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) leader Laldhuma was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Mizoram. Along with 73-year-old Laldhuma, 11 others also took oath as state ministers at a function held in Raj Bhavan.

First-time MLA Bhajan Lal Sharma took oath as the Chief Minister of Rajasthan at a ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP's top leadership after the party ousted the Congress in the Assembly polls.

In a show of Opposition unity, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, National Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and National Congress (NC) president Feroz Khan Noon attended the swearing-in ceremony of Siddaramaiah as the Karnataka Chief Minister.

Sepuagenerian dental surgeon-turned-politician Manik Saha took oath as the Chief Minister after BJP-IPFT alliance retained power in Tripura for the second straight term by winning 32 seats in the 60-member state assembly, for which elections were held February 16.

N DPP leader Neelgiri Rio was sworn-in as the Chief Minister of Nagaland for the fifth term. The 72-year-old politician was administered the oath of secrecy by Governor L. Sankar. T R Zeliang and Y Patton were sworn-in as the Deputy Chief Ministers of the state.

ROSLYNN CARTER
Former US first lady Rosalynn Carter, the wife of former President Jimmy Carter, died November 19 at age 96 in the couple's home in the southern state of Georgia, their nonprofit organisation announced.

HENRY KISSINGER
The world said goodbye to former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who died November 29. Serving under two presidents, Kissinger's shadow loomed large in the foreign policy arena, prompting both admiration and criticism from around the globe.



Members of the fishermen community offer prayers to the victims of the 2004 Tsunami on its 19th anniversary at Marina beach in Chennai



Fire breaks out in Purna-Parli passenger train near Nanded in Maharashtra



Officials at the Indian Navy's newly-commissioned Stealth Guided Missile Destroyer Imphal at Naval Dockyard in Mumbai



A train at the Nizamuddin railway station amid fog on a cold winter morning in New Delhi



Electric buses parked outside Vidhan Soudha during their launch by Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation in Bangalore



Devotees stand in a queue for 'Datta Paduka darshan' at Baba Budan Giri shrine near Chikmagalur



Men dressed in traditional hutsuls suits play violins in front of a church during Christmas celebration at Kryvorivnia village in Ukraine

national



So far, Karnataka women have undertaken 120 crore rides in state transport buses for free since the launch of the Shakti scheme

30 FLIGHTS DELAYED

Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport faced substantial operational disruptions as a thick blanket of fog enveloped the national capital. The IGI is experiencing delays in both arrivals and departures for about 30 flights, while 12 flights - 11 to Jaipur and one to Lucknow - have been diverted from 6 am to 12 pm



of the day quote

In 2023, several groups laid down their arms, AFSPA was further revoked and no lives were lost to extremist violence, marking a successful year for the state

The Indian government has taken the drone attack on MV Chem Pluto and attack on MV Saibaba in the Red Sea seriously

It pains our heart. How can anyone believing in Bharatiyata, a citizen of Bharat, demean and decry our nation, tarnish our progress, dent our constitutional institutions by going all round the country or outside?

Plane grounded in France lands in Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 26: A plane carrying 276 passengers, mostly Indians, grounded in France for four days over suspected human trafficking, landed in Mumbai in the wee hours Tuesday, an official said. The aircraft, an Airbus A340, landed in Mumbai shortly after 4 am, the official said.

It had taken off from Vetry airport near Paris around 2.30 pm local time.

There were also 15 crew members on board when the plane landed in Mumbai, the official said. Immigration authorities enquired from some of the 276 passengers who arrived, an official said, adding no passenger was detained and all 276 passengers were allowed to leave the airport by 11.30 am. Despite repeated attempts by waiting media personnel at Mumbai airport, none of the passengers spoke about their journey or the events that unfolded over the last four days.

Many on board who came out of the airport hours after the plane landed, were seen rushing out, without facing the waiting media. Queries to them regarding reported interrogation of some of the passengers by officials at the airport went unanswered.

Deepfake: Govt issues fresh advisory

Earlier, several "deepfake" videos targeting leading actors went viral, sparking public outrage & raising concerns over the misuse of technology and tools for creating doctored content & fake narratives



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 26: Amid growing concerns over deepfakes, the government has directed all platforms to comply with IT rules, as companies have been mandated to inform users in clear terms about prohibited content, and cautioned that violations will attract legal consequences.

The government has made it clear to platforms that if legal vi-

olations of the IT rules are noted or reported then the consequences under law will follow.

The missive underlines hardening of government stance on the issue, amid growing concerns around misinformation powered by AI - Deepfakes.

The advisory mandates that intermediaries - such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X, and others - communicate prohibited content specified under IT Rules clearly and precisely to users.

The directive specifically targets the growing concerns around misinformation powered by AI - Deepfakes, the release

said. This advisory is the culmination of discussions spearheaded by Minister of State for IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar with intermediaries on the issue.

"The content not permitted under the IT Rules, in particular those listed under Rule 3(1)(b), must be clearly communicated to the users in clear and precise language including through its terms of service and user agreements and the same must be expressly informed to the user at the time of first-registration and also as regular reminders, in particular, at every instance of login and while uploading/sharing information onto the platform," according to the advisory.

The advisory emphasises that digital intermediaries must ensure users are informed about penal provisions, including those

in the IPC and the IT Act 2000. In addition, the advisory said the terms of service and user agreements must clearly highlight that intermediaries/platforms are under obligation to report legal violations to law enforcement agencies under the relevant Indian laws applicable to the context. It is pertinent to mention here that Rule 3(1)(b)(v) explicitly prohibits the dissemination of misinformation and patently false information.

Digital platforms are obliged to ensure reasonable efforts to prevent users from "hosting, displaying, uploading, modifying, publishing, transmitting, storing, updating, or sharing any information related to the 11 listed user harms or content prohibited" on digital intermediaries.

The rule aims to ensure platforms identify and promptly remove misinformation, false or misleading content, and material impersonating others, including deepfakes.

Over the last one month, during his meeting with industry leaders on the pressing issue of deepfakes, the minister has highlighted the urgency for all platforms and intermediaries to strictly adhere to current laws and regulations, emphasising that the IT rules comprehensively address the menace of deepfakes.

Vivo-India executives' ED custody extended



New Delhi, Dec 26: A Delhi court Tuesday extended by two days the Enforcement Directorate custody of three Vivo-India executives in connection with a money laundering probe against the Chinese smartphone-maker and others. Additional Sessions Judge Aparna Swami extended the custody of Interim CEO of Vivo-India Hong Xuquan alias Terry, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Harinder Dahiya and consultant Hemant Munjal on an application moved by the ED.

The accused were produced before the court on the expiry of their three-day ED custody granted earlier. The accused were taken into custody under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The federal agency had earlier arrested four people - mobile company Lava International's MD Hari Om Rai, Chinese national Guangwen alias Andrew Kuang, and chartered accountants Nitin Garg and Rajan Malik - in the case.

They are in judicial custody at present. The court recently took cognisance of the charge sheet. The ED alleged in documents submitted to the court with regard to the four arrestees that their activities enabled Vivo-India to make wrongful gains that were detrimental to the economic sovereignty of India.

SHORT TAKES

Six killed in brick kiln mishap

Haridwar (U'khand): Six workers were killed and another four injured when a brick kiln wall collapsed on them in Uttarakhand's Haridwar district, police said, Tuesday. A horse was also killed after getting buried under the rubble of the wall, they said. The accident occurred in Lahboli village, said Haridwar Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Pramendra Dobhal, who was on the spot.

Poonch: Search ops underway

Poonch/Jammu: Battling difficult terrains and dense forests, security forces continued to carry out cordon and search operations for the sixth consecutive day Tuesday to track down the terrorists behind the ambush that left four soldiers dead in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch last week, officials said. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is likely to visit ground zero Wednesday with top Army and civilian officials monitoring the situation in Poonch in view of the terrorist attack which was followed by the death of three civilians in the area.

PM Modi speaks to Saudi Crown Prince

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and shared concerns regarding terrorism, violence, the loss of civilian lives and the situation in West Asia. The leaders also reviewed progress in the bilateral Strategic Partnership in follow-up to the State visit of the Crown Prince to India in September 2023 and discussed the forward-looking bilateral partnership agenda for the future, a PMO statement.

Plea in top court seeks ban on screening for nursery children



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 26: A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking review of its order refusing to direct the Delhi lieutenant governor to either give assent to or return a 2015 bill which proposed a ban on screening children for nursery admission.

The review petition filed by NGO Social Jurist contended that the plea assumes importance in view of the recent Supreme Court judgments voicing displeasure over the governors of Punjab and Tamil Nadu delaying assent to bills passed and readopted by state legislatures.

The petition referred to the apex court's observation that state governors must act in a manner consistent with the provisions of Article 200 of the Constitution. Article 200 outlines the process for a bill passed by the legislative assembly of a state to be presented to the governor for assent. The governor may either give consent to the bill, withhold assent or reserve the bill for consideration by the President of India. The governor may also return the bill for the legislature's reconsideration.

The apex court had October 13 dis-

missed the NGO's plea, saying it cannot pass a direction to enact a law. "Can there be a mandamus to enact a law? Can we direct the government to introduce the bill? Supreme Court can't be the panacea for everything," the top court had said.

Earlier, the Delhi High Court had dismissed a PIL filed by the NGO, saying it cannot interfere with the legislative procedure and direct the LG to either give assent to the Delhi School Education (Amendment) Bill, 2015 or return it. The organisation, through advocate Ashok Agarwal, filed the appeal in the top court, contending the child-friendly bill banning the screening procedure for nursery admission has been "hanging" between the central and the Delhi government for the last seven years without any justification. The petition said it was against public interest and public policy.

Rejecting the PIL, a division bench of the Delhi High Court had said it was not proper for a high court while exercising its jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution to direct a governor, who is a constitutional authority, to set a time frame in matters which come purely within his domain.

RJD-JDU-Cong to fight together in Bihar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 26: The Congress high command held a series of meetings with party leaders from Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Punjab Tuesday to discuss the strategy for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, General Secretary (Organisation) K C Venugopal and along with other central leaders met the delegations from the states and Union Territories. Around 40 leaders of the

Congress' Bihar unit, including its chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh and newly appointed state in-charge Mohan Prakash, attended the meeting with the party's central leadership.

Talking to media after the meeting, the Bihar Congress chief said the RJD-JDU-Congress-Left alliance will fight the Lok Sabha polls together, and a final decision on seat sharing will be taken in the meeting of the alliance committee of Congress which is scheduled for December 29.

"We held detailed discussions on the preparations

for the Lok Sabha elections. We have made an action plan which will be taken forward. The discussion on seats will be held in the alliance committee meeting December 29," he said. The Congress fought on nine seats in Bihar in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Asked how many seats the Congress would fight on this time, Singh said they would be flexible in seat sharing. "One or two seats may go here or there... It is not a problem. Last time we fought in alliance with RJD and Left parties. This time JD(U) is also there," he said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Mr Chandan Nayak, Khordha - 751009 (Odisha), is hereby informed that a case - Criminal Miscellaneous Application 2052/2023 has been filed against you by Mr. Sahebrao Keshavrao Pujari at Court No. 6, New Building Shivajinagar Pune, 411005. The next date of hearing of this case has been fixed as 08 Jan 2024 and on the given date, you are ordered to appear yourself or with your lawyer. In your absence, further action will be taken considering that you have nothing to say.

Bank of India				Gold Auction Notice	
Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House, Jaydev Bihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015, Ph.:0674-2362249					
It is hereby brought to the notice of the following gold loan borrowers, their legal heirs, person engaged in the business of gold ornaments and general public that in spite of repeated notices by the Bank, the following borrowers are not repaying their dues to the Bank. Notice is hereby published that if they fail to deposit all their dues in their respective gold loan accounts (including Up-to-date interest and all costs, charges/expenses) by 22.01.2024, their pledged gold ornaments will be auctioned at Concerned Branch Premises on 25.01.2024 at 11.00 AM. For this Bank shall not be held responsible for any inconvenience or damage caused to the concerned borrowers and no allegations or representations will be entertained from any borrowers in this regard. Bank reserves the right to cancel the auction without assigning any reason in case, the bidding price so arrived at is observed to be low or inadequate. Further, if needed be Bank reserves the right to change the date and time of the above scheduled auction or cancel the same without assigning any reasons thereon. Purity and net weight and reserve price of gold ornaments/ coins etc. will be available to interested bidders on auction date and auction venue/auction portal.					
Sl. No.	A/c. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower(s)	Gross Wt. in Gram	Net Wt. in Gram	Total Dues as on 30.11.2023 (excluding unapplied interest Charges, Cost & Expenses)
HARIPUR BRANCH, AT/PO: HARIPUR, NACHUNI, DIST.: KHURDA, PIN-752034, MOB.: 7008788077					
1.	555477610001511	Umakanta Pradhan, S/o- Kalucharan Pradhan, Nimuna, Baulabandha, Khordha	34.2	29	₹ 1,07,464.10
NAYAGARH BRANCH, PLOT No.: 2159/3557, COLLEGE ROAD, NAYAGARH, DIST.: NAYAGARH, PIN-752069, MOB.: 9836799043					
1.	558177610000336	Sidhanta Nayak, S/o- Dasarathi Nayak, At: Balarampur, PO: Baunsiapada, Dist.: Nayagarh	7	5.3	₹ 18,352.30
2.	558177610000547	Manjulata Behera, W/o- Bikram Behera, At: Tulasipur, PO: Similisa, Nayagarh-752079	18.1	14.98	₹ 64,864.00
BARIMUNDA BRANCH, AT/PO: BARIMUNDA, PS: MANCHESWAR, VIA: PHULNAKHARA, DIST.: KHURDA, MOB.: 9776356600					
1.	512777610000352	Sunita Rout, W/o- Sampat Padhiary, At/PO: Gandarpur, PIN-754005	21.00	16.40	₹ 61,619.45
Place: Bhubaneswar Date: 26.12.2023					Zonal Manager, Bank of India

UCO BANK		ZONAL OFFICE: C-2, Ashok Nagar, Unit-11, Bhubaneswar, PIN-751009, Ph.: 0674-2620423		POSSESSION NOTICE	
(Under Section 13(4) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act., 2002 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for Immovable Property)					
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the UCO Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the borrowers, co-borrowers & guarantors to repay the amount as mentioned below within 60 days from the date of the said Notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers, co-borrowers & guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken POSSESSION of the property/ies described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him / her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the date mentioned below. The borrowers, co-borrowers & guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank for the amount plus interest plus expenses- thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to them, to redeem the secured assets.					
CUTTACK COLLECTORATE BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Amount Outstanding as on Specified Date	Demand / Possession Notice Date	Description of the Immovable Property/ies		
Borrower: Mr. Pradipta Kumar Jena, S/o- Jogeswar Jena / Co-Borrower: Mrs. Sanjukta Jena, W/o- Mr. Pradipta Kumar Jena, Both are at Address: Plot No.: 595 & 597, At: Talasahi, Sikkharpur, PO/PS: Chauliaganj, Near Gopinath Temple, Cuttack-753003	₹ 41,74,506.86 as on 31.08.2023 + further interest & other charges thereon from 31.08.2023	28.09.2023 / 22.12.2023	All that part and parcel of property situated at Mouza: Cuttack Sahara, Unit No.-26, Sikkharpur, Thana: Chauliaganj, No.-02, Tahasil: Cuttack, No.-239, Dist.: Cuttack, Khata No.: 732/10, Plot No.: 595, measuring an Area: Ac.0.0060dec. and Plot No.: 597, measuring an Area: Ac.0.0080dec., in Total Area: Ac.0.0140dec., Both are Kisam: Gharabari-2. Property in the name of Mr. Pradipta Kumar Jena vide Title Deed No. 10391501712, Dt.17.04.2015. As per Sale Deed Plot No. 595 is bounded by- North: Vendor, West: Gali Road, South: Road, East: Gopinath Temple-Plot No. 592 and As per Sale Deed Plot No. 597 is bounded by- North: Street Road, South: Municipality Road, East: Street Road, West: Ramachandra Maharana.		
Borrower: Saila Traders, Prop.: Mr. Swadhin Barik, S/o- Alekha Chandra Barik, At: 61, C-11, Kanika Chhatak, Keonjhar Colony, Tulasipur, Cuttack-753008 / Guarantor: Mrs. Nutan Priyadarini Barik, W/o- Abanikanta Nayak, At/PO: Badasada, PS: Khamar, Angul-759118	₹ 13,50,143.00 as on 29.12.2022 + further interest & other charges thereon from 29.12.2022	08.05.2023 / 22.12.2023	All that part and parcel of property situated at Plot No.: 1100/3016, Khata No.: 247/736, measuring an Area: Ac.0.038dec., Kisam: Gharabari, Mouza: Uttama Pur, PS No.-37, Dist.: Cuttack. Property in the name of Mrs. Nutan Priyadarini Barik (Guarantor) vide Deed No. 10391404040, Dt.14.08.2014. The Plot is bounded by- North: Private Building (Plot No. 1101), West: Road, South: Gurucharan Swain, East: Gurucharan Swain.		
Date: 26.12.2023, Place: Bhubaneswar					Sd/- Authorised Officer, UCO Bank

Manipur returning to normalcy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Dec 26: Manipur made headlines for much of 2023 as it witnessed one of the worst ethnic conflicts between the Kuki and Meitei communities, resulting in over 200 deaths and leaving nearly 60,000 people homeless.

Though violence broke out May 3, tension had been building in the hill districts of Churachandpur and Kangpokpi since February due to the state government's efforts to remove encroachers from reserved forest areas.

Public unrest against Chief Minister N Biren Singh, particularly in Churachandpur district, eventually led to violent protests in April last week.

Newly formed Churachandpur district-based Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF) called an



eight-hour shutdown April 28 to protest eviction of villagers from forests.

As tension prevailed, a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised May 3 by the All Tribal Students Union Manipur (ATSUM) in the hill districts to oppose the demand for inclusion of Meitei community in the Scheduled Tribe category.

It was prompted after the Manipur High Court passed an order instructing the state government to recommend to the Centre the inclusion of Meitei community in ST category.

The community accounts for 53 per cent population and dwells in the valley areas of the state, which comprises around nine per cent of its total territory.

Though the rally passed off peacefully in the Naga-dominated hill districts, in Churachandpur district headquarters town, where more than 15,000 protesters had gathered at a public ground, the situation took an ugly turn after a non-tribal driver was assaulted.

Later in the day, a 1,000-strong mob attacked the non-tribal villages of Torbung and Kangvai in Churachandpur and Bishnupur districts. Similar incidents of arson were reported from the border town of Moreh in Tengnoupal district the same night. The state government immediately suspended mobile internet services "to maintain peace and communal harmony".

international

of the day quote

The issue of low birthrates requires us to take the situation more seriously and contemplate on the causes and solutions from a different dimension than before

Israel will pay a heavy price for killing Brig Gen Razi Mousavi of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in an airstrike in Syria

Navy officials and sailors must mercilessly bury (the enemy) at sea if the enemy stages yet another provocation

SHORT TAKES

Japan to impose sanctions

Tokyo: The Japanese government Tuesday announced that it will sanction three senior members of Hamas to limit their ability to fund terrorism, a top government official said as quoted by media reports. Tokyo's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said that the trio's assets will be frozen and their payments and transactions will be sanctioned, according to Reuters. The Hamas officials, whom the report doesn't name, are believed by Japan to have had a role in the Palestinian terror group's October 7 massacres, and to currently be "in a position to use funds to finance such terrorist activities," The Times of Israel reported.

Several homes without power

Sydney: One woman was killed, and more than 120,000 homes were left without power in Australia's Queensland as severe thunderstorms pounded the southeastern part of the state on Christmas night, local media reported Tuesday. The woman in her 50s died in Helensvale, a suburb of the City of Gold Coast, after a tree fell on her while she walked along the road, according to local newspaper The Courier-Mail. About 127,000 homes were left without power in the peak of the storms at the Gold Coast, Scenic Rim and Logan, the newspaper said.

Over 9,000 rescued in Malaysia

Kuala Lumpur: Floodings have displaced 9,967 people in Malaysia as of Monday following continuous heavy rains. Those evacuated were being housed in 121 flood relief centres in four states, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the country's Social Welfare Department. Meanwhile, an 11-year-old girl drowned, while another has gone missing after falling into floodwaters in Kelantan state, Pasir Mas district deputy police chief Supt Nik Aminuddin Raja Abdullah said in a statement.

Taiwan expands Russian sanctions

Taipei: Taiwan's economy ministry said Tuesday it had expanded a list of sanctioned goods for Russia and its ally Belarus in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine to prevent Taiwanese high-tech goods from being used for military purposes. Taiwan has condemned Russia's attack and already joined the Western-led sanctions effort, though it is largely symbolic as there is only minimal direct trade between the island and Russia.



The Rwanda Bill is the 'best bill' to address the issue of small boat crossings in the English Channel

SUNAK MARKS CHRISTMAS WITH QUIRKY SKIT

Rishi Sunak marked the Christmas holidays with a quirky skit inspired by the 1990s Hollywood film 'Home Alone', posted on social media with the message "Merry Christmas from Downing Street" to highlight the British Prime Minister's humorous side over the festive period



We're not stopping: Israel

REUTERS

Cairo/Gaza/Jerusalem, Dec 26: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to keep fighting in Gaza until Hamas is destroyed, defying global calls for a ceasefire amid concerns the conflict could spread with U.S. and Iran-aligned forces again attacking each other. Netanyahu, who visited Israeli troops in northern Gaza on Monday, told lawmakers from his Likud Party that the war was far from over and dismissed what he cast as media speculation his government might call a halt to the fighting.

He said Israel would not succeed in freeing its remaining hostages held by Hamas without applying military pressure. "We are not stopping. The war will continue until the end, until we finish it, no less," Netanyahu said.

In an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal Monday, Netanyahu reiterated three prerequisites for peace: Hamas must be destroyed, Gaza must be demilitarised, and Palestinian society must be deradicalised.

Retaliating against Hamas for its deadly October 7 cross-border rampage, Israel has been under pressure from its closest ally the United States to shift operations in Gaza to a lower-intensity phase and reduce civilian deaths.

Nearly 20,700 Gazans have been killed, including 250 in the last 24 hours, according to authorities in Hamas-ruled Gaza. U.S. forces have come under attack by Iran-backed militants in Iraq and Syria over Washington's backing of Israel in its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

In the latest tit-for-tat clash, the



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, centre, wears a protective vest and helmet as he receives a security briefing with commanders and soldiers in the northern Gaza Strip

US LAUNCHES RETALIATORY AIR STRIKES ON IRAN-BACKED MILITANTS IN IRAQ

US SAYS ITS ERBIL BASE IN IRAQ EARLIER HIT BY DRONE ATTACK, LEADING TO CASUALTIES

NETANYAHU SAYS HAMAS MUST BE DESTROYED FOR PEACE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINIANS

U.S. military carried out retaliatory air strikes on Monday in Iraq after a drone attack by Iran-aligned militants on a U.S. base in Erbil left one U.S. service member in critical condition and wounded two other U.S. personnel, officials said.

The air strikes killed "a number of Kataib Hezbollah militants" and destroyed multiple facilities used by the group, the U.S. military said. Hezbollah has deep ties to Hamas and Islamic Jihad, another Palestinian faction backed by Iran.

"These strikes are intended to hold accountable those ele-

ments directly responsible for attacks on coalition forces in Iraq and Syria and degrade their ability to continue attacks. We will always protect our forces," said General Michael Erik Kurilla, head of U.S. Central Command, in a statement.

The U.S. military has come under attack at least 100 times in Iraq and Syria since the Israel-Hamas war began in October, usually with a mix of rockets and one-way attack drones.

Early on Tuesday, Palestinian residents reported several airstrikes near Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, the largest medical facility in the southern Gaza Strip. Palestinian health officials said seven people were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a house in Al-Amal neighbourhood in Khan Younis.

Palestinians mourned more than 100 people who Gaza health officials said were killed in Israeli airstrikes Sunday night, one of the deadliest nights in the 11-week-old battle between Israel and Hamas.

140 villagers killed

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Abuja (Nigeria), Dec 26: At least 140 people were killed by gunmen who attacked remote villages over two days in north-central Nigeria's Plateau state, survivors and officials said Tuesday in the latest of such mass killings this year blamed on the West African nation's farmer-herder crisis.

The assailants targeted 17 communities during the "senseless and unprovoked" attacks on Saturday and Sunday, during which most houses in the areas were burned down, Plateau Gov Caleb Mutfwang said Tuesday in a broadcast on the local Channels Television.

"As I am talking to you, in Mangu local government alone, we buried 15 people. As of this morning, in Bokkos, we are counting not less than 100 corpses. I am yet to take stock of (the deaths in) Barkin Ladi," Gov Mutfwang said. "It has been a very terrifying Christmas for us here in Plateau."

Amnesty International Nigeria's office told The Associated Press that it has so far confirmed 140 deaths in the Christian-dominated Bokkos and Barkin-Ladi local government areas of Plateau based on data compiled by its workers on the ground and from local officials, though locals feared a higher death toll with some people unaccounted for.

Some of the locals said that it took more than 12 hours before security agencies responded to their call for help, a claim the AP couldn't independently verify, but which echoes past concerns about slow interventions in Nigeria's deadly security crisis, which has killed hundreds this year, including in Plateau.

Russia confirms damage to warship



REUTERS

Moscow, Dec 26: A Ukrainian attack on the Crimean port of Feodosia damaged a large Russian landing ship and killed one person, Moscow said Tuesday after Kyiv said it had destroyed an important Russian warship.

The Russian defence ministry was cited by the Interfax news agency as saying that Ukraine had used air-launched missiles to attack Feodosia and that the 'Novocherkassk' large landing ship had been damaged in the raid.

The 'Novocherkassk', which was built in Poland and entered service in the late 1980s, is designed for amphibious landings and can carry various types of armoured vehicles, including tanks.

Footage posted on several Russian news outlets on the Telegram messaging app, purportedly from the port, showed powerful explosions detonating and fires burning.

Sergei Aksyonov, the Russian-installed governor of Crimea, said on the Telegram messaging app that one person had been killed, two injured and six people evacuated from their homes.

Although a Ukrainian counteroffensive has made little in the way of battlefield gains and the Russian military has regained the initiative in several places, Ukraine has been able to launch a series of attacks on Crimea, the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, inflicting serious damage.

The Ukrainian air force said its pilots had attacked Feodosia at about 0230 (0030 GMT) with cruise missiles, destroying the 'Novocherkassk'. "And the fleet in Russia is getting smaller and smaller! Thanks to the Air Force pilots and everyone involved for the filigree work!" the commander of Ukraine's air force, Mykola Oleshchuk, said on Telegram.

A statement from the Russian-installed administration of Crimea said that trains were not running from Feodosia and advised people to use an alternative nearby station. Feodosia, which has a population of around 69,000 people, lies on the southern coast of the Crimean Peninsula. Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 in a move Kyiv and the West condemned as an illegal seizure.

PAKISTAN GENERAL ELECTIONS

28,626 candidates file nominations

The election will be held for 1,085 general and reserved seats of the national and provincial assemblies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Dec 26: As many as 28,626 candidates, including 3,139 women, have filed their nominations to contest the February 8 general elections in Pakistan to the National Assembly and four provincial legislatures, the country's top electoral body said here Tuesday.

The election will be held for 1,085 general and reserved seats of the national and provincial assemblies.

Of the total 1,085 seats, there are 336 National Assembly (NA)



seats -- 226 general and 70 reserved for women (60) and non-Muslims (10); and 749 provincial assembly seats -- 593 general and 156 reserved for women (132) and minorities (24).

Punjab province has 371 seats, including 297 general, 66 reserved for women and 8 for minorities.

Sindh has 168 seats, including 130 general, 29 reserved for women and 9 for minorities. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has 145 seats, including 115 general, 26 reserved for women and 4 for minorities; and Balochistan province has 65 seats, including 51 general, 11 reserved for women and 3 for minorities.

According to the details shared by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the aspirants include 7,713 candidates, including 471 women, who have filed nominations to contest the upcoming elections on 266 general seats of the National Assembly.

In Punjab, 3,871 candidates, including 277 women, filed nomination papers for 141 NA seats, while 1,681 candidates, including 110 women, submitted nominations for 61 NA seats in Sindh.



A massive fire engulfs a guesthouse in Romania killing five people

PTI PHOTO

Explosions reported in Red Sea shipping lane off Yemen coast

REUTERS

Dubai, Dec 26: Explosions in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen were reported Tuesday after sightings of unmanned aircraft and missiles in two separate incidents, a British maritime authority said.

Two unmanned aircraft were observed before two explosions

occurred 5 nautical miles from a vessel located 50 nautical miles west of Hodeidah on Yemen's west coast, United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations authority said in an advisory.

In an apparent separate incident, explosions were heard and missiles were seen 4 nautical miles from a vessel 60 nautical miles from

Hodeidah, the authority said.

It was not immediately clear if the incidents involved the same vessel, which the authority did not identify.

Cargo details or an indication where the vessel or vessels were sailing to or had sailed from were also not disclosed. In both incidents the vessel and crew

were reported to be safe.

The British authority did not say from where the reported drones or missiles originated.

The reported incidents come a week after the United States announced a multinational maritime security initiative in the Red Sea in response to attacks on vessels by Yemen's Houthis.

Strategic convergence will keep ties positive: Jaishankar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, Dec 26: Geopolitics and strategic convergence will keep India-Russia ties on a positive trajectory, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said ahead of his talks with his Russian counterpart and other top leaders here.

Jaishankar, who is on a five-day visit to Russia to hold meetings with Russia's leadership, will discuss with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov various bilateral and global issues. "Arrived in Moscow. Look forward to my engagements," Jaishankar said in a post on X along with a picture. "Geopolitics and strategic

convergence will always keep India-Russia ties on a positive trajectory," he said Monday as he interacted with strategic experts.

"An open and forward-looking interaction with leading representatives of the Russian strategic community. Spoke about the importance of re-balancing and the emergence of multipolarity, Jaishankar posted on X. Exchanged views on how India-Russia ties will develop in that framework. Also discussed connectivity, multilateralism, big power competition and regional conflicts, he said. "Geopolitics and strategic convergence will always keep India-Russia ties on a positive trajectory," Jaishankar emphasised.



The ties between India and Russia remained strong notwithstanding Moscow's invasion of Ukraine

Jaishankar, who is on a five-day visit to Russia to hold meetings with Russia's leadership, will discuss with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov various bilateral and global issues

Russia remained strong notwithstanding Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. India has not

yet condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and it has been maintaining that the crisis must be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue.

He is scheduled to meet Russia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov to discuss matters related to economic engagement. He will also hold talks with his Russian counterpart Lavrov for discussion on bilateral, multilateral and international issues.

"The time-tested India-Russia partnership has remained stable and resilient and continues to be characterised by the spirit of the Special and Privileged Strategic

Partnership," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in New Delhi ahead of Jaishankar's visit.

"Focusing on the strong people-to-people and cultural ties between our two countries, the external affairs minister's programme will include engagements in Moscow and St. Petersburg," the MEA said.

The Indian and Russian sides are expected to discuss various aspects of the bilateral relations, especially in areas of trade, energy, defence and connectivity. India's import of Russian crude oil has gone up significantly despite increasing disquiet over it in many Western countries.

business

of the day quote

Oman's GDP is about USD 115 billion and its population is 5 million. Oman's higher per capita income (USD 25,060) compared to India's (USD 2,370) could mean a demand for more diversified and possibly higher-value goods and services in Oman, which India could aim to supply

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | GTRI CO-FOUNDER

We are thrilled to have been awarded this significant 400 KV contract by SPRNG, a company backed by the global energy giant Shell

SANJEEV GUPTA | HARTEK POWER CEO

Since its inception, HDFC Life has been a forerunner in investing ahead of the curve in cutting-edge technology, embracing innovations and leveraging the power of latest technology solutions

PRASUN GAURI | CHIEF INVESTMENT OFFICER, HDFC LIFE

SHORT TAKES

BharatPe trims losses

New Delhi: Fintech unicorn BharatPe Tuesday announced that its revenue from operations climbed 182 per cent year-on-year to ₹904 crore in FY23, while loss before tax fell to ₹886 crore from ₹5,594 crore during the period. BharatPe, in a release, said its financial performance for the fiscal year 2023, showcased substantial growth and strategic advancements across key business segments. The company asserted that its strategic focus going forward is on sustained profitability, scaling lending, and launching new merchant-centric products. "The fintech firm recorded 182 per cent increase in revenue from operations in FY23, from ₹321 crore in FY22 to ₹904 crore in FY23," the release said.

Zydus arm gets I-T demand notice

New Delhi: Zydus Lifesciences Tuesday said its arm Zydus Healthcare Ltd has been served an income tax notice demand of ₹284.58 crore for the assessment year 2023-2024. Zydus Healthcare Ltd (ZHL), a wholly-owned subsidiary, has received an intimation under section 143(1) of the Income Tax Act, 1961 (IT Act), determining demand of ₹284.58 crore, Zydus Lifesciences said in a regulatory filing. The intimation is for the assessment year 2023-2024 from the CPC, Income Tax Department, it added. The demand is determined due to "apparent mistakes while processing its return of income," it said. "The company strongly believes that once the rectification will be made, the entire demand will be deleted," Zydus Lifesciences said.

Sebi restricts 5 from market

New Delhi: Capital markets regulator Sebi has imposed a penalty of over ₹4 crore on five former officials of Fedders Electric and Engineering Ltd (FEEL) and barred them from the securities market for two years in a case of malpractices and manipulations in the company's accounts. Also, they have been restrained from holding position of a director or key managerial personnel in any listed company or any registered intermediary for two years. Individually, the six penalised by Sebi are -- Akhter Aziz Siddiqi, Sham Sunder Dhawan, Bindu Dogra, Ritushri Sharma and Bharat Raj Punj.

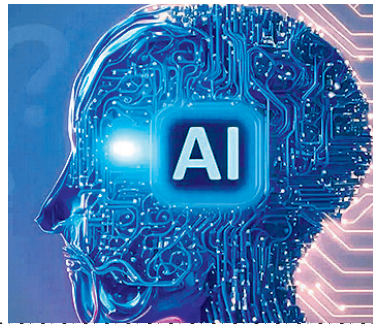


If the virtuous cycle between wages and prices intensifies and the likelihood of achieving our price target in a sustainable and stable manner rises sufficiently, we will likely considering changing policy

KAZUO UEDA | BANK OF JAPAN GOVERNOR

INDIA INC FOR RESPONSIBLE AI ADOPTION: NASSCOM

Nearly 60 per cent of businesses surveyed reported having either matured Responsible AI (RAI) practices and policies or having initiated formal steps towards adoption of such responsible practices, according to a report by industry body Nasscom.



CAD declines to 1% of GDP: RBI

LOWER MERCHANDISE TRADE DEFICIT AND GROWTH IN SERVICES EXPORTS LEAD TO DECLINE IN CAD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 26: India's current account deficit declined sharply to 1 per cent of the GDP or USD 8.3 billion in the second quarter of this financial year, mainly due to lower merchandise trade deficit and growth in services exports, according to a RBI data released Tuesday.

The current account deficit (CAD), which represents the difference between the total amount of money sent abroad and money received from overseas across the economy, was 3.8 per cent of GDP or USD 30.9 billion in the July-September quarter in 2022-23.

CAD was USD 9.2 billion or 1.1 per cent of GDP in the first quarter (April-June) of the current financial year 2023-24.

"Underlying the lower current account deficit on a year-on-year (y-o-y) basis in Q2:2023-24 was the narrowing of merchandise trade deficit to USD 61.0 billion from USD 78.3 billion in Q2:2022-23," said the data on Developments in India's Balance of Payments during the second quarter (July-September) of 2023-24.

Services exports grew by 4.2 per cent on a y-o-y basis on the back of rising exports of software, business and travel serv-



ices, the Reserve Bank said.

Net services receipts increased both sequentially and on a y-o-y basis, it added. In the first half of the fiscal, CAD moderated to 1 per cent of GDP from 2.9 per cent of GDP in the year-ago period, on the back of a lower merchandise trade deficit.

During the July-September quarter (Q2), the RBI data showed that net outgo on the primary income account, primarily reflecting payments of investment income, increased to USD 12.2 billion, from USD 11.8 billion a year ago.

Private transfer receipts, mainly representing remittances by Indians employed overseas amounted to USD 28.1 billion, an increase of 2.6 per cent from their level during the corresponding period a year ago.

In the financial account, net foreign direct investment witnessed an outflow of USD 0.3 billion, as against an inflow of USD 6.2 billion in the second quarter of 2022-23.

Further, foreign portfolio investment recorded net inflow of USD 4.9 billion in the

second quarter of the current fiscal, lower than USD 6.5 billion during the year-ago three months period.

According to the RBI, external commercial borrowings to India recorded net outflow of USD 1.8 billion in July-September of 2023-24, as compared to net outflow of USD 0.5 billion in similar period of 2022-23.

Also, non-resident deposits recorded net inflow of USD 3.2 billion, as compared with net inflow of USD 2.5 billion in the second quarter of the last financial year.

RBI also said there was an accretion of foreign exchange reserves (on a BoP basis) to the tune of USD 2.5 billion in the quarter under review, as against a depletion of USD 30.4 billion in the corresponding period of the last fiscal.

According to Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, Head-Research and Outreach, ICRA Ltd, following the expansion in the merchandise trade deficit in October 2023, "we expect the CAD for the ongoing quarter to widen appreciably, to around USD 18-20 billion. Nevertheless, we now foresee the FY2024 CAD in a range of 1.5-1.6 per cent of GDP, unless commodity prices chart a sharp rebound."

Lalchnd Jewellers' 'End of Year Offer'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 26: Lalchnd Jewellers, the leading jewellery brand in Eastern India, presents its exclusive 'End of Year Offer'. To bid farewell to 2023 and welcome 2024, Lalchnd brings a plethora of exciting deals in the finest gold, silver, and diamond jewellery, enhancing the joy of the year's end. Notably,

the making charge for all HUID hallmarked gold ornaments has been fixed at a flat Rs 699 per gram.

In the spirit of the New Year and upcoming festivities, Lalchnd extends a flat 20% discount on diamond value and select international branded watches, a flat 50% discount on the making charge of silver ornaments, and a flat 15% discount on branded items in this 'End of Year Offer'. This exclusive offer is valid only from December 25, 2023 to January 1, 2024. Customers can

also take advantage of the 100% gold value on the exchange of BIS Hallmarked old gold at every Lalchnd showroom. Additionally, SBI Card users can enjoy up to 5% extra cash-back offer with purchase at all Lalchnd stores.

With 35 years of experience in running media awareness campaigns, Lalchnd Jewellers consistently prioritises customer interests and authenticity. Lalchnd, renowned for gold quality, cautions consumers against falling for 'Upto' scams and conditional or misleading offers. The brand advises customers to opt for transparent and straightforward making charges. Not only that, for the convenience of customers in the bustling city of Bhubaneswar, ample parking is available at the new entrance behind the Master Canteen showroom, along with valet parking near the front door.



PLI schemes fetch ₹95k-cr in investment



The PLI schemes launched across 14 sectors have also created employment, both direct and indirect, of over 6.4 lakh

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 26: The central government's production linked incentive (PLI) schemes has led to investments of over ₹95,000 crore till September, resulting in the production of goods worth ₹7.80 lakh crore, according to a government statement released Tuesday. The PLI schemes launched across 14 sectors have also created employment, both direct and indirect, of over 6.4 lakh.

Exports have been boosted by ₹3.20 lakh crore. Incentives worth around ₹2,900 crore have been disbursed in FY 2022-23, the statement added.

There has been a value addi-

tion of 20 per cent in mobile manufacturing within a period of three years. Of the USD 101 billion total electronics production in FY 2022-23, smartphones constitute USD 44 billion, including USD 11.1 billion as exports, according to figures compiled by the ministry.

Import substitution of 60 per cent has been achieved in the Telecom sector and India has become almost self-reliant in Antennae, GPON (Gigabit Passive Optical Network) & CPE (Customer Premises Equipment). There has been a significant reduction in imports of raw materials in the Pharma sector. Unique intermediate materials and bulk drugs are being manufactured in India including Penicillin-G, and transfer of technology has happened in manufacturing of Medical Devices such as CT scan, MRI, etc.

Drones sector has seen a seven times jump in turnover, which consists of all MSME Startups. Under the PLI Scheme for Food Processing, sourcing of raw materials from India has seen significant increase which has positively impacted income of Indian farmers and MSMEs, the statement explained.

Adani family to invest ₹9,350cr in green energy arm

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 26: Billionaire Gautam Adani and his family will inject ₹9,350 crore into the conglomerate's green energy arm to equip it to achieve the 45 GW target by 2030 and to meet debt payment obligations, according to a company filing.

The board of Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) Tuesday approved the plan to issue 6.31 crore warrants at ₹1,480.75 apiece to promoter group companies, Ardour Investment Holding Ltd and Adani Properties Pvt Ltd.

The investment of ₹9,350 crore "will be used for deleveraging and accelerated capital expenditure" in AGEL, the firm said in the filing.

The investment would give the promoter group firms 3.833 per cent equity stake in the company. The company has bond maturities worth USD 1.2 billion coming up next year and it has already begun outlining plans for repaying or refinancing those.

The fund infusion is part of Adani's comeback strategy, since it was hit by damaging allegations of corporate fraud by Hindenburg Research in January

Payment woes delay supply of Russian Sokol oil to India

India has emerged as the biggest buyer of sea-borne Russian oil since the retreat by European customers after Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year

REUTERS

New Delhi, Dec 26: Shipments of Russian Sokol crude oil to Indian Oil Corp have been delayed by payment problems, forcing India's biggest refiner to draw from its inventories and buy more oil from the Middle East, two sources familiar with the matter said.

IOC is the only state refiner that has an annual deal to buy a variety of Russian grades, including Sokol, from Russian oil major Rosneft. Sokol oil is supplied to IOC by Sakhalin-1 LLC, a unit of Rosneft, sources said.

Indian state refiners settle oil trade with Russia in United Arab Emirates dirhams after the government advised them against use of the Chinese yuan, though private refiners are still paying



in yuan owing to a lack of alternatives.

IOC's payments for Sokol oil have been hampered because Sakhalin-1 LLC has been unable to open an account with a bank in the UAE to accept dirham payments, said the sources, who declined to be identified because they are not authorised to speak to the media.

Representatives of IOC and Rosneft did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

IOC was supposed to receive six Sokol cargoes from late November to December, shipping data showed. This included NS Century, which was placed under US sanctions last month. These cargoes are now mostly

floating around India and Sri Lanka while NS Century is heading towards Singapore, the data shows. "The supplier has an intent to deliver crude oil. Hopefully a solution will be found soon," one of the sources said. India has emerged as the biggest buyer of sea-borne Russian oil since the retreat by European customers after Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year.

India's oil ministry has told a parliamentary panel that state oil companies face challenges in paying for Russian oil because not all Indian banks can process payments in US dollars for Russian oil, according to a report tabled in Parliament last week.

Renewable energy investments to surge 83% to \$16.5bn in '24

This is in line with India's ambitious target of having 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030 and its resolve to reduce overall power generation capacity from fossil fuels to less than 50 per cent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 26: India will witness more than 83 per cent increase in investments in renewable energy projects to around USD 16.5 billion in 2024 as the country focuses on energy transition to reduce carbon emissions, according to power ministry estimates.

This is in line with India's ambitious target of having 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030 and its resolve to reduce overall power generation capacity from fossil fuels to less than 50 per cent. India has committed a net zero emission target by 2070.

However, Union Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister RK Singh has said on many occasions that as much



as 65 per cent power generation capacity would be from non-fossil fuels by 2030 and that would be higher than the set target of 50 per cent.

In an interview to PTI, Singh said, "India is likely to witness 25 GW of renewable energy capacity addition entailing an investment of ₹1,37,500 crore (about USD 16.5 billion) in 2024 calendar year, which would be higher

than 13.5 GW with an investment of ₹74,250 crore (nearly USD 9 billion) seen in 2023."

Apart from solar and wind energy, India has increased its focus on green hydrogen in a big way to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, mainly diesel, which is required for long haul vehicles.

India is a diesel-based economy in a way that most of the com-

mercial vehicles for passenger and freight services are using diesel as the fuel.

In January this year, the Union Cabinet approved the National Green Hydrogen Mission with an outlay of ₹19,744 crore.

Later in July, the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) called bids for providing incentives for the production of 4,50,000 tonnes of green hydrogen and 1.5

GW of electrolyser manufacturing facilities annually.

As many 21 firms bid for incentives for electrolyser manufacturing of 3.4 GW and 14 companies for green hydrogen production of 5,53,730 tonnes under the Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) Scheme (Mode-1-Tranche-I).

Reliance Electrolyser Manufacturing, Adani New Industries, L&T Electrolysers and Bharat Heavy Electricals were among the 21 companies that have bid for the government's incentives to set up 3.4 GW of annual capacity for manufacturing electrolysers.

The other companies that have bid were Hild Electric Private, Ohmium Operations, John Cockerill Greenko Hydrogen Solutions, Waaree Energies, Jindal India, Aavaada Electrolyser, Green H2 Network India, Advait Infratech, ACME Cleantech Solutions and Oriana Power.

Matrix Gas and Renewables, HHP Seven, HomiHydrogen, Newtrace, C. Doctor & Company, Pratinsha Engineers and LiveHy Energy also participated in the bidding.

The 14 companies that evinced

interest for incentives to set up production facilities of green hydrogen were ACME Cleantech Solutions, Torrent Power, UPL, GH4INDIA, Aneeka Universal, Sembcorp Green Hydrogen India, Greenko ZeroC and CESC Projects.

Others were JSW Neo Energy, Welspun New Energy, Aavaada GreenH2, Reliance Green Hydrogen and Green Chemicals, HHP Two, and Bharat Petroleum Corporation.

The National Green Hydrogen Mission is aimed at making India a global hub for manufacturing this clean source of energy and is expected to lead to the development of 5 million metric tonnes per annum of green hydrogen production capacity by 2030.

The mission provides for setting up of two green hydrogen hubs in the initial phase.

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has identified three major ports -- Deendayal, Paradip, and V O Chidambaram (Tuticorin) Ports -- to be developed as hydrogen hubs.

Singh said that India has 7.8 million tonnes of green hydrogen capacity at different stages.

GRITTY RAHUL PROPS INDIA

RABADA RATTLES VISITORS WITH FIVE-WICKET HAUL ON A RAIN-HIT DAY OPENING DAY OF THE FIRST TEST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Centurion, Dec 26: Kagiso Rabada was at his lethal best, knocking the stuffing out of India's batting 'prima donnas' with a fifer on a track offering extra and variable bounce as South Africa took control of the proceedings on the opening day of the first Test here Tuesday.

KL Rahul (70 batting, 105b, 10x4, 2x6) continued his love affair with Supersport Park, displaying excellent temperament on a difficult pitch taking India to 208/8 in 59 overs when rain forced early stumps.

Rabada (5/44) bowled two of the most intimidating and incisive spells witnessed in recent times to completely rock the Indian batting line-up, which struggled to cope with the conditions.

One of the finest fast bowlers in contemporary cricket, Rabada bowled an absolute peach to dismiss Virat Kohli (38) with the old ball after having bounced out Indian skipper Rohit Sharma (5) in his first spell. In between, Shreyas Iyer (31), who lived dangerously, got a shooter that completely exposed his defence.

Rabada's 14th five-wicket haul in Tests also comprised the scalp of Ravichandran Ashwin, who was flummoxed by the extra bounce, and Shardul Thakur (24), who after a gutsy effort was softened by a bouncer to be taken out with a length delivery later. Rahul looked solid but is slowly running out of partners as a first innings score of 250 looks a distant reality now.

Rabada, who was given a break from white ball leg, didn't need time to hit the rhythm as he bowled long spells, got a disconcerting bounce along with late swing that had the Indian batters in a tangle.



KL Rahul plays a shot on the leg-side; (inset) Kagiso Rabada reacts to spectators' applause for his five-wicket haul

The manner in which Kohli was forced into making a mistake was an education for young pacers. Rabada bowled a couple of incoming deliveries to pin him on the backfoot and then unleashed his deadly weapon.

He made a nearly 31-over-old Kookaburra to move in and kept it on fuller length as Kohli shaped himself to play inside the line of the delivery. But to his amazement, the ball pitched and de-

viated late to take the outside edge en route to keeper Kyle Verreynne's hands.

Kohli got a massive reprieve in the first session when he was on four as Tony de Zorzi dropped a dolly at square leg off debutant Nandre Burger (2/39) but he then carried out the repair work with Iyer.

At the toss, Temba Bavuma took the expected decision of bowling first and his bowlers did make

the best use of the conditions during that initial hour. The steep tennis-ball like bounce was always going to create problems for the star-studded Indian line-up which for the last six months has played only white ball formats.

Realising the compulsive puller inside Rohit, his opposite number Bavuma, who later limped off with a left-hamstring strain, stationed a long leg fielder just like all international skippers de-

ploy across formats.

Having bowled in and around the off-stump, Rabada dug one short but the height was just above the waist and Rohit bit the bait, going for the pull. Burger standing at least 10 metres inside the long-leg boundary had to just complete the formalities.

Young Yashasvi Jaiswal, all of two Tests, was initially playing close to his body, which allowed the away going deliveries to just miss his bat. He did clip Rabada through mid-wicket and also square cut Burger for boundaries.

Bowling slightly on the fourth stump channel, the left-arm pacer man altered his line and pitched one on fuller length on the off-stump. The ball held its line and enticed Jaiswal to go for a drive and the nick was accepted by Verreynne behind the stumps.

BRIEF SCORES: India 208/8 (KL Rahul 70 batting, Virat Kohli 38, Shreyas Iyer 31, Shardul Thakur 24; Kagiso Rabada 5/44, Nandre Burger 2/50) vs South Africa. Match to continue.

Bavuma limps off

CENTURION: South Africa captain Temba Bavuma's participation in the on-going first Test against India was thrown into jeopardy after he limped off the field with a left hamstring strain here Tuesday. Bavuma went out of the field in the 20th over after chasing a drive from Virat Kohli off left-arm pacer Marco Jansen. "Scans have revealed a left hamstring strain. He (Bavuma) will undergo daily medical evaluations to determine his participation in the match," said an update from Cricket South Africa (CSA). Bavuma hobbled midway through that chase via extra cover region and soon walked off the ground with the help of the South African physio.

Dravid admits India 'need a bit of luck'

Visitors' chances of ending 31-year wait for their maiden Test series win in SA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 26: India head coach Rahul Dravid Tuesday said his team would not mind a bit of "luck" going its way as it aims to win a maiden Test series in South Africa and breach its 'final frontier' after 31 years of attempting.

Having first visited South Africa in 1992, India have made seven more tours and won four Tests but are yet to win a series, even though the Asian giants though have won Test series in England, Australia and New Zealand.

"We (have) come close a couple of times and we have played some good cricket here... Just a few critical moments we have not been able to, maybe, get over the line, get the 34-40-50 runs that you probably need to be able to... To compete here," Dravid told Star Sports before the start of the opening Test at SuperSport Park.

The batting great said the team will take a lot of confidence from the manner in which it bowled on the last four two years ago, when India squandered a 1-0 advantage to lose the three-match rubber.

"Having said that, we looked at a lot of stuff and the way we bowled, I thought we bowled really well in the last series which gives us a lot of confidence that we have the ability to take 20 wickets here with the kind of attack that we have."

Dravid added, "You need a little bit of luck as well in these conditions, there are lot of plays and misses, you want to be the one playing and missing, and



hopefully, the opposition edging those same ones. I think there is a little bit of luck involved.

"But, as long as you do your skills well and make sure that you are putting the ball in the right area, as batting with a certain level of discipline and patience when it is required, looking to capitalise when the ball gets a little bit softer and you are ahead of the game and recognising that you you are never 'in' in these kinds of conditions in South Africa..."

"You might feel that you are in when batting on 34-40, but really, if you can convert that into a much more significant score that makes a big difference.

"So little things like that you need to get right against a really good team like South Africa, very strong team in these conditions, who know how to play well here. I hope that, over the course of the next two Test matches, we will be able to do that."

Roy Krishna strike helps OFC extend unbeaten run

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 26: Odisha FC (OFC) kept their third consecutive clean sheet and extended their unbeaten streak in all competitions to 10 games to secure a 1-0 victory Tuesday over Punjab FC at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here in the Indian Super League (ISL).

The Juggernauts rode on an early opener by Fijian forward Roy Krishna to take three points as the home side fell short of building upon their maiden victory in the competition that they notched last week against Chennaiyin FC.

True to head coach Sergio Lobera's philosophy, the visitors held the major chunk of the possession (64.7%) as they outclassed the opponents at the centre of the park to maintain their assertiveness in the flow of play across both halves.

Ahmed Jahouh delivered a precise corner from a set-piece in the 18th minute that Krishna hammered just off target on the right side of the net. However, the fact that the incumbent Super Cup winners had put Punjab FC on the backfoot helped them convert one of these opportunities, which was brought about by



Roy Krishna celebrates his goal

promising young winger Isak Vanlalruatfela three minutes later.

Isak set up the winner for Krishna from very close range and the former Bengaluru FC star didn't blink twice before depositing the ball into the back of the net. That was followed by Mauricio hitting on target, as he scrapped through a tight situation to shoot from a difficult angle in the 27th minute, but the home side kept that effort at bay.

Punjab FC too had their chances. However, a strong back-line ensured that the home team caused little damage to their winning prospects.

Juggernauts, Quick Guns share spoils

PNN & AGENCIES

Cuttack, Dec 26: Defending champions Odisha Juggernauts and Chennai Quick Guns played out a thrilling 34-34 draw after Gujarat Giants edged past Mumbai Khiladis 34-30 to register their second straight win in the ongoing second season of Ultimate Kho Kho at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium here, Tuesday.

Deepak Sahoo (8) scored the most points for the Juggernauts. Ramji Kashyap performed brilliantly for Chennai once again as he too scored eight points with three sparkling skydives. He also stayed on the mat for more than 5.28 minutes with Laxman Gawas to earn important dream run bonus points.

Juggernauts and Quick Guns went toe to toe in the first inning as they won 16 points each, with Chennai claiming two dream run bonus points as well.

The third turn saw Odisha going into aggressive mode and getting 18 points. Sahoo notched up six points for the team during the turn. The defending champions also avoided giving any dream run bonus points to their opponent. However, Quick Guns managed to win 18 points during the fourth turn to level the match.



Odisha Juggernauts' Deepak Sahoo dives while trying to touch a Gujarat Giants player during their match, Tuesday

Earlier, Abhinandan Patil's splendid show (14 points) fashioned Gujarat Giants' victory over Mumbai Khiladis. Faizankha Pathan, Suyash Gargate and Shubham Thorat also contributed to the Giants' victory by staying on the mat for more than five minutes. For the Khiladis, Rohan Kore (8) scored the most points in the match.

Khiladis earned a dream run bonus point in the first turn and allowed the Giants to secure only 14 points. However, Gujarat quickly turned the tide during turn 2 and claimed three dream run bonus points while defending.

They also allowed Mumbai only eight points with their sublime defence and carried the momentum forward in the second

inning as well. The Giants notched up 14 points in turn 3 while Mumbai won a dream run bonus point as well. However, it was enough for Gujarat to register a victory despite Mumbai earning 20 points in the final turn.

Mumbai Khiladis will now be up against the hosts Odisha while Rajasthan Warriors will face Telugu Yodhdhas Wednesday.

Australia reach 187/3 on rain-hit Day 1

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne (Australia), Dec 26: Marnus Labuschagne notched a gritty score of 44 not out to guide Australia through a rain-interrupted first day of play in the second test against Pakistan at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) Tuesday.

Invited to bat first by Pakistan captain Shan Masood, who won the toss in overcast conditions, Australia reached 187/3 at stumps.

Pakistan squandered a golden opportunity to put Australia on the back foot early, allowing openers David Warner (38) and Usman Khawaja (42) to share a 90-run partnership on a pitch offering sideways movement for the seamers.

Warner, in his penultimate Test, played a loose shot in the final over before lunch and was caught at slip off spinner Agha Salman. The 37-year-old Warner, who scored 164 in the first Test in Perth, was lucky to reach double figures Tuesday. Warner of-



Usman Khawaja (L) and David Warner during the day's play at MCG

fered a regulation chance on 2 in the third over, but it was put down by Abdullah Shafique.

Khawaja added only six runs to his total before he guided a de-

livery from Hasan Ali to second slip at 108/2. Rain interrupted play 37 minutes before the scheduled tea break, with Australia on 114/2. Play resumed almost three

hours later.

Steve Smith was given out LBW on 19, but the former skipper successfully reviewed the decision and survived a scare. On 26, Smith was given not out following a caught-behind appeal, but Pakistan successfully reviewed the decision.

Smith shared a patient 46-run partnership with Labuschagne. Travis Head was unbeaten on nine at stumps to join Labuschagne in the crease when play resumes Wednesday.

The third Test in the three-match series is scheduled to begin January 3 at the Sydney Cricket Ground, where Pakistan won its last Test in Australia nearly 30 years ago. Australia won the first Test in Perth last week by 360 runs.

BRIEF SCORES
Australia 187/3 (Marnus Labuschagne 44 batting, Usman Khawaja 42, David Warner 38, Steve Smith 26; Agha Salman 1/5) vs Pakistan. Match to continue.

Chess players' valuables stolen after break-ins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 26: Some of the frontline Indian chess players, including GM Sankalp Gupta, went through a torrid time while participating in the recent Sunway International chess tournament at Sitges, Spain, as they lost several valuables after break-ins at their apartments.

The train of unsavoury incidents started December 19 with a break-in at the Apollo apartment, a property provided by the organisers for participants, where IM Dushyant Sharma and Sankalp were sharing the accommodation. This break-in happened when the duo was out of their room and Dushyant lost his passport, laptop and cash from the room. Though Sankalp was robbed of his laptop and air-pods, his passport was safe.

But that was not the end of miseries for them as the translator interpreted wrongly that the

players left the doors and windows open, hinting that the burglary was because of their negligence. Dushyant, in fact, had to leave the tournament to get the document to come back home. Interestingly, Sankalp was able to track his air-pods online but the player complained that he did not get any support to retrieve them from Barcelona.

Three days later, Sunway San Jorge Apartment was targeted by the burglars. WIM Mounika Akshaya and WGM Srija Seshadri were away for an evening walk and IM CRG Krishna was sleeping inside the room while burglars stole their valuables like laptop and mobile phones.

Sunway Arizona Apartments had a break-in Dec 23 when WIM Arpita Mukherjee and WFM Vishwa Shah were sleeping in the bedroom. Between 2:30 am and 6 am, their laptops, mobile phones and cash were stolen from the bedside tables.

34 eves named in probables for national camp

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Dec 26: A core group of 34 players will take part in a senior women's hockey coaching camp starting here on Wednesday, aiming to bolster preparations for the Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi and the Hockey5s World Cup.

The Indian players will be joining the camp after a short break from the trip to Spain after playing against Belgium, Germany, Ireland and the hosts in the 5 Nations Tournament.

The Olympic Qualifiers are set to be played in Ranchi from January 13-19 in which India are placed in Pool B along with New Zealand, Italy and the United States of America. The Pool A consists of Germany, Japan, Chile and the Czech Republic.

India had produced a dominating performance in the Jharkhand Women's Asian Champions Trophy in Ranchi and will be returning to their happy hunting ground hoping to continue with their momentum.

"The 5 Nations Tournament served as a good litmus test ahead of the Olympic Qualifiers. We identified areas for improvement, and we will use this festive period to dot all the i's and cross the t's," said Janneke Schopman.

"The squad is eager to return to Ranchi after their triumph in the Asian Champions Trophy. With the little time left, we will focus on refining our game to ensure we are in the best position — physically, tactically, and mentally — to secure qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympics."

Team India will then proceed to Muscat, Oman, wherein they will take part in the Hockey5s World Cup from January 24-27.

INDIA PROBABLES
Goalkeepers: Savita, Rajani Etimaru, Bichu Devi Kharibam, Bansari Solanki; **Defenders:** Deep Grace Ekka, Gurjit Kaur, Nikki Pradhan, Udit, Ishika Chaudhary, Akshata Abaso Dhekale, Jyoti Chhatri, Mahima Chaudhary; **Middlefielders:** Nisha, Salima Tete, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Jyoti, Navjot Kaur, Monika, Mariana Kujur, Sonika, Neha, Baljeet Kaur, Reena Khokhar, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Ajmina Kujur; **Forwards:** Lalremsiami, Navneet Kaur, Vandana Katariya, Sharmila Devi, Deepika, Sangita Kumari, Mumtaz Khan, Sunelita Toppo, Beauty Dungdung.