



True to self

Ananya Panday says she doesn't pretend to have a different relationship status just for the sake of social media

LEISURE | P2



Trump's uncertain future

Donald Trump is tipping back towards chaos after Colorado and Maine disqualified him from 2024 ballot over US Capitol riot

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Record rally in 2023

The S&P 500 closes out 2023 with a gain of more than 24 per cent and the Dow finished near a record high

BUSINESS | P11



India eves go down

Deepthi Sharma's fifer and Richa Ghosh's fighting knock go in vain as India suffer a narrow three-run loss to Australia

SPORTS | P12

PANDIAN REVIEWS SRIMANDIR HERITAGE CORRIDOR PROJECT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Ahead of the inauguration of the Shree Jagannath Temple Heritage Corridor project in Puri January 17, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's close aide VK Pandian Saturday reviewed the progress of pilgrim's holding area, queue management and traffic control in the holy town.

Pandian, the chairman of 5T (Transformational Initiatives) and 'Nabin' (new) Odisha, visited the ongoing project and facilities being created near the 12th-century shrine.

During his visit, he inspected the progress on landscaping works, mutt (monastery) restoration, queue management system, two-wheeler parking areas, garbage chutes and facade painting and emphasized on timely completion, a release issued by the CMO said.

Pandian also inspected 'Shree Danda', 'Shree Jagannath Ballav Vihar' and 'Shree Setu'. He discussed with the Puri Collector, SP and managing director of Odisha Bridge Construction Corporation (OBCC) regarding the progress of the project with focus on parking and security measures.

Congress workers opposed the visit of Pandian to Puri and showed black flags to him Saturday. The protest happened when Pandian arrived in front of the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) office at Puri.



TAKE IT BACK: Wrestler Vinesh Phogat walks with her Arjuna and Khel Ratna trophies before leaving them on a pavement near the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) as a mark of protest, in New Delhi, Saturday (Report P12) PTI PHOTO

SHORT TAKES

Arun Sarangi gets addl charge of DGP
Bhubaneswar: A day before Sunil Bansal retires as Odisha DGP, the state government Saturday said senior IPS officer Arun Kumar Sarangi will hold the post as additional charge till further notice. Sarangi, a 1990-batch Odisha cadre IPS officer, is at present the Special DG of Police, Training and Director of Biju Patnaik State Police Academy. "Shri Arun Kumar Sarangi... is allowed to remain in additional charge of DG of Police, Odisha until regular DGP joins," a notification issued by the Home Department said. Meanwhile, sources said the Odisha government has sent a list of five IPS officers to the Central government for appointment of a regular DGP.

₹1,849cr irrigation projects

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday laid foundation stone for two major irrigation projects that would be developed at a cost of ₹1,849 crore in Nabarangpur district. While the Parvati Giri lift irrigation project will be constructed at an investment of ₹1,272 crore, around ₹577 crore will be spent on the Turi-Guntat project. About 70,000 acres of farmland in 120 villages in Nandahandi, Nabarangpur and Tentulikhunti blocks of the district will get irrigation facilities when the Parvati Giri project is complete, an official statement said. P3

Relief for OCS aspirants

ODISHA CABINET OKAYS 13 PROPOSALS COVERING VARIOUS SECTORS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Enhancement of upper age limit of candidates appearing for Odisha Civil Service (OCS) exams to 38, from the existing 32, for the 2024 recruitment calendar, and addition of 200 more electric buses to the Mo Bus fleet are among the 13 proposals that received a go-ahead from the state Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Saturday.

Considering delay in recruitment process, the state government had earlier enhanced the upper age limit of OCS aspirants from 32 to 38 for advertisements made during calendar years 2021, 2022 and 2023, Chief Secretary PK Jena said after the Cabinet meet here.

In order to provide ample opportunity to candidates wishing to participate in the recruitment examinations for 2024 calendar year, the state has decided to amend the Orissa Civil Service (Fixation of Upper Age Limit) Rules, 1989, he said.

The Chief Secretary added, "Following the amendment, the upper age limit for OCS exam aspirants will be increased to 38 from 32 for advertisements in 2024 calendar year."

Jena said 200 new electric



KEY DECISIONS

- Govt to collect betel nut, fistful of rice from all households for heritage corridor project
- Enhancement of upper age limit for OCS candidates to 38
- 200 more e-buses to be added to Mo Bus fleet
- Allotment of 5-acre land for IIPH campus in Bhubaneswar
- ₹312.18cr for LED streetlights in 110 ULBs

buses will be procured and added to Capital Region Urban Transport's (CRUT) Mo Bus fleet.

CRUT began Mo Bus services in Bhubaneswar with 200 diesel buses in November 2018. Soon after, 55 Midi buses and 50 electric buses were added to the fleet. Later, CRUT expended its services to Rourkela and its hinterlands with addition of 100 midi buses, he said.

"The Cabinet approved the bidding process taken up by CRUT and selected JBM Ecolife Mobility Private Limited as operator for procurement, operation and maintenance of 200 electric buses on gross contract basis for 10 years with a total cost of ₹933,26,40,000," Jena pointed out.

For the safety of commuters and reduction of carbon emission, the state Cabinet approved the 'Implementation of LED

Public Street Lighting Project'. "With an allocation of ₹312.18 crore, the project will help illumination in 110 urban local bodies (ULBs) in Odisha," Jena said.

The state Cabinet approved allotment of five acres of land in Bhubaneswar free of premium to the Public Health Foundation of India for establishment of a permanent campus of Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH) that will create skilled human resource in public health system, the Chief Secretary said.

To promote Jagannath Culture at village level, the state government will collect betel nut and a handful of rice from all households in state for the inauguration ceremony of Shree Jagannath Heritage Corridor Project in Puri January 17, the Cabinet decided.

Don't visit Ayodhya January 22, says PM

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ayodhya, Dec 30: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged people not to visit Ayodhya January 22 for inauguration of the Ram Temple.

"As bhakts, we would not like to cause any problems to Lord Ram. You all can come starting January 23 till eternity... Ram Mandir is now there forever and ever," Modi said Saturday. He also asked everyone to light a diya in their house on that day.

The prime minister said that Ram Lalla has got a new permanent home in the form of the Ram temple in Ayodhya after 'spending years in a tent'.

He said that houses have been constructed for both Ram Lalla and four crore poor people of the country.

Modi also said that the government is taking steps to improve connectivity to Ayodhya from several places in the country.

He made the remarks after inaugurating the Ayodhya Dham railway station and Maharishi Valmiki International Airport. The prime minister also flagged off eight new train routes during the day.

Addressing a public event in Ayodhya, Modi said, "December 30 has been a very historical date in the history of the country. On this day in 1943, Netaji



Subhash Chandra Bose hoisted the flag in Andaman and proclaimed the Independence of India."

He further said that if any country wants to reach new levels of development, it has to preserve its heritage.

Modi said that the India of today is an 'amalgam of the old and the new'.

"We are moving ahead in the digital age and are also preserving our heritage. Development must come with preservation of heritage and carry forward Viksit Bharat," he pointed out.

The prime minister added that the completion of the Ram temple is a moment that the world was waiting and the excitement is palpable on the streets of Ayodhya.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Am I allowed in, or am I being suspended?

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	28.0°C	26.8°C
Min Temp	16.2°C	16.0°C
Humidity	85%	77%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST

DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY

Worried your kids watching same shows

REPEAT WATCHING ENABLES IMMERSION INTO A MAKE-BELIEVE WORLD THAT PROVIDE COMFORT

Do you find your children asking to watch the same TV shows and movies, or play the same video games over and over (and over again)? Perhaps you also find yourself thinking it would be better if they had a more varied screen-time diet.

The good news is, it's perfectly OK for children to watch and repeat. In fact, it can help them learn.

Children learn through repetition

Children have a lot to learn about themselves and the world. A big part of the way they do this is through repetition.

This applies to learning to walk, talk and read. But it can also be said for TV shows, movies and video games with a storyline such as 'Stardew Valley'.

Children may start by learning about the plot. On subsequent viewings they may pick up more details about the characters, the songs, the context or even the subtle twists and turns of



the plot. So this offers children insights into different characters, stories and ideas. These different perspectives offer valuable opportunities for learning about people and the world.

Repeat watching also enables immersion into a make-believe world that provides comfort. Just like adults might enjoy catching up on old episodes of Seinfeld or Friends, or watching Love, Actually each Christmas.

A unique opportunity

When a child watches something

over and over; this also opens up unique learning opportunities because they get to know the story so well.

Once a child is very familiar with a storyline, they can have deep discussion to help them think critically about what they are watching, especially once they've reached primary-school age.

Together, you can share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints to those offered in the story. Together, you can also question the assumptions in the characters' actions and the storyline.

This will help your child's critical thinking and help them evaluate information in the rest of their lives. It can also help them weigh up positive and negative attributes of characters, plots and beliefs that form part of the storyline. Ultimately, this can help your child learn to reason and make judgements about controversial issues, and hopefully learn to do this in a respectful way.

CONVERSATION VIA PTI

Both Asthma and Arthritis rise rapidly in winter. Patanjali & Divya's research and evidence-based medicines are a complete solution to it.

Swasari Gold and Bronchom— Using these medicines and yoga, we have treated patients with 90% infected lungs due to Corona or any other cause. Take 1 tablet of Swasari Gold daily on an empty stomach. Licking Swasari Gold powder with honey has special benefits. Sucking Bronchom after meals multiplies its benefits. Taking both these medicines with Swasari Kwath is immensely beneficial.

Swasari Pravahi- Very effective medicine for cough, cold, asthma, lung, bacterial and viral infections.

RESEARCH & EVIDENCE based ayurvedic medicine for Arthritis, Cervical, Spondylitis, Slip Disc, Sciatica and other Vata Dosha-related diseases. Regenerates damaged cartilage, improves blood circulation, rejuvenates degenerated cells and regulates pain markers.

All our medicines are available at Patanjali Stores, leading medical, ayurvedic and other stores across India.

The usage of the medicine mentioned above is suggestive in nature and it is the choice of the treatment in the management of above-mentioned diseases. Avoid self-medication and always take the medicines under medical supervision.

leisure



ZAC, KELLY SPLIT AFTER 4 MONTHS OF MARRIAGE

Country music star Zac Brown and his wife Kelly Yazdi are going their separate ways after four months of marriage. The *Zac Brown Band* lead singer, 45, and Yazdi, 32, announced they are divorcing in a joint statement Friday, reports People magazine.

SHARON OSBOURNE VOWS TO STOP COSMETIC SURGERY

Reality television star Sharon Osbourne has vowed to never undergo any more cosmetic surgery procedures, saying she has nothing 'left to stretch, pull or cut'. The 71-year-old, who has been open about her procedures, admitted a recent face-lift left her feeling frightened as the surgeon messed up.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
You are likely to give in to the demands of your children today. Ganesh says it is for times like this that you labour so hard. You will finish the tasks that you have been postponing for a long time. It is a good day for people in the medical field and in the public sector.

TAURUS
Ganesh finds this an excellent day for managers and administrators. If you are one, the results you will achieve by the end of the day will far exceed the efforts you put in. This is mainly because your subordinates will be enthusiastic, compliant and cooperative.

GEMINI
You will listen to your heart over your head, swept away as you will be in a flood of emotions today. This could mean that you will be unable to distinguish between good and bad. However, looking back upon your day in the evening, you are unlikely to regret any of the decisions you made, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will be involved in a team effort and associated with work like inspection and examination. You will base your opinions on your friends' choices. So select good friends, says Ganesh. You will spend time with close circle.

LEO
Your natural self-confidence and capability will help you attain a position of strength today. As a result, all your tasks will be completed easily and you will reap rewards greater than your expectations, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
You will be faced with serious financial problems today. You may even have to pay through your nose to get what you desire. Later in the evening, you might accomplish some short-term goals. Ganesh predicts that some vital business agreements will end your day in high spirits.

LIBRA
Ganesh says you will be able to improve your relations abroad. There will be good news coming from friends or relatives living abroad. Your working ability and efficiency will make you popular in the office today. In the day today you shall have a variety of good and bad experiences.

SCORPIO
An electric wire of 440 volts is apt to describe you today. According to Ganesh, you are in a belligerent mood today and can burst like a fireball. Meditation and yoga is likely to improve the situation. Remember, treat others the way you want to be treated by them.

SAGITTARIUS
Ganesh foresees a day full of promises. People in the creative field, especially artists are going to benefit more. Radio jockey and television anchors can make a note of this day in their diary, as it may serve as a memorable day, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You have projected yourself as a confused individual. You may have a tendency to remain in a double mind. But, today you'll come up with a very specific plan that will surprise many of the people around you. Be clear about what you want to do in life, how you want your life to be and make sincere efforts to achieve it, guides Ganesh. Rest assured, success shall be with you!

AQUARIUS
You are disappointed and you seek solace in spirituality. Don't run away from the problems; rather face them with strength and confidence, advises Ganesh, to bring your life back on track. With patience and belief in the Almighty, you will sail through the storm. Understand that challenges are a part of everyone's life.

PISCES
You will display kindness and generosity today and will do your best to help anyone in need. At work you will receive praise for the efforts that you've put in and your dedication will be validated. Even though you intend to give utmost importance to your family, this intention will trail in the shadow of pending work which will require long hours.

Ananya hates 'situationship'

Mumbai: Ananya Panday and Aditya Roy Kapur are rumoured to be dating since last year. Although Aditya said he is in a 'situationship' during his recent appearance on Karan Johar's show *Koffee With Karan-Season 8*, Ananya in an interview with a news portal said she disapproves of the new dating concept. She added she doesn't believe in faking relationship status just for the sake of social media.

Ananya Panday said, "I hate situationships. I don't like that term only. Also, I'm not on a dating app and nor do I talk about my relationships on social media. I'm not someone, who will pretend to have a different relationship status just for the sake of social media."

In *Koffee With Karan*, *The Night Manager* actor was asked by Karan Johar, "Rumour has it that you are dating Ananya Panday?" The actor replied, "You see Karan, you said on your show - ask me no secrets and I'll tell you no lies."

"But she said that she is very Ananya Joy Kapur," added Karan. "And I am Aditya Joy Kapur, as of now," Aditya said in response.

"Yes, you mean you are joyously in a situationship," Karan further said and Aditya replied, "Yes, I am quite joyous."

AGENCIES

Jamal Jamaalo, Elnaaz's NY present

Mumbai: Known for her work in *Kandahar* and *Jugg Jugg Jeeyo*, among others, actress, model and singer Elnaaz Norouzi is now set to enthrall her fans with a cover of the Iranian song *Jamal Jamaalo*, which holds a special place in her heart.

The original Iranian song has been sung by Omid Jahan. The song recently became a hit with its inclusion in the Ranbir Kapoor-starrer action movie *Animal*. It is titled as *Jamal Kudu*.

The song featured actor Bobby Deol, who got a raving review over his entry in the film with this track.

Now, Elnaaz will captivate her fans with a cover of the Iranian song. Being of Iranian descent herself, Elnaaz felt a deep connection with the song and expressed her excitement about singing in her native language.

"I've always had a passion for singing, and covering *Jamal Jamaalo*, a song in Iranian language, holds a special place in my heart. As a New Year present, I'm thrilled to share this with all my fans in India, Iran and around the world," she said.

On the film front, she has the Telugu movie *Devil: The British Secret Agent* lined up.

IANS

I don't set goals every year: Yami

Mumbai: Actor Yami Gautam, who had three successful projects in 2023 including *OMG 2*, *Lost*, and *Chor Nikal Ke Bhaaga*, expresses her satisfaction with the positive reception of her projects in 2023.

"After 2022 with *A Thursday*, I was hoping to be consistent, not just with my choices, but also with the audience's response to my film and work. I am happy that all these films worked theatrically and in their OTT releases," she says, adding, "I wanted to have a balance between both mediums, regardless of anything. I try and keep my expectations very minimal."

Asked if she has set any goals for the upcoming year, the 34-year-old concluded, "I am a very go-with-the-flow kind of a person. I don't set any rules or goals every year. I have two releases lined up, a political thriller and a comedy, and I am very excited about them and hopeful that they find their respective ways to the right audience."

AGENCIES



SRK, Deepika to collaborate for their next

Mumbai: Top stars Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone are gearing up for a thrilling collaboration, and it's not a sequel to their blockbuster *Pathaan!*

The dynamic on-screen duo, who ended 2023 on an all-time high with back-to-back Rs 1000 crore blockbusters, is set to kick off 2024 with an all new project. SRK and DP will soon feature in an ad for a prominent car company, fusing the worlds of high-speed and glamour.

Late Friday night, the anticipation reached a fever pitch as a teaser of the upcoming advertisement was released online.

The clip offered a sneak peek into the stars' 'super-spy' avatars. In this snippet, Deepika embarks on a mission to uncover the mysterious figure known only as KING, setting the stage for an adrenaline-fueled narrative that promises to keep viewers waiting in anticipation.

Taking to the comments section, fans wrote, "Can't believe an ad got me hyped. Also looks like Deepika will be SRK's co-star in more films this decade."

"Oh God! They are so hot together," another declared.

"Do another movie together!!!!!!" a fan demanded. Beyond the silver screen, their chemistry is now poised to shine in the commercial sphere as they join forces as brand ambassadors.

AGENCIES

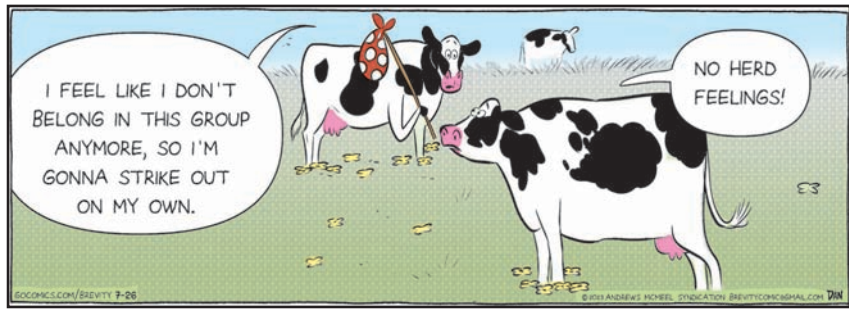
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

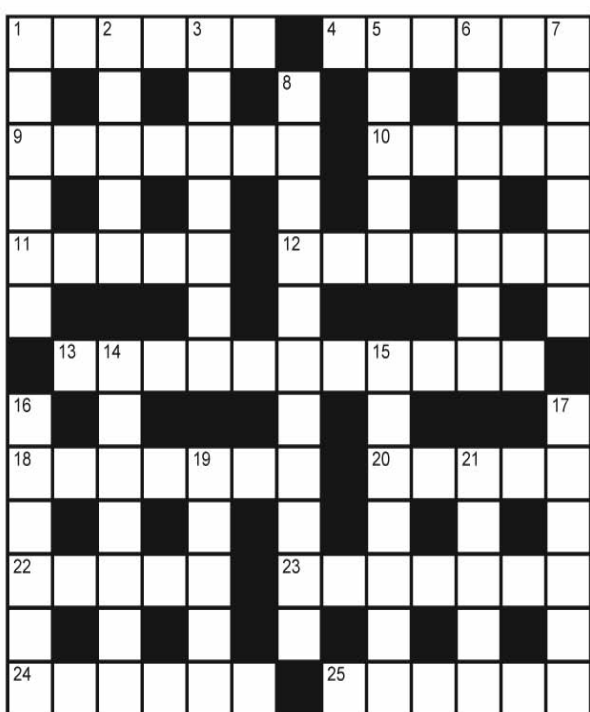


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD

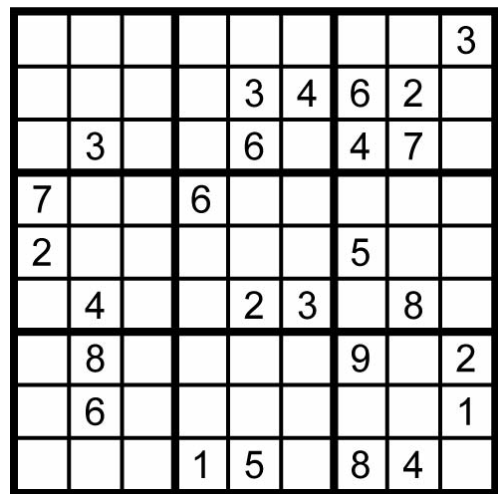


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- Across**
- 1 Charm
 - 4 Dusters
 - 9 Demolish
 - 10 Seed structure
 - 11 Fencing swords
 - 12 Pilot
 - 13 Spiders (3,8)
 - 18 Agave liquor
 - 20 Compress
 - 22 Innocent
 - 23 Renting
 - 24 Candy
 - 25 Ship's boat
 - 6 Closet disorder
 - 7 Fortified wine
 - 8 In a forceful manner
 - 14 Ask after
 - 15 Notorious London prison
 - 16 Acrobatic feats
 - 17 Account book
 - 19 All thumbs
 - 21 Dehydrated
- Down**
- 1 Confused
 - 2 Outmoded
 - 3 Collars
 - 5 New Zealand native

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

CLASSIC CRAFT
U R L E R A I H
R E B E L E A R L O B E
E E F D B L A
D E R M A T O L O G I S T
T P H R
S C A M P S B Y E B Y E
O O D A
F E E D I N G F R E N Z Y
T L N U A D E
E P I S T L E T I A R A
N T E S E G T
S T E E D S Y S T E M S

SUDOKU

7 3 6 1 5 8 4 2 9
9 2 8 7 4 3 6 1 5
4 1 5 2 9 6 8 3 7
1 4 7 3 8 5 9 6 2
5 8 3 9 6 2 1 7 4
2 6 9 4 1 7 5 8 3
3 9 4 8 2 1 7 5 6
6 7 1 5 3 9 2 4 8
8 5 2 6 7 4 3 9 1

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

EVICTON DRIVE

An excavator engaged by BDA razing down unauthorised constructions in Chandrasekharpur area of Bhubaneswar, Saturday



ZERO NIGHT CELEBRATION

Cov fear, restrictions may dampen spirit



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: As the people in the Capital city gear up for New Year celebrations, the guidelines issued by Commissionerate Police in view of new Covid variant have somewhat dampened their spirit. Along with that, the restrictions on the timing of Zero Night parties have worried the hotel owners and managers too.

As the revelers have been asked to finish their fun activities by 12:30am, several business establishments feel disappointed. As the police will be on tight vigil to keep a check on drunk driving and other unlawful activities, many young people are apprehensive about their plans.

Srinivas Subudhi, working president of Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO), said that Covid cases in the state have made people more

cautious and many young people are hesitant because of increased police alertness against drunk driving. Speaking about concern of all hoteliers, Subudhi said, "Zero hour celebrations are occasions where we expect huge footfall at different hotels, especially those in Bhubaneswar and Puri. For the last few years, due to Covid we had suffered huge losses. We hope for a good business this year. However, we are worried too as there is a sense of panic among people due to Covid."

Accordingly, City Hotels have done full preparation to welcome the New Year. Empires Hotel will organise their zero hour with 'Hello 2024' where Amit Sana will perform along with Ollywood singer Smruti Mohapatra and members of the Swagger King Dance Group. Similarly, Hotel Pal Heights has laid out 'Masquerade' theme party where many celebrities,

along with musical sensation Koustav, will perform to entertain the crowd.

Subudhi said that safety of people is the organisers' top priority. "All hotels have put systems in place to counter Covid. The arrival of people with masks is compulsory in all hotels and we have arranged special rooms to facilitate isolation of anybody with symptoms," he said.

"We have requested the Commissionerate Police to extend the deadline for the New Year eve celebrations till 2:30am," he added.

Apart from the Capital, Puri is going to witness many grand New Year celebrations. Toshali Group of Hotels and Resorts has lined up entertainment shows which also offer exotic gala dinner with DJ music. Similarly, Wonder World Water Park is organising Euphoria, 2024 and has roped in belly dancers and singers Kuldeep Pattnaik and Neeraj Bakshi along with DJ Waseem to regale the visitors.

Many people are also visiting the Eco Retreats in Konark, Satkosia, Bhitarkanika, Daringbadi, Sonapur, Putsil and Hirakud, and other places like Nandankanan, Jaydev Vatika for the New Year.

Notably, to ensure that Zero Night celebrations go incident-free, the Commissionerate Police has stepped up its vigil and urged hotel, club and apartment owners to not use loudspeakers whose sound exceeds 65 decibel.



JUST DEMAND: Members of 'Odisha Rajya Swatantra Bidyalaya Sikhya O Karmachari Sangh' stage a demonstration at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Saturday, seeking fulfillment of their demands including monthly pension

45th Mo School meeting held

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: The 45th executive council meeting of Mo School Abhiyan took place here Saturday under the chairmanship of School and Mass Education Commissioner-cum-Secretary Aswathy S. In the meeting, it was decided that the state level Mukhyamantri Shiksha Puraskar celebration will be held January 31 and district-level award distribution will be held from February 6 to 15. In addition, the meeting also decided to include 500 schools to cover in the first phase for development by JSW Foundation. The meeting also approved to provide scholarships to Dibyang students of higher primary schools under Mo School Abhiyan. It was informed that as of Saturday, 8,27,182 alumni has been added in Mo School network.

Centre to safeguard historical monuments through local bodies

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 30: The Union government has been considering empowering local bodies to provide security to historical monuments especially to those which are not under the list of centrally protected monuments.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture has recently recommended to the Union Ministry of Culture that provisions to empower the local bodies for the protection of historical monuments and to make them accountable may be incorporated in the amendment of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act.

The Union ministry of Culture has accepted the recommendation of the committee for the implementation.

The committee said that no proposal exists at present with ASI for empowering local bodies to provide security guards to the unprotected monuments.

The committee stated that given their proximity and cultural ties with local monuments, local bodies are best suited to look after the protection of historical monuments especially those which are not under the



KAPILSWAR TEMPLE

list of Centrally Protected Monuments (CPMs). "Empowering local bodies to provide security guards at such monuments for their protection can go a long way in ensuring that these monuments are preserved in their present state for generations to come," the committee said. It recommended that provisions to empower local bodies for the protection of historical monuments and to make them accountable may be incorporated in the amendment of the AMASR Act.

The committee had also recommended formation of the State Level Co-ordination Committees for coordination between the ministry of Culture and respective state governments for resolving important issues such as removal of encroachment of monuments. The ministry informed the committee that 11 states including Odisha have formed such committees.

Barik elected as member of BCI

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 30: The Bar Council of India has issued a notification announcing that advocate Bhakta Bhushan Barik has been elected as Member, Bar Council of India (BCI) from the State Bar Council of Odisha.

The election for the member-representative was held December 17 after the BCI lifted stay on the elections of chairman, vice-chairman and member-representative to BCI of Odisha State Bar Council.

As many as three candidates namely advocates Bhakta Bhushan Barik, Bibhu Prasad Tripathy and Dinesh Chandra Ray were contesting for the position. The BCI informed that advocate Bhakta Bhushan Barik declared elected with highest vote. "Bhakta Bhushan Barik, Advocate declared elected with highest votes in the election held December 17 as Member, Bar Council of India from the State Bar Council of Odisha," BCI said.

Welfare of farmers, women always main focus: Naveen

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Saturday laid foundation stone for two irrigation projects through video conferencing in Nabarangpur district to be constructed at a cost of around Rs 2,000 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, the CM said that agriculture is backbone of the state's socio-economic system and his government has always given importance to development of the farm sector and the farmers. "Many schemes have been launched for development of agriculture in the state," he added.

Patnaik further said that the welfare of farmers and women has always been his main focus as the state cannot achieve development without the development of farmers and women.

Sources at the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said that while 11 proj-



REPRESENTATIVE PIC

ects would be implemented under the Parvatigiri Mega Lift Irrigation project at a cost of Rs 1,272 crore, the Turi-Gunmat Irrigation project would be built at a cost of Rs 576 crore.

With the commissioning of these two projects, 70,000 hectares of cultivable land would be irrigated. "While around 50,000 hectares of land in Nandahandi, Nabarangpur and Tentulikhunti block would be irrigated after commissioning of Parvatigiri mega irrigation projects, 20,000 hectares of crop land of Kosamunda and Nabarangpur block

The Chief Minister Saturday laid foundation stone for two irrigation projects in Nabarangpur district to be constructed at a cost of around Rs 2,000 crore

With the commissioning of these two projects, 70,000 hectares of cultivable land would be irrigated in the district, providing farmers with modern irrigation facilities

would be irrigated due to the Turi-Gunmat irrigation project," said an official.

Notably, the latest modern technology will be used for irrigation in these parts through underground pipe. "There would be no displacement of people," Patnaik assured.

The Chief Minister said a decision has been taken to cover all people in villages under the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana. Now 90 per cent people of the state would get better Medicare free.

AI to touch every aspect of Indian tech industry in 2024

According to a recent Nasscom study, AI and automation have the potential to add up to \$500 billion to India's GDP by 2025

Leading Indian tech industry leaders said Saturday that the coming year presents an exciting opportunity for purpose-driven organisations to better serve their communities as humanity advances in ways of using AI which requires more funding and expertise.

In the next year, businesses will transform the way they measure performance and productivity to focus on outcomes like products launched or leads generated, instead of inputs.

"Business leaders have a responsibility to ensure that their teams are equipped with the right resources and support to take advantage of unprecedented opportunities that AI offers," said Arundhati Bhattacharya, chairperson and CEO, Salesforce India. "AI will be felt through enhanced productivity within these ever-changing business models. In short - AI will touch every aspect of the tech industry and the markets they serve," she added.



According to a recent Nasscom study, AI and automation have the potential to add up to \$500 billion to India's GDP by 2025.

"On the Generative AI front, we expect it will hypercharge efficiency, and we will all get familiar with the term 'semantic query' and advancement in semantic query (essentially a question written in a 'human' language that then gets translated into machine language) which will dramatically change

customer service," said Bhattacharya.

Businesses can provide quick and meaningful, hyper-personalised service with AI using text, images, videos, and audio for search. Throughout 2024, semantic query will become a cornerstone for AI, according to industry leaders.

Generative AI (GenAI) is expected to generate economic value worth \$2.6-\$4.4 trillion annually, of which around 75 per cent is ex-

pected to be concentrated in software engineering, customer operations, product and R&D, and sales and marketing, which are core service lines of many technology service providers in India, according to a recent report by Nasscom in association with McKinsey & Company

According to Bikram Singh Bedi, Managing Director, Google Cloud, India, "We sit in a unique position to help businesses innovate with generative AI with our advanced models and continue to help businesses solve complex problems and transform in this new AI era."

"2023 has been an extraordinary year for Google Cloud and particularly for our business in India. From forging deep collaborations with CERT-In, Bhashini and ONDC to launching Gemini Pro we have seen the potential of how technology can shape the future of Indian organisations, the public sector and beyond," Bedi told IANS.

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“The Divine Truth is greater than any religion or creed or scripture or idea or philosophy.”
SRI AUROBINDO



Events in Kashmir

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has visited the families of those Kashmiris killed in army custody and assured them justice. He told them, it was reported, that “nobody can bring those who have died back to life. But there will be justice.” This was a good thing to have said in humane terms and we shall see if justice comes. We should however examine the past record of the government of India (all governments including previous ones) when it comes to justice for those wronged by our army.

Much of the focus is on AFSPA, the law that gives armed forces immunity in so called “disturbed areas” of India. We should try and understand it. In 2015, it was pointed out that the Disturbed Areas Act had lapsed in Kashmir in 1998 but AFSPA was still in force, apparently without sanction, but this was overlooked.

The key provision of AFSPA was the sweeping empowerment of individuals belonging to the police and the military and the paramilitary to open fire “if he is of opinion that it is necessary so to do for the maintenance of public order.” The forces could use force “even to the causing of death” and would be immune from prosecution for their actions except with the sanction of the Centre.

They could destroy anything they thought was a hideout, a fortified position or shelter from which an attack could be made. And they could arrest and detain without a warrant anyone they wanted and could use force in effecting the arrest. What happens when you give armed men such freedom in a place that has been declared hostile by the State is not difficult to imagine. On 1 January 2018, the Rajya Sabha was informed by the government that the Defence Ministry had got 50 requests in 26 years from the Jammu and Kashmir government for permission to prosecute soldiers under AFSPA. It granted permission in zero cases. These include cases of soldiers accused of unlawful killings, torture and rape between 2001 and 2016.

An Amnesty India report published in 2015 looked at over a hundred cases and met with 58 families and found that since 1990, no sanction had ever been given to prosecute those accused by the Kashmir government of crimes. A chargesheet is the document filed after an FIR is registered and on the basis of investigation, meaning the police had found evidence of a crime.

However, the Centre has approved none of the state’s requests for justice. The army says it conducts its own justice system, the court martial. These are opaque processes where the survivor or victim does not have access and shouldn’t be used for crime unrelated to military discipline. However, this parallel court system has been allowed to soldiers trying fellow soldiers of crimes against civilians.

An editorial in the Economic Times (‘Pathribal fake encounter case: India’s army’s acquittal of accused soldiers a blot on democracy’, 27 January 2014) describes what happens in these courts martial. The case discussed related to an attack in March 2000 during the then president Bill Clinton’s visit to India. The army claimed it had attacked a hut which contained Lashkar-e-Taiba militants who had participated in a massacre of Sikhs in the village of Chatisingpora just before the Clinton visit. On 11 May 2006, after investigating the case the CBI filed murder charges against five serving army personnel from the 7 Rashtriya Rifles unit in the court of the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Srinagar. The CBI argued this was a case of ‘cold blooded murder’ and were not actions taken in the course of performing official duties, and so the perpetrators could not be protected. The Indian Army blocked the prosecution of five army personnel under Section 7 of the AFSPA. The Supreme Court of India upheld the army’s action and asked it to decide whether it wanted to court martial them instead. In September 2012, over twelve years after the murder of the five civilians in Pathribal, the Indian Army chose to bring the case before the military justice system and began proceedings in a general court-martial. On 24 January 2014 the Indian Army said it was dismissing all charges against five of its personnel due to a lack of evidence. According to the closure report filed in the Srinagar Chief Magistrate’s Court, the Indian Army did not conduct a trial but instead dismissed the charges through a pre-trial procedure known as summary of evidence under Rule 24 of the Army Rules 1954. The Economic Times editorial said that “the army’s self-acquittal of the Pathribal accused is a continuation of the cover ups of human rights violations in J&K and India’s Northeast, where the military has a free hand in dealing out ‘justice’ as it deems fit. This is a blot on our democracy.”

In another case, the paper reported on 11 July 2018 (‘Machhil encounter: Life sentence of 5 army men suspended’) soldiers were convicted of murdering three civilians but freed nonetheless by an army tribunal without explanation. Two years ago, on December 4, 2021, soldiers from the 21 Para Special Forces army unit shot and killed six coal miners in Nagaland’s Mon district. The deaths led to violent clashes between local villagers and troops, and seven more civilians and a soldier were killed. A day later, soldiers killed another person after protesting villagers attacked their camp.

In June 2022, Nagaland police filed charges against 30 soldiers, including a major, after a special investigation team found the military had used “wrong positive identification without proper application of mind,” and that the miners were shot “with a clear intention to kill.” On April 14, 2023, the Indian government denied permission to pursue the prosecution.

This is the background and it is against this that we should judge what Rajnath Singh has said about the events in Kashmir.



Aakar Patel

What happens when you give armed men such freedom in a place that has been declared hostile by the State is not difficult to imagine



DK Giri

INDIA IS ONE OF THE FEW COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD WITH A SECULAR CONSTITUTION

Another year is passing. We await the New Year with hope as well as anxiety, as the world is going through turbulent times. Philosophically speaking, it is the order of life, full of ups and downs, happiness and sorrow, peace and war. The last cycle of international life (peace and war) is under interrogation as Prime Minister Narendra Modi profoundly said while mildly chiding the Russian President Vladimir Putin last year during Shanghai Cooperation Summit at Samarkand, that “it is no time for war.”

The United Nations was created after the Second World War to prevent further wars. However, the world community has failed in preventing full-scale wars in addition to several armed skirmishes and clashes. The horrifying war in Ukraine continues unabated causing horrendous loss of lives, properties and resources. The war that started last year lingers on defying diplomacy and the political acuity of world leaders. Apparently, the Ukrainian war at present is stalemated as Russia seems to tire out and Ukraine running out of support from the West. Until there is some kind of truce, the war can intensify at any stage as the resources or resolve on either side are reinforced.

If Ukrainian war was not enough for the world community to address the disruptions in economy and politics, another violent war erupted in the Middle-East between Israel and Hamas. This was quite unexpected. Israel and Palestine were living in peace and some kind of co-existence since the conflict began over seven decades ago. However, terrorism as a method of conflict resolution is still lurking around. This is completely illegitimate and unacceptable. India, as a victim of cross-border terrorism has been raising the issue of eliminating the scourge of terrorism from world. But, because of dubious policies of quite a few

FOCUS YEAR ROUNDUP

INDIA & THE WORLD



When India is aspiring, may be rightly so, to be a ‘Vishwa Guru’ because of its unique spirituality and culture, any blemish on India’s politics and society should be addressed

countries terrorism persists. According to reports, over 20,000 civilians in Palestine have been killed. Israel is facing assaults from Hezbollah in Lebanon and Houthis in Yemen. According to the Israel military, the war is likely to continue for months.

Again, the world leaders have miserably failed in bringing about a lasting ceasefire, let alone the end of the war. In dealing with the current war, the commentators are going back to the origin of conflict and are caught in victim-aggressor-victim cycle. In this war, both Israel and Hamas have become aggressors as well as victims.

Recalling the brighter side of India and its interactions with the world, we had an amazingly successful G20 Summit in Delhi. It came up roses inasmuch as there was a consensus statement by the world leaders despite a divided opinion on Ukrainian war. Indian leadership was credited with successful negotiation across the countries.

This year, India became the fifth largest economy in the world. That is some achievement to shout about as India’s growth has been constantly low in the 70s and 80s at 3 per cent which was queerly called ‘Hindu rate of growth’ by an eminent economist, Prof. Raj Krishna. The economic planners resolved

to expedite the economic growth which is promised to be over \$5 trillion by the end of this decade to be the third largest in the world. However, the prosperity of the country is measured by per capita GDP not the country’s GDP alone. In that sense, disappointingly, India has the lowest per capital GDP among all G20 members.

At the same time, India became the most populous country in the world surpassing China. This is again a distinction India could claim provided it uses the demographic dividend intelligently and strategically. Prime Minister Modi, in an article, articulated the strength of India in terms of four Ds – democracy, demography, development and diversity. So, India’s population, mainly its large segment of youth population, could be harnessed in India and abroad. India’s foreign policy could strategise on population redistribution, facilitating the migration of skilled manpower to various countries.

There were two unsavoury incidents involving India and Canada and India and the USA. In both the cases, two Sikhs of Indian origin having accepted the citizenship of Canada and USA, were plotting violent attacks on Indian agencies. One of them,

Hardeep Singh Nijjar with dual citizenship of India and Canada, was murdered in Canada. The Canadian Prime Minister accused Indian agencies being behind his death. An avoidable diplomatic row erupted. Similarly, the US citizen Gurpatwant Pannu, who called for boycott and violence against Air India, was targeted causing the US to point a finger at Indian intelligence agencies. The sharing of evidence is on between relevant authorities in India and the US.

On the side of caution, it is to be noted that once again the US Commission on International Religious Freedom has asked for 17 countries, including India, to be put as ‘countries of particular concern’. This is about lack of religious freedom in those countries. This is certainly a matter of concern for a country like India, which has been famous across the world for religious tolerance and accommodation. Remember, Prime Minister Modi spoke in Israel with a great sense of pride that no Jew suffered from anti-Semitism in India. India is one of the few countries in the world with a secular Constitution.

Likewise, India ranked low in the ranking of three democracy watchdogs – Freedom House, V-Dem and Economist Intelligence Unit. One may quarrel with their process of measurement of democracies, but should we be completely dismissive of such concerns? When India is aspiring, may be rightly so, to be a Vishwa Guru because of its unique spirituality and culture, any blemish on India’s politics and society should be addressed. The World Happiness Report 2023 shows India on 126th position out of 137 countries despite it being the fifth largest economy. Is this not something to address in 2024 and beyond?

The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism.

SPECTRUM TECH PLATFORMS

Saving democracy from trolls



Ngaire Woods

IN INDIA, ONE IN EVERY SEVEN TWEETS ABOUT FEMALE POLITICIANS IS PROBLEMATIC OR ABUSIVE

More than 70 national elections are scheduled for 2024, including in eight of the ten most populous countries. But one group is likely to be significantly underrepresented: women. A major reason is the disproportionate amount of abuse female politicians and candidates receive online, including threats of rape and violence, and the rise of artificial intelligence, which can be used to create sexually explicit deepfakes, is only compounding the problem.

And yet, over the past year, platforms such as Meta, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube have de-emphasised content moderation and rolled back policies that previously kept hate, harassment, and lies in check. According to a new report, this has fuelled a “toxic online environment that is vulnerable to exploitation from anti-democracy forces, white supremacists, and other bad actors.”

Online attacks against women in politics are already on the rise. Four out of five female parliamentarians have been subjected to psychological violence such as bullying, intimidation, verbal abuse, or harassment, while more than 40% have been threatened with assault, sexual

violence, or death. The 2020 election in the United States was particularly revealing. A recent analysis of congressional candidates found that female Democrats received ten times more abusive comments on Facebook than their male counterparts. And immediately after presidential candidate Joe Biden named Kamala Harris as his running mate, false claims about Harris were being shared at least 3,000 times per hour on Twitter.

Similar trends have been documented in India, UK, Ukraine, and Zimbabwe. Minority women face the worst abuse, together with those who are highly visible in the media or speak out on feminist issues. In India, one in every seven tweets about female politicians is problematic or abusive, with Muslim women and women belonging to marginalised castes bearing the brunt of the vitriol.

The disproportionate targeting of women discourages them from running for office, or leads them to disengage from online discourse in ways that harm their political effectiveness—all of which weaken democracy. In Italy, “threats of rape are used to intimidate women politicians and push them out of the public

sphere,” says Laura Boldrini, an Italian politician who served as president of the country’s Chamber of Deputies, adding that political leaders themselves often issue these menacing remarks.

Tech companies should take four steps to counter this trend. For starters, they should publish guidelines on what constitutes hate speech and threatening and intimidating harassment on their platforms.

Second, platforms need to reinvest in effective content moderation for all countries, not just the US and Europe. That means using a combination of human capital and improved automated systems. Equally important is training human moderators to identify online violence against women in politics and more equitable investment in effective content moderation.

Third, “safety by design” principles should be embedded in new products and tools. That could mean building mechanisms that “increase friction” for users and make it harder for gendered hate speech and disinformation to spread in the first place.

Lastly, independent monitoring by researchers or citizen groups would help societies keep track of the problem and how well tech

platforms are handling it.

Crucially, governments must also take steps to prevent gendered online abuse from undermining democracy. Tunisia and Bolivia have outlawed political violence and harassment against women, while Mexico recently enacted a law that punishes, with up to nine years in prison, those who create or disseminate intimate images or videos of women or attack women on social networks. But even when laws exist, female politicians speak of “virtually constant” abuse and report that law-enforcement officials do not take online threats and abuse seriously. In the UK, for example, less than 1% of cases reported to Scotland Yard’s online-hate-crime unit have resulted in charges.

Tech companies and governments must act now to ensure that both men and women can participate equally in next year’s elections. Unless they do, representative democracies will become less representative and less democratic.

The writer is Dean of the Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford.

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WISDOM CORNER

- “The limits of the possible can only be defined by going beyond them into the impossible.” —ARTHUR C. CLARKE
- “There are only two tragedies in life: one is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it.” —OSCAR WILDE
- “However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at.” —STEPHEN HAWKING

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1600:** The East India Company, formed for the exploitation of trade with East and Southeast Asia and India, was incorporated by English royal charter.
- 1907:** The first annual ball drop at Times Square. The annual tradition of dropping a ball at 11:59 pm to mark the start of the New Year was organized for the first time by Adolph Ochs, the owner of the New York Times.
- 1991:** The Soviet Union legally ceased to exist, Russia and other former Soviet republics having declared themselves independent and having founded the Commonwealth of Independent States December 21, 1991.
- 1999:** The United States officially handed over control of the Panama Canal to Panama.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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Mob culture

Sir, It is deplorable and disgusting that the primitive and evil practice of ‘witch hunting’ continues to thrive in parts of India especially in Assam. A tribal woman was burnt alive by a group of men, in front of her husband, suspecting her of practicing ‘witchcraft’ in Assam’s Sonitpur district a few days ago sending shock waves across the country. A strong law on prohibition and prevention of witch hunting that was passed in 2108 does exist in Assam but the enforcement has been indecisive. Though it is indisputable that the heinous practice is attributed to superstition, illiteracy and backwardness, several mass campaigns by the authorities and non-governmental organisations to create awareness among the gullible have not clicked big. Witch hunting is a mob culture; the government cannot be contented with mere slogans and awareness drives. Adequate and efficient healthcare should reach areas where the inhumane practice is prevalent.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Call for regulation

Sir, India confronts a growing deepfake crisis, sparking widespread concern across various sectors from politics to entertainment. The surge in manipulated media blurs reality, raising alarms in the nation’s digital landscape. This trend is anticipated to heighten in 2024, with a staggering 900% increase in deepfake online content noted by the World Economic Forum between 2019 and 2020. Forecasts project that up to 90% of online content may be synthetically generated by 2026. Unfortunately, the ease of producing deepfakes, now mainstream and accelerated by AI, poses increased risks. The exponential growth of AI has also led to a troubling rise in deepfake pornography, generating hyperrealistic images and videos with minimal effort and cost. The proliferation of deepfake videos featuring prominent actors has incited public outrage, accentuating concerns regarding the misuse of technology for fabricating content and disseminating false narratives. Instances of manipulated videos and images distorting speeches contribute to the spread of misinformation. Deepfake technology, powered by AI, enables impersonation using images, showcasing self-learning capabilities that produce convincing, emotion-laden footage. In 2023, the rapid advancements in AI amplified the prevalence of deepfakes on social media. **Krishna Kumar Vepakomma**, HYDERABAD

Ganjam farmers bring turnaround in paddy farming with SRI method

SRI METHOD OF CULTIVATION IS BEING IMPLEMENTED IN THE DISTRICT WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT, GREEN CLIMATE FUND AND UNDP



POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 30: SRI (System of Rice Intensification) method of paddy cultivation can help check climate change and benefit the farmers as it consumes very less water in comparison to other methods of cultivation. This is because SRI method does not require continuous flooding for rice cultivation.

Taking up paddy cultivation in SRI method helps reduce the possibility of global warming by 29 per cent as it results in 25-70 per cent reduction in discharge of methane and carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. This method also produces more particles during the harvest, reduces the crop harvest period by at least 10 days, requires minimum amount of seed, water and chemical fertiliser for the crop. Moreover, the paddy cultivation is rain and storm tolerant and helps in increasing the fertility of the farmland.

As large volume of water is required for rice cultivation, farmers conventionally depend on rainfall to raise their crops.

However, due to a change in climatic conditions, it has become a difficult task for the farmers to supply enough water to their farmlands for growth of the paddy crops. Farmers have been failing to start their cultivation in time due to lack of water every year. Even if they manage to sow seeds, seedling death comes back to haunt them due to lack of irrigation facilities.

Lack of irrigation results in reduced output for farmers,

which is why they are withdrawing from rice cultivation in most cases. Distraught farmers look for financial assistance from the state government but they are often left high and dry.

As a result, in Ganjam district alone hundreds of acres are left uncultivated. In this situation, the district project management unit under Berhampur Forest department is laying stress on SRI method of cultivation and drawing the farmers towards it. This has come as a relief for the distressed farmers fed up with crop loss and reduced output in the traditional method of cultivation.

SRI method of cultivation is being implemented in the district with the support of the state government, Green Climate Fund and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

This has helped many farmers in becoming self-reliant and financially independent. Farmers are of the opinion that this new method is helping them raise their crops without hassle.

However, there is significant difference between the SRI and traditional methods of paddy cultivation. In this method, eight to 10 days old paddy saplings are transplanted within a distance of 25 cm on wet farmlands. Maintaining proper distance during transplantation

helps in growth of the root. As a result, paddy saplings get more air, sunlight and nutrients.

Jute and long beans are sown along with paddy as green manure. The de-weeding machine is used every tenth day to clear weeds and unwanted shrubs on the farmlands. This helps in aeration of the soil and the weeds also act as organic manure for the crops. The cultivation is resilient to standing water and dampness on the farmland. The output is more where there is proper movement of air.

When contacted, Ranjan Kumar Bhoi, the district coordination officer of the Agriculture department said this year over 900 farmers in Chikiti, Rangeilunda, Khallikote and Ganjam blocks have taken up SRI method of cultivation which initially started with only 30 farmers on 10 acre land in 202-23 FY.

Assisted by two voluntary outfits Lipika and Pallishree and supervised by 30 experts, an additional 870 farmers have taken up the cultivation this kharif season on 200 acre of farmland. The cultivation was initially started by training the farmers in 39 villages. An increase in cultivation in the coming days can help check climate change and benefit the farmers, Bhoi added.

Tribal body calls for Rayagada Bandh Jan 5

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Dec 30: Zilla Adivasi Mahasangh, a local tribal outfit here, Saturday called for Rayagada Bandh on January 5 seeking justice against the torture and murder of innocent tribals in the district.

The announcement for the bandh was made by the president of the outfit Apalswami Kadraka, convener Basanta Kumar Ulaka, general secretary Jagannath Mandangi and secretary Manjula Miniaka in a press conference.

A tribal youth leader Bhagirathi Mandangi had been



brutally killed December 15 in 2010. Investigation into the mur-

der was first taken up by the police and then by the Crime

Branch. However, even after 13 years of the incident the murder mystery has not yet been solved, members of the outfit said. "We have demanded for a proper probe before the police and the government many times but in vein," they rued.

"Bhagirathi's family has been waiting for justice for the last 13 years and if the government does not take any step in this regard till January 3, bandh will be observed January 5," the outfit's office-bearer warned. The outfit appealed to all associations in the district to extend their support to make the bandh successful.

All-women technical team of RSP shows the way



RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

Rourkela, Dec 30: Women are emerging as architects of change, reforming industries and excelling in domains once considered exclusive for men. From technology and scientific advancements to leadership and innovation, women are leaving an indelible mark across the globe. Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) is no different in providing such a platform to the women.

The 12-member all-women technical team of contract cell works (CCW) is responsible for breaking the male domination in steel making by RSP. The team, with sheer competence, dedication, and resilience, is redefining the norms and setting new standards in the field of contract management.

The technical team of 12

women, including both executives and non-executives, of many age groups are looking after various contract related jobs in the department. The day-to-day activities of the team include purchase order processing, generating competitive statements, scrutinising those, handling tender inquiry proposals, maintaining PO copies and record keeping. The sub-team among them looks after contracts of various departments.

"Women are leading big businesses today. As women, we feel empowered to see other female colleagues in the department who are maintaining both home and office works with ease," says Satabdi Sahu, ACT, who is proficient in statistics and has the responsibility of sending monthly reports to the top management.

Sonali Nanda, ACT, who looks

after the contracts of some major departments like the Blast Furnaces, New Plate Mill, CPP - 1, SSM, C&IT, and Fire Services gives credit to the management for providing great support to the team and creating a conducive work environment for the team without any discrimination.

Rukmini Kerketta, Executive Assistant and PS to HOD, who looks after vital areas like Audit and Vigilance and is also responsible for keeping record of all the bills, says, "It is not easy but I do it without problems."

Gyaneswari Padhy, Senior Manager, who is also the dealing officer of the department, says, "The switching over from pen and paper documentation system to SAP, EPS, SRM and currently GeM portal has been challenging because of the rapid transition to digital mode."

3 bodies found on railway track

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Dec 30: The Government Railway Police (GRP) here recovered three dead bodies on railway tracks in separate locations in the last 48 hours.

The first body was recovered from near Chhatrapur railway station Friday. The deceased was identified as Tanmaya Mallick, 35, of Badhuan village under Basudevpur police limits in Bhadrak district.

Police recovered his mobile phone from his pocket and informed his family members. The brother of the deceased Sashanka Sekhar Mallick reached MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur and identified the body.

Sources said, Tanmaya had gone to Angul in Andhra Pradesh for job. While returning to Bhadrak by Antyodaya Express, he was standing near the door and accidentally fell from the train and died. Police seized the body and registered a case (90/23) of unnatural death.

Similarly, the second body was

recovered from Khodasingi railway track near Berhampur Saturday.

The deceased was identified as K Gourishankar Reddy, 58, a resident of Dura village under Gopalpur police limits in Ganjam district. He was working as a clerk at Malkangiri collectorate. He went to Bhubaneswar over some work and spoke to his family members December 28. Police also recovered a train ticket from his pocket.

The body was identified by his brother K Mohan Reddy. It is suspected that he accidentally fell from the train and died. A case (91/23) of unnatural death has been registered by the police in this regard.

Another body was recovered from railway track between Chhatrapur and Ganjam. The approximate age of the deceased might be 40-42, the police said.

A case (92/23) of unnatural death was registered by the police. However, the identity of the deceased has not been ascertained yet and the body has been kept in the morgue, police said.

Fisherman dies as boat overturns in Bay of Bengal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Gopalpur, Dec 30: In a tragic incident, a fisherman drowned while two others escaped narrowly after their boat overturned in the Bay of Bengal near Gopalpur coast in Ganjam district in the wee hours of Saturday.

The deceased was identified as B Bairagi, 63, a resident of Gopalpur Notified Area Council (NAC). However, two other fellow fishermen M Simadri and D Kaleya of the same locality managed to swim ashore.

According to reports, the trio went into the sea for fishing in the wee hours of Saturday. However, their boat was hit by a strong sea current and overturned. Simadri and Kaleya managed to jump into the sea before the boat overturned but Bairagi was trapped under the boat and could not come out.

Locals rescued and rushed them to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur where doctors declared Bairagi brought dead. Simadri and Kaleya have been admitted to the hospital, while Bairagi's wife has lodged a written complaint in this regard at Gopalpur police station, sources said. Police seized the body and sent it for post-mortem after registering a case (31/23) of unnatural death.

Awards for 3 top officials of RSP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 30: Three senior executives of SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) were awarded the prestigious 'SAIL Corporate Awards for Excellence 2021-22' in a glittering ceremony held in New Delhi December 28. Amarendu Prakash, Chairman, SAIL, handed over the awards to the winners in various categories in the presence of the members of SAIL Board of Directors, Director In-Charges of different Plants, and other senior officers of SAIL.

In the individual categories, SK Nayak, CGM, (F&A) of RSP won the Cost Champion and Finance

Wizard awards. RK Muduli, CGM (HSM-2), was the joint winner in the 'Innovation Architect' category, while Asha Kartha, GM In-Charge (Safety Engineering), RSP received the joint winner award in the Women Trailblazer segment.

Amarendu Prakash congratulated the winners and said, "Excellence is a culture and one who adopts this culture excels in every field of work. SAIL is a family and we should imbibe excellence in each thought to make SAIL an excellent company." Atanu Bhowmick, Director In-Charge of RSP with additional charge of Bokaro Steel Plant also congratulated the award winners.

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Sd./- Executive Engineer, Kendrapara (R&B) Division-II, Kendrapara
OIPR-34158/11/0006/2324

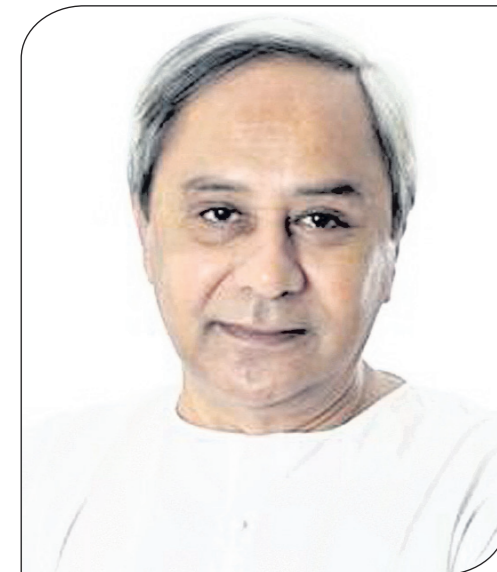
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. O-2047
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, JEYPORE
e-Procurement for Road works | Bid Identification No.: EERWJYP - Online- 15/2023-24
Letter No. 5092 Date: 29.12.2023
01. Name of the work :- Road Works
02. Total Number of works :- 07 (Seven) Nos.
03. Approximate Estimated Cost :- Rs.5.88 lakhs to Rs.21.01 lakhs (approximately)
04. Class of Contractor :- "D", "C" & "B" Class
05. Period of Completion :- Within 3 Months
06. Other details
Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. SI. No. of work in notice Availability of tender online for bidding Last Date & Time of Seeking Tender Clarification Date & Time of Opening
Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Jeypore Online Tender/15/RWD-JYP/2023-24 SI No.1 to 07 08.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M. To 14.01.2024 upto 5.00 P.M. 13.01.2024 at 01.30 P.M. 14.01.2024 at 11.00 AM
Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in/nicapp/app. All Amendments, time extension, clarifications etc. will be uploaded in the website only. Bidders should regularly visit the above website to keep themselves updated. "N.B.: Any Addendum or Corrigendum will be available in the Website only.
OIPR-25160/11/0015/2324 Sd./- Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Jeypore

Bank of India Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar, Mob.: 8373911737
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE
E-Auction Sale Notice Under SARFAESI ACT, 2002
Where as the Bank acting through its Authorised Officer in exercise of its powers under-Section 13(4) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (SARFAESI) has decided to put up for E-auction of the following properties for realization of the debts due to the Bank.
Sl. No. BRANCH/ Name & Address of the Borrowers/Guarantors/ Total Dues Description of the Properties Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount
1. RANIHAT BRANCH, Ph.: 7028182354/ Borrower: M/s. Guru Maharaj Filling Station, Prop.: Mr. Tanmay Pattanayak, Address-1: At: Kolsahi, Tangi, Dist.: Cuttack-754022, Odisha, Address-2: At/PO.: Professor Pada, Dist.: Cuttack-753003, Odisha / Guarantor: Mrs. Snigdha Pattanayak, W/o.: Mr. Tanmay Pattanayak, At/PO.: Professor Pada, Dist.: Cuttack-753003, Odisha / Total Dues: ₹1,59,14,304.11 + interest, costs and expenses, less any part amount repaid. Property-1: All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Sub Plot No.: 157 & 158, Rev Plot No.: 395/807, Khata No.: 323/14 having Area: Ac. 0.055 Dec. i.e. 2396 sq.ft., KISSAM: Gharabari at Kalyani Vihar, Mouza: Kantilo within the registration Sub-Dist.: Jatni, PS.: Bhubaneswar Thana No.: 53, Dist.: Khurda, registered in the name of Mrs. Snigdha Pattanayak, W/o.: Mr. Tanmay Pattanayak, vide RSD No.: 294/2002, Plot No.: 157 is Bounded by North: Sub Plot No.: 156, South: Sub Plot No.: 158, East: Sub Plot No.: 172, West: Road, Plot No.: 158 is Bounded by North: Sub Plot No.: 157, South: Sub Plot No.:159, East: Sub Plot No.: 171, West: Road
Property-2: All that part and parcel of the property (co-joint Vacant Land) consisting of Khata No.: 725/2122, Sub Plot No.: 134, Rev Plot No.: 1650/4793 of Area: Ac. 0.051 Dec. i.e. 2221.56 sq.ft., Rev Plot No.: 1651/4792 of Area: Ac. 0.002 Dec. i.e. 87.12 sq.ft., Rev Plot No.: 1649/4794 of Area: Ac. 0.001 Dec. i.e. 43.56 sq.ft., Total 3 Plots, Total Area: Ac. 0.054 Dec. i.e. 2352.24 sq.ft., KISSAM: Gharabari, Mouza: Kalarahanga, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, PS.: New Capital, Dist.: Khurda, registered in the name of Mrs. Snigdha Pattanayak, W/o.: Mr. Tanmay Pattanayak, vide RSD No.: 5281/2000, Bounded by North: Road, South: Sub Plot No.: 126, East: Sub Plot No.: 133, West: Sub Plot No.: 135
Property-2: All that part and parcel of the property consisting of EQM of Land & Building under Khata No.: 109/113 of aggregate Total Area: Ac.4.100 Dec, Plot No.: 10/949, Sarada-3/2, Area: Ac.0.820 Dec, Plot No.: 10/952, Sarada-3/2, Area: Ac.0.820 Dec, Plot No.: 10/953, Sarada-3/2, Area: Ac.0.820 Dec, Plot No.: 10/954, Sarada-3/2, Area: Ac.0.820 Dec, Plot No.: 10/956, Sarada-3/2, Area: Ac.0.410 Dec, Plot No.: 10, Sarada-3/2, Area: Ac.0.410 Dec, KISSAM: Gharabari situated at Mouza: Gilinasi, Tahasil: Krushnaprasad, Thana: Krushnaprasad, Dist.: Puri, Odisha, standing in the name of M/s. Tapaswini Food Products
Date & Time of E-Auction : 09.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. with unlimited extension of 10 (Ten) minutes each
Last date & time for submission of EMD & Documents: 08.02.2024 upto 4.00 P.M.
Inspection will be provided to the prospective bidders on any working day before 08.02.2024 with prior appointment of the authorised officer
The sale shall be subject to the terms and conditions and provisions prescribed in the SARFAESI Act 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
This is also a 30 days sale notice to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) of the aforesaid loan account for settlement of their outstanding dues with the Bank and to participate in the public auction on the above mentioned date.
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in (1) https://www.ibapi.in (2) https://www.mstcecommerce.com (3) www.bankofindia.co.in
Place: Bhubaneswar Date: 31.12.2023 Authorised Officer Bank of India

POWER LIST 2023

The world witnessed many geopolitical upheavals this year too as war broke out between Israel and Hamas in the Middle East, and this came at a time when the Russia-Ukraine conflict showed no signs of receding. Back home, ethnic violence in Manipur and communal clashes in Haryana stirred up social and political fabrics. However, some leaders wielded the proverbial sword of power, and it was their decisions - good or otherwise - that determined the world's destiny. **OrissaPOST** lists up the power honchos who mattered most in eventful 2023...

STATE



NAVEEN PATNAIK
CHIEF MINISTER



KARTIK PANDIAN
ST & NABIN ODISHA CHAIRMAN



DHARMENDRA PRADHAN
UNION MINISTER

NATIONAL



NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER, INDIA



DY CHANDRACHUD
CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA



AMIT SHAH
HOME MINISTER



MALLIKARJUN KHARGE
PRESIDENT, INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS



RAHUL GANDHI
CONGRESS LEADER



SHARAD PAWAR
PRESIDENT, NCP



MAMATA BANERJEE
CHIEF MINISTER, WEST BENGAL



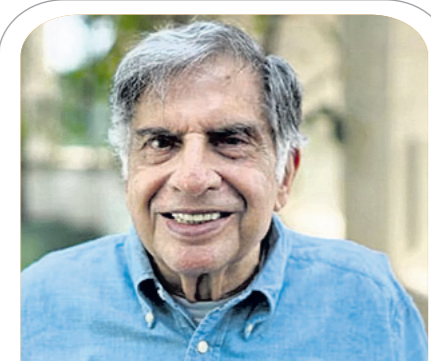
YOGI ADITYANATH
CHIEF MINISTER, UP



NITISH KUMAR
CM, BIHAR



MUKESH AMBANI
CHAIRMAN & MD, RIL



RATAN TATA
CHAIRMAN, TATA SONS



GAUTAM ADANI
FOUNDER-CHAIRMAN, ADANI GROUP



KM BIRLA
CHAIRMAN, ADITYA BIRLA GROUP



JAGAT PRAKASH NADDA
PRESIDENT, BJP



AJIT DOVAL
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR



MK STALIN
CHIEF MINISTER, TN



JAGDEEP DHANKHAR
VICE PREZ, INDIA



NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
UNION FINANCE MINISTER



MOHAN BHAGWAT
RSS CHIEF



SITARAM YECHURY
GENERAL SECRETARY, CPM



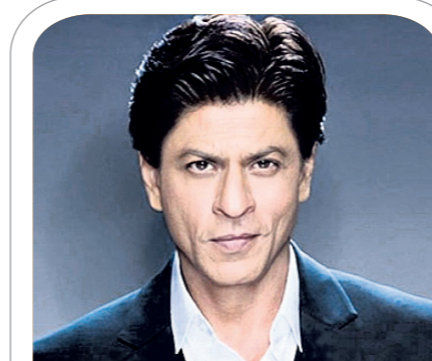
REVANTH REDDY
TELANGANA CHIEF MINISTER



ANIL CHAUHAN
CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF



SAKSHI MALLICK
INDIAN FREESTYLE WRESTLER



SHAH RUKH KHAN
ACTOR

INTERNATIONAL



JOE BIDEN
PRESIDENT, USA



XI JINPING
PRESIDENT, CHINA



VLADIMIR PUTIN
PRESIDENT, RUSSIA



KING CHARLES III
KING OF THE UNITED KINGDOM



BENJAMIN NETANYAHU
PRIME MINISTER, ISRAEL



EMMANUEL MACRON
PRESIDENT, FRANCE



MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN AL SAUD
CROWN PRINCE, SAUDI ARABIA



LUIZ INÁCIO LULA DA SILVA
PRESIDENT, BRAZIL



RISHI SUNAK
PRIME MINISTER, UK



JUSTIN TRUDEAU
PRIME MINISTER, CANADA



GIORGIA MELONI
PRIME MINISTER, ITALY



KIM JONG UN
SUPREME LEADER, NORTH KOREA



ELON MUSK
CEO, X, TESLA & SPACE X



POPE FRANCIS
HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



ISMAIL HANIYEH
HAMAS LEADER



VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY
PRESIDENT, UKRAINE



SULTAN AHMED AL JABER
PRESIDENT FOR COP28 UAE



SAM ALTMAN
CEO, OPEN AI



A child gestures with a toy sword at a protest in support of Palestinians in Gaza, in Amman, Jordan



This drone image shows thousands of tents used by displaced people in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip



Confetti is released during a test ahead of New Year's Eve at Times Square



Waves smash against a home along the California coast in Malibu Beach, Calif.



School students celebrate ahead of the New Year in Moradabad



BJP MP Manoj Tiwari along with others protests at Gyarah Murti against Arvind Kejriwal-led state government and the rising air pollution, in New Delhi



The Amritsar-Delhi Vande Bharat Express during its flag-off ceremony in Amritsar



Union Minister Anurag Thakur launches the Government of India Calendar for 2024 in New Delhi

national

of the day quote

Poor and middle-class people are not able to run their families but they have not got any relief. The government's priority is only to fill the pockets of a few billionnaires

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

I have not received any invitation yet and I don't need one to visit Ayodhya as Ram Lalla belongs to everyone. Whenever I feel like it, I will go. Shiv Sena had contributed a lot to the Ram temple movement

UDDHAV THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) CHIEF

Let's abandon violence, come to the negotiating table, and initiate a dialogue to restore normalcy

N BIREN SINGH | MANIPUR CM

SHORT TAKES

Infant dies in MP

Shahdol: A one-and-half-month-old boy died after he was allegedly branded with a hot iron rod as part of a ritual to cure him of a respiratory ailment in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol district, an official said Saturday. The infant died while undergoing treatment at the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) of the district hospital on Friday, civil surgeon G S Parihar said.

Navlakha grilled

New Delhi: A team of Delhi Police has questioned activist Gautam Navlakha in connection with probe into NewsClick's alleged foreign fundings and anti-India activities, an official said Saturday. Navlakha was questioned at his house in Navi Mumbai's Agroli for three hours by a team led by an assistant commissioner of police (ACP)-level officer. Navlakha was asked about his links with news portal's founder and Editor-in-Chief Prabir Purkayastha and about his share in the company, an official said. Navlakha, who was on house arrest, was granted bail on December 19 in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case.

Majithia quizzed

Patiala: Shiromani Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia Saturday appeared before a Punjab Police special investigation team here in connection with a drugs case and was questioned for more than four hours, official sources said. This was Majithia's second appearance before the SIT this month. He had earlier appeared before the SIT on December 18 and was questioned for more than seven hours.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

Affidavit under Office of the Executive Magistrate, Puri. I Alok Barik, aged about 21, S/o Indramani Barik, resident of Hatisala, p.s.- Baselisahi, Puri- 752001 declared that I have changed my name from Alok Barik to Alok Barik. Hence I shall be known as Alok Barik for all purpose.



POOR AIR QUALITY

Delhi continues to grapple with alarming levels of air pollution, reaching 'severe' conditions despite GRAP-III in force and various measures being taken by city authorities

POOR AIR QUALITY

Delhi continues to grapple with alarming levels of air pollution, reaching 'severe' conditions despite GRAP-III in force and various measures being taken by city authorities



'Unknown' persons booked for embassy blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: Days after a low-intensity blast took place near the Israeli embassy here, Delhi Police have registered an FIR against "unknown" persons, officials said Saturday.

The FIR was registered Friday night under Section 3 (punishment for causing an explosion likely to endanger life or property) of the Explosive Substances Act and Section 427 (mischievous causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees) of the Indian Penal Code at Tughlak Road police station based on a complaint lodged by a police officer, an official said.

The blast occurred Tuesday evening in the area between the boundary walls of a house on plot number 4 -- Nanda's House -- and the Central Hindi Training Institute on plot number 2A on Prithviraj Road. The area has bushes, plants and trees and no CCTV camera. It is behind the Israeli embassy on Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Road, running parallel to Prithviraj Road.

No one was injured in the blast. Police had found an "abusive" letter addressed to the Israeli ambassador near the blast site.



FRIDAY, POLICE SAID THAT THEY WERE PLANNING TO REGISTER AN FIR AS THEY HAD FOUND 'CRUCIAL EVIDENCE' POINTING TO A CONSPIRACY TO THREATEN THE ISRAELI ENVOY

ANOTHER OFFICIAL SAID SATURDAY THAT THE CASE MIGHT BE HANDED OVER TO THE SPECIAL CELL TO DIG OUT THE DEEPER CONSPIRACY

According to sources, the one-page letter written in English is suspected to be related to an organisation called Sir Allah Resistance and mentions words like "Zionists", "Palestine" and "Gaza".

Friday, police said that they were planning to register an FIR as they had found "crucial evidence" pointing to a conspiracy to threaten the Israeli envoy. Another official said Saturday that the

Cong flags model code violation



Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra and Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma with the newly-appointed ministers after the oath ceremony, at Raj Bhawan in Jaipur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Dec 30: Surendra Pal Singh, the BJP's nominee for the January 5 election to the Karanpur assembly constituency, was inducted as a minister in the Rajasthan government Saturday, drawing flak from the Congress which accused the ruling party of violating the model code of conduct.

Apart from Singh, 21 BJP MLAs were sworn in as ministers by Governor Kalraj Mishra at a ceremony in the Raj Bhawan here. While 12 leaders have been sworn in as cabinet ministers, five have been made ministers of state (independent charge) and five ministers of state.

Singh took oath as Minister of State (independent charge). Hitting out at the BJP for inducting Singh into the council of ministers, senior Congress leader and former chief minister Ashok Gehlot said it was a "clear violation" of the model code of conduct and an attempt to influence voters.

In a post on X, he said, "The Election Commission should take cognizance of this and take immediate action. Taking such unconstitutional steps is unfortunate in a democracy. This shows the arrogance of the BJP high command."

The Congress' Rajasthan

unit chief Govind Singh Dotasra said his party will bring this matter to the Election Commission's notice and demand action. Polling to the Rajasthan assembly seat of Karanpur, originally scheduled for November 25, was adjourned following the death of the Congress candidate. The election will now be held on January 5 and results will be declared three days later.

"The BJP's ego is at its peak. It has defied the Election Commission and violated the Model Code of Conduct by administering the oath of office to its candidate from Karanpur Surendra Pal Singh," Dotasra said in a post in Hindi on X.

He said this was probably the first case in the country where the BJP has made its candidate a minister before the polling. "The Congress will bring this matter to the notice of the Election Commission and demand action. The BJP may tempt the voters but the Congress party will win the Karanpur seat by a huge margin," he added.

The Congress has fielded Rupinder Singh Kooner as its nominee for the poll, which was postponed following the death of party candidate and his father Gurmeet Singh Kooner.

151 MYANMARESE SOLDIERS FLEE TO MIZORAM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aizawl, Dec 30: At least 151 Myanmar soldiers fled to Mizoram's Lawngtlai district after their camps in the neighbouring country were overrun by an armed ethnic group, an Assam Rifles officer said Saturday.

The Myanmar army personnel, also known as the 'Tatmadaw', fled with their arms and approached the Assam Rifles at Tuisentlang in Lawngtlai district Friday after their camps near the international border were overrun by the Arakan Army fighters, he said.

The officer said that there had been intense gunfights between the Myanmar army and the Arakan Army fighters for the past few days in areas close to the Indian border. He said that some of the Myanmar Army personnel, who entered Mizoram Friday, were critically injured and first aids were administered to them by the Assam Rifles.

The Myanmar army soldiers are now in the safe custody of Assam Rifles at Parva in Lawngtlai district near the Myanmar border, he said. The Myanmar soldiers will be sent back to their country in some days as talks are going on between the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Myanmar military government, he added.

In November, a total of 104 Myanmar soldiers fled to Mizoram after their military camps along the Myanmar-India border were overrun by pro-democracy militia - People's Defence Force (PDF).



Tourists participate in paragliding in Manali

Passenger finds worm in sandwich

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: An IndiGo passenger found a worm in a sandwich served onboard a flight from the national capital to Mumbai, and a video was shared on social media, following which the airline apologised and said the matter is under thorough examination.

The incident happened onboard flight 6E 6107 from Delhi to Mumbai Friday. The woman passenger Kushboo Gupta shared on Instagram a short video of the worm in the sandwich onboard the flight.

When contacted for comments on the video, an airline spokesperson said the airline is aware of the concern raised by one of its customers regarding the experience on flight 6E 6107 from Delhi to Mumbai.



"Upon investigation, our crew had immediately ceased the service of the specific sandwich in question. The matter is currently under thorough examination, and we are working closely with our caterer to ensure appropriate corrective measures are taken. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience caused to the passenger," the spokesperson said in a statement on Saturday.

In the Instagram video, she questioned the quality of food being served by the airline and said that despite informing the cabin crew about finding the worm, they continued to distribute the sandwiches to other passengers. Gupta also wondered about the kind of training given to the airline staff and who would be responsible in case someone contracts an infection.

Armed men target security forces in Manipur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Churachandpur/Imphal, Dec 30: A Manipur Police commando was injured in a heavy gunfire exchange between unidentified gunmen and security forces in Moreh, Tengnoupal district, around 3:50 pm Saturday, officials said.

Eyewitnesses said the commando was injured when the gunmen targeted police vehicles as they were heading towards the

Key Location Point (KLP) from the border town of Moreh. An officer confirmed, "One commando sustained shrapnel injuries when they came under attack while crossing the M Chahnou village section of Imphal-Moreh road."

The injured commando has been identified as Ponkhalung of 5 IRB, officials said, adding, he is currently receiving treatment at the 5 Assam Rifles camp. Police said, "Unidentified gun-



men fired shots and threw bombs at the commando team of Moreh

at Chikim Veng, Moreh Ward No. 9 in Tengnoupal district. The incident occurred while Manipur police commandos were conducting routine reconnaissance in the area."

Police said, "Initially, two bombs exploded, followed by 350 to 400 rounds of fire." Sources said firing was continuing near the New Moreh entrance gate and M Chahnou village. Two houses in Moreh were also set on fire, sources added.

ED summons Soren again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, Dec 30: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued a letter-cum-summons to Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren seeking his availability for questioning in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam, official sources said Saturday.

Soren, 48, has been asked by the central agency to inform the investigating officer of the case about the date, venue and time of his choice so that his statement can be recorded under the Prevention

of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

The agency has sought a response from the Chief Minister by December 31, failing which it will initiate further legal action under the provisions of the anti-money laundering law. This is the seventh notice or summons issued to Soren but he has never deposed before the ED. The first was issued for August 14.

He had filed a petition before the Supreme Court and then the Jharkhand High Court seeking protection from the ED action and terming the summons "unwarranted".

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
DEOGARH (R&B) DIVISION, DEOGARH
E-mail ID: eepwdddeogarh@gmail.com
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)

Letter No. 4672 Dtd. 19.12.2023
No.B-1517:- **Invitation for Bids**
Bid Identification No. SE PWD DGR No. 16 of 2023-24

1	The Superintending Engineer, Deogarh (R&B) Division, Deogarh, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in Single / Double cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for Construction of Road & Building as detailed below.
2	Nature of work : Road, Building & Electric work
3	No. of works : Road 01 No., Building 1 No. & Electric work 1 No.
4	Bid cost : Rs. 6,000/-, 10000/-
5	Class of contractor : "B" Class, "MV" & "HT" Electrical
6	Availability of bid documents in the website : From dt. 01.01.2024 to 17:00 hours of dt. 10.01.2024
7	Date of opening of technical bid : Dt.11.01.2024 at 11:30 AM.
8	The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Deogarh (R&B) Division
OIPR-34061/11/0016/2324

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-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-8984236754, 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-Cookieman-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-9438642501, 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-Chandranath 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.

international

of the day quote

Loyalty to the Party, the country and the people is the glorious tradition of the diplomatic front

Various conspiracies are being hatched to foil the polls. Many are also involved internationally. They work to bring a third party to power in Bangladesh, we will give a befitting reply to the conspiracies through the January 7 election

Our bankrupt economy has no alternative but to stick to the current \$2.9 billion IMF bailout programme

SHORT TAKES

China's Parl purge

Beijing: In a major purge of the Chinese military, nine senior generals of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), including senior officials of the country's Rocket Force, have been dismissed from China's Parliament, official media reported Saturday. Those dismissed from the National People's Congress (NPC), the country's Parliament, include five past or current top commanders of the PLA Rocket Force, which handles the missiles division and a key component of the country's nuclear arsenal besides a former Air Force commander, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. No reason for their disqualification has been mentioned. This is not the first time top generals of the PLA were dismissed for corruption as a number of them were summarily removed for graft and abuse of power after Xi came to power in 2012.

2 PIOs arrested

New York: Two Indian-origin men, who allegedly staged armed robberies across the US so that 'victims' could apply for immigration benefits, have been arrested on charges related to visa fraud, authorities have said. If the charges are proven, the duo can be sentenced to up to five years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of \$2,50,000. Rambhai Patel, 36, and Balwinder Singh, 39, who have been charged with one count each of conspiracy to commit visa fraud, were arrested from Seattle and Queens in New York, respectively December 13, a press release from the US Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts said here late Friday. Official documents suggested that starting in March 2023, Patel and his co-conspirators, including at times Singh, set up and carried out staged armed robberies of at least eight convenience/liquor stores and fast food restaurants across the United States, including at least four in Massachusetts.

Flash floods kill 21

Johannesburg: Flash floods killed over a dozen people in the small town of Ladysmith in KwaZulu-Natal province, South African officials said Saturday. "As of Friday, 29 December 2023, a total of 21 bodies have been recovered," said police spokesperson Colonel Robert Netshiunda. The floods hit the town on Christmas Day, destroying about 1400 homes, with the death toll expected to rise as an unconfirmed number of people are still missing, he said. Search and rescue teams have been scouring rivers to recover bodies, Netshiunda added. The operation is expected to continue throughout the weekend.



I am not irrational, I know that America's response will be to use force but I have no reason to be frightened by that into sacrificing (Serb) national interests

MILORAD DODIK | SERBS' SEPARATIST LEADER, BOSNIA

CHINA'S VISA RELIEF FOR US

China will simplify visa applications for tourists from the United States from January 1, cutting the documents required, according to a notice on the website of the Chinese embassy in Washington. Tourist visa applicants in the US will no longer need to submit air ticket bookings, hotel reservations or an invitation letter



Gaza enters 12 weeks of war

ISRAEL IS DETERMINED TO PURSUE ITS UNPRECEDENTED AIR AND GROUND OFFENSIVE UNTIL IT HAS DISMANTLED HAMAS, A GOAL VIEWED BY SOME AS UNATTAINABLE BECAUSE OF THE MILITANT GROUP'S DEEP ROOTS IN PALESTINIAN SOCIETY

Cairo, Dec 30: Israeli tanks pushed deeper into districts in central and southern Gaza overnight under heavy air and artillery fire, residents said, pressing a deadly offensive that has razed much of the enclave and that Israel has said may last months more.

Fighting late Friday and early Saturday was focused in al-Bureij, Nuseirat, Maghazi and Khan Younis, backed by intensive air strikes that filled hospitals with injured Palestinians. The bombardment has killed 100 Palestinians and injured 150 in the central Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, a senior health official in central Gaza said.

Most all of Gaza's 2.3 million residents have been forced from their homes by Israel's withering 12-week assault, triggered by the Hamas attack October 7 that killed 1,200 people and brought 240 hostages into the group's grasp.

The offensive has killed at least 21,500 Palestinians, according to health authorities in Hamas-run Gaza, and the conflict risks spreading across the region, drawing in Iran-aligned groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav



We are very concerned about the growing threat of infectious diseases in the Gaza Strip

TEODOS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS | CHIEF, WHO

The war has already killed over 21,500 Palestinians, most of them women and children

Gallant said Friday troops were reaching Hamas command centres and arms depots and pictures the military released showed soldiers moving across churned-up earth among ruins of destroyed buildings.

The Israeli military said it had destroyed a tunnel complex in the basement of one of the houses of the Hamas leader for Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, in Gaza City.

Israel said Friday it had facilitated the entry of vaccines

into Gaza in coordination with UNICEF, the United Nations children's agency, to help prevent the spread of disease.

The little aid reaching the enclave since the start of the war, when Israel imposed a near total blockade on all food, medicine and fuel, has come across the border with Egypt.

Israel has only allowed access to the south of the enclave, where it started ordering all Gaza civilians to move from October, and aid agencies have

said Israeli inspections have stopped all but a small fraction of needed supplies getting in.

MORE US WEAPONS FOR ISRAEL

The State Department said Friday that Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Congress he approved a \$147.5 million sale for equipment, including fuses, charges and primers, that is needed for 155 mm shells Israel bought previously.

It marked the second time this month that the Biden administration is bypassing Congress to approve an emergency weapons sale to Israel.

The department cited the "urgency of Israel's defensive needs" as a reason for the approval, and argued that "it is vital to US National interests to ensure Israel is able to defend itself against the threats it faces."

The emergency determination means the purchase will bypass the congressional review requirement for foreign military sales. Such determinations are rare, but not unprecedented, when administrations see an urgent need for weapons to be delivered without waiting for lawmakers' approval.

Blinken made a similar decision December 9 to approve the sale to Israel of nearly 14,000

Genocide by Israel: South Africa files case at World Court

South Africa launched a case Friday at the United Nations' top court accusing Israel of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and asking the court to order Israel to halt its attacks. Israel swiftly rejected the filing "with disgust." South Africa's submission to the International Court of Justice alleges that "acts and omissions by Israel... Are genocidal in character as they are committed with the intent 'to destroy Palestinians in Gaza' as a part of the broader Palestinian national, racial and ethnic group. The Israeli government 'rejected with disgust' the South African genocide accusations, calling it a 'blood libel.' A Foreign Ministry statement said the case lacks a legal foundation and constitutes a 'vile exploitation and cheapening' of the court. Israel also accused South Africa of cooperating with Hamas. South Africa can bring the case under the Genocide Convention because both it and Israel are signatories to the convention.

rounds of tank ammunition worth more than \$106 million.

Pak election body junks Khan's name for 2024 elections

REUTERS

Karachi, Dec 30: Pakistan's election body has rejected former Prime Minister Imran Khan's nomination to contest the 2024 national elections in two constituencies, officials and his party's media team said Saturday.

The 71-year-old former cricket star has been embroiled in a tangle of political and legal battles since he was ousted as prime minister in April 2022. He has not been seen in public since he was jailed for three years in August for unlawfully selling state gifts while in office from 2018 to 2022.

Khan has been disqualified from contesting the national elections scheduled for February 8 because of the corruption conviction, but he nevertheless filed nomination papers for the elections Friday, his media team said.

In a list of rejected candidates from Lahore, the Election Commission of Pakistan said Khan's nomination was rejected because he was not a registered voter of the constituency and because he is "convicted by the court of law and has been disqualified".

Khan, who is widely seen as the country's most popular leader, says he is being targeted by the powerful military, which wants to keep him out of the polls. The military denies the charge.

Wealthy Indian-origin couple, daughter found dead in US



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Dec 30: A wealthy Indian-origin couple and their teenage daughter were found dead in their \$5 million mansion in the US state of Massachusetts in an apparent domestic violence incident, according to media reports.

The bodies of Rakesh Kamal, 57, his wife, Teena, 54, and their 18-year-old daughter, Ariana, were found in their Dover mansion at about 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Norfolk District Attorney (DA) Michael Morrissey said.

Dover is about 32 kilometres southwest of downtown Boston, the capital of Massachusetts.

Teena and her husband, who also went by Rick, had previously run a now-defunct education systems company called EduNova.

The district attorney, who de-

scribed the "terrible tragedy" as a "domestic violence situation," said a gun was found near the husband's body.

He declined to say whether all three family members were shot dead — and by whom, the New York Post reported.

Morrissey said he was waiting for the medical examiner's ruling, which was expected soon, before deciding whether to refer to the incident as a murder-suicide. The district attorney refused to speculate on a motive for the slayings.

The couple appeared to have faced financial problems in recent years, online records show.

The grim discovery of their bodies was made after a relative had stopped by to check on the family members after not hearing from them in one or two days, the district attorney said.

UNSC decries Russia's air assault on Ukraine

Ukraine witnessed fiercest Russian assault, an 18-hour aerial barrage, which killed at least 39 civilians and injured over 160 Friday

REUTERS

Washington, Dec 30: Russia drew sharp criticism at the UN Security Council Friday for launching massive missile and drone attacks against Ukraine, after Kyiv and its supporters called for an urgent meeting of the 15-member body to address the strikes.

The 18-hour aerial barrage across Ukraine killed at least 39 civilians and wounded more than 160 others in the biggest aerial attacks since the start of the war in February 2022, according to officials, and Poland said a Russian missile appeared to have flown into its airspace before returning to Ukraine.

Most council members, including the United States, France and Britain, condemned the attacks on Ukraine.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST SINCE WAR

UNSC decries Russia's air assault on Ukraine



Tragically, 2023 is ending as it began — with devastating violence against the people of Ukraine. Once again, Ukrainians are forced to spend the holidays seeking shelter, clearing the rubble, and burying the dead, amidst freezing temperatures

KHALED KHIARI | ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

"Rather than peace, (Russian President Vladimir) Putin chose to mark this holiday season and usher in the New Year with an unprecedented number of drone

and missile strikes against another UN member state," said US Minister-Counselor John Kelley.

China's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, Geng Shuang, did not condemn the attacks and called for a "political solution" to the war in Ukraine. Russia's UN ambassador Vasily Nebenzya said in a lengthy response that Russia had launched attacks only on military infrastructure in Ukraine and that Ukraine's air defense systems were responsible for civilian casualties.

Britain's ambassador to the UN Barbara Woodward responded that Russia's actions were the sole cause of the tragedy in Ukraine.

'Putin must be stopped'

US President Joe Biden Friday called Russia's latest missile barrage on Ukraine a "stark reminder" that Russian President Vladimir Putin remained committed to destroying Ukraine and said "he must be stopped." Biden, in a statement issued during his vacation in St Croix, said the overnight attack, which killed 31 civilians and wounded over 120 across Ukraine, was the largest aerial assault since Moscow launched its invasion in February 2022. "It is a stark reminder to the world that, after nearly two years of this devastating war, Putin's objective remains unchanged. He seeks to obliterate Ukraine and subjugate its people. He must be stopped," Biden said.

"The rest is a torrent of lies and disinformation," Woodward said of Nebenzya's remarks.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the attacks by Russia on Ukraine, spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement. "Attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure violate international humanitarian law, are unacceptable and must end immediately," Dujarric said.

Can Trump run for 2024 US Prez despite bans?

THE REPUBLICAN FRONTRUNNER IS TIPPING BACK TOWARDS CHAOS AFTER COLORADO AND MAINE DISQUALIFIED HIM FROM 2024 BALLOT OVER US CAPITOL RIOT INCITEMENT

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, Dec 30: With multiple US states hearing challenges to Donald Trump's right to run in the 2024 election, his supporters claim his enemies are tearing up democracy to prevent his return to the White House.

Rulings in Colorado and Maine banning the ex-president from their primary nominating contests under the Constitution's "insurrection clause" set off a political earthquake that could upend the campaign.

But do they pose a genuine

threat to Trump's presidential ambitions?

Why Trump might be ineligible? The US House of Representatives impeached the Republican tycoon for inciting insurrection after he called on his supporters to march on the US Capitol ahead of a deadly riot that delayed the certification of the 2020 election.

A large, bipartisan majority of the Senate agreed with the lower chamber's finding, but the tally fell short of the two-thirds of members required for a conviction, which would have barred Trump from seeking office again.

Federal prosecutors have since charged Trump with conspiracy over the violence, and he is scheduled for trial in March.

Meanwhile, activists have brought court challenges nationwide to stop his name appearing on ballots for state primaries under the 14th Amendment, which bars people from office if they have taken an oath to defend the Constitution but subsequently "engage in insurrection."

What happens next? Both states put their bans on hold while the legal process plays



Supreme Court ruled that Trump was ineligible for the state's primary under the 14th Amendment's "insurrection clause."

Maine — where the secretary of state, currently a Democrat, makes the initial eligibility determination — followed suit Thursday.

Related challenges have been filed nationwide, with decisions pending in 14 states, according to national security website Lawfare's online disqualification tracker.

What can the US SC do? The strongly conservative-leaning high court — which in-

cludes three Trump appointees — can decline to review the Colorado case, meaning the Trump ban would stand.

In reality, most analysts believe that Maine joining with Colorado removes any doubt that the justices will act.

They would determine whether or not section three of the 14th Amendment — the insurrection clause — applies to a former president.

The court could also rule on whether the ban is automatic or would require an act of Congress, and whether the 2021 storming of the Capitol and Trump's role in it indeed qualify as insurrection.

The effect of the bans

Even if the Colorado and Maine bans stand, front-running Trump is expected to be able to secure the Republican nomination comfortably without those states, so his path to the White House would not necessarily be impeded.

But an adverse Supreme Court ruling that is binding on lower courts nationwide — rather than a narrow procedural ruling affecting only Colorado — could torpedo the

ex-president's primary challenge.

He would then have to decide whether to run for president as a third-party candidate.

But even if the high court doesn't weigh in on the state level rulings and the damage is limited to Colorado and Maine, the justices could leave the door open to challenges to Trump's eligibility for the general election.

So he could well find himself barred from challenging President Joe Biden in November, even if he wins the Republican nomination.

Timetable The gears of the US justice system grind notoriously slowly — particularly at the top.

The Supreme Court has not indicated whether it intends to take up the Colorado appeal, nor how long it would take to rule on Trump's eligibility if it did. Trump's opponents have stressed the importance of an urgent decision.

The court can act quickly when required: Its ruling ending Florida's vote count in the 2000 election — handing victory to George W Bush — took less than a month.

business

of the day quote

The industry appreciates the incentive of ₹6.87/litre on supply of ethanol from C-Heavy Molasses that takes the price to 56.28/litre



M PRABHAKAR RAO | PRESIDENT, ISMA

Business leaders have a responsibility to ensure that their teams are equipped with the right resources and support to take advantage of unprecedented opportunities that AI offers



ARUNDHATI BHATTACHARYA | CHAIRPERSON AND CEO, SALESFORCE INDIA

Homebuyers in Mumbai continue to demonstrate confidence in the property market, buoyed by stable demand and an enhanced positive sentiment. This optimism has resulted in a significant surge in property registrations in Mumbai



SHISHIR BAJAJ | CMD, KNIGHT FRANK

SHORT TAKES

Govil new Director (HR) of IOC

New Delhi: Rashmi Govil, a senior HR executive at Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), is set to be next Director (Human Resources) of the state-owned firm. Her name for the job was recommended by the Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB), according to a notification by the government headhunter. PESB interviewed 11 candidates, including five from IOC, before recommending Govil for the job, the notification showed. She is presently Executive Director (HRD & ER) in IOC. Govil will replace Ranjan Kumar Mohapatra, who was in May denied an 8-month extension of service till his superannuation age.

Snapdeal's FY23 loss narrows

New Delhi: Snapdeal's has seen its consolidated loss after tax narrow to ₹282.2 crore for FY23, from ₹510 crore in previous year, according to a statutory filing. As per the company's RoC filing, the total income fell to ₹388.1 crore in FY23, from ₹563.5 crore in the previous fiscal (FY22). "The focus on profitability and long-term sustainability of the business yielded results with adjusted EBITDA loss reducing to ₹144 crore in FY2022-23, from ₹419 crore in FY2021-22," the filing said. The loss reduction measures also led to revenue decreasing to ₹388 crore in FY2022-23 from ₹564 crore in FY2021-22, it added.

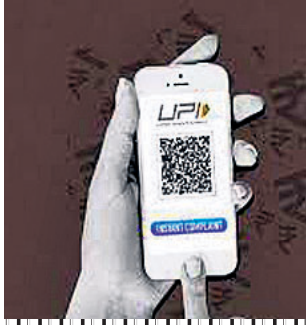


There is no such intention of the government to look into exports of all agri products

RAJESH AGRAWAL | ADDITIONAL SECRETARY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

UPI FOR SECONDARY MARKET

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) said the 'UPI for Secondary Market' launch would take place next week. The launch of 'UPI for Secondary Market' is set to commence next week in its Beta phase for the equity cash segment, with the collaborative support of key stakeholders including clearing corporations, stock exchanges, depositories, stockbrokers, banks, and UPI app providers, NPCI said



Wall Street roars in '23

RESILIENT ECONOMY ENERGISES INVESTORS, AS FINANCIAL MARKETS END 2023 UP 24%

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New York, Dec 30: Wall Street hit record high after record high in 2023, a year investors had feared would be a washout as elevated interest rates threatened to grind the economy to a halt, media reports said.

However, a resilient job market, robust consumer spending and easing inflation kept investor confidence high — helping propel all three indexes to double-digit gains.

S&P 500, the broadest measure of the US stock market closed 0.28 per cent lower Friday, leaving it just under 30 points away from a record-high close, it gained 24 per cent this year, ending 2023 with a bang. It also notched its ninth-straight weekly gain — the longest streak since January 2004. This year has been much kinder to the market than last: The benchmark index fell by about 20 per cent in 2022, CNN reported.

Dow Jones Industrial Average reached multiple record highs in December, including notching records in each of the past five trading sessions. It was down 0.05 per cent Friday, closing at 37,689. In 2023, the Dow gained 14 per cent.

The tech-heavy Nasdaq index was the year's biggest star, however. Although it was down 0.56 per cent Friday, closing at around 4769, it rose by 43 per cent in 2023 — its best per-



formance since 2020. It remains about 1,000 points below the all-time high it reached in November 2021, demonstrating what a horrendous year tech had in 2022 — and how much room it still has left to recover, CNN reported.

It's been a strong year for super-sized tech and AI stocks. Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, Nvidia, Meta Platforms and Tesla, known collectively as the 'Magnificent 7,' dominated the S&P 500 and soared well over 100% in 2023.

Nvidia gained 246 per cent, Meta gained 184 per cent and Tesla soared 130 per cent. Each of those stocks slumped by more than 50 per cent in 2022.

Most major indexes were able to erase their losses from a dis-

mal 2022. Smaller company stocks had a late rally, but managed to erase the bulk of their losses from last year: The Russell 2000 index finished 2023 with a 15.1 per

S&P 500 ENDS 2023 UP 24%
DOW WITNESSES RECORD HIGH
NASDAQ BEST YEAR SINCE 2020

cent gain after falling 21.6 per cent in 2022.

The rally that started in November helped broaden the gains within the market beyond just the big technology companies. It marked a big psychological shift for investors, said Quincy Krosby, chief global strategist at LPL Financial.

"Investors were able to accept that fact that the market would close the year on a higher note," Krosby said. "Above all else, it was broad participation in the market that reinforced and confirmed gains for smaller company stocks were particularly important."

CHINESE STOCKS BIGGEST LOSERS

While 2023 has been the best year for global stocks since before the pandemic, with markets in the United States, Europe, Japan and India enjoying strong rallies, investors have soured on China, a media report said. A string of problems — including a real estate crisis, weak consumer spending and high youth unemployment — have put the world's second biggest economy on the back foot, CNN reported. China's blue-chip CSI 300 index fell more than 11 per cent this year, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng is down almost 14%. Meanwhile, the MSCI World index is on track to close the year 22% higher, its biggest annual jump since 2019, CNN reported. The US benchmark S&P 500 index, and Europe's Stoxx 600, are on course to finish the year up almost 25 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively. Japan's Nikkei 225 has soared 30 per cent since the start of the year. India's benchmark Sensex, which tracks 30 large companies, has climbed nearly 19 per cent this year.

76 mineral blocks auctioned in 2023

Out of the total 335 blocks auctioned since 2015, 46 are operational and 43 are in production



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: The government Friday said that as many as 76 mineral blocks have been auctioned in the current year.

Of the 76 mineral blocks, 30 mineral blocks were auctioned for mining lease and the remaining 46 were sold as a composite licence.

Mining lease means a lease granted for the purpose of undertaking mining operations, while, composite licence is a two-stage operating right granted for the purpose of undertaking exploration followed by production operation.

"During the Year 2023, 76 mineral blocks have been successfully auctioned till December. Out of

these, 30 mineral blocks were auctioned for Mining Lease (ML) and the remaining 46 were auctioned as Composite Licence (CL)," the mines ministry said in a statement.

Out of the total 335 blocks auctioned since 2015, 46 are operational and 43 are in production. During the year 2023, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have successfully auctioned the maximum number of blocks, i.e. 22 and 16, respectively.

In 2022 a total number of 33 Iron Ore minerals were auctioned which was the highest mineral blocks auctioned in 2022. Similarly, this year also a high-end number of 24 Iron Ore minerals were auctioned followed by 20 limestone blocks.

Retail inflation for industrial workers increases marginally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: Retail inflation for industrial workers increased marginally to 4.98 per cent in November compared to 4.45 per cent in October this year, mainly due to higher prices of certain food items.

Food inflation stood at 7.95 per cent against 6.27 per cent in the previous month (October 2023) and 4.30 per cent during the corresponding month (November 2022) a year ago, a labour ministry statement said.

According to the statement, year-on-year inflation for the month stood at 4.98 per cent in November compared to 4.45 per cent for the previous month (October 2023) and 5.41 per cent during the corresponding month (November 2022) a year before.

The All-India CPI-IW (Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers) for November 2023 increased by 0.7 points and stood at 139.1 points. The CPI-IW was 138.4 points in October 2023.

On one-month percentage change, it increased by 0.51 per cent with respect to the previous month, whereas it remained stationary between the correspon-



ding month a year ago, the statement said.

The maximum upward pressure in the current index came from the Food and Beverages group, contributing 0.65 percentage points to the total change.

At item level, Rice, Wheat, Wheat Atta, Jowar, Arhar Dal/Tur Dal, Urd Dal, Eggs-Hen, Gingly oil, Coconut fresh with Pulp, Carrot, Drum-stick, French beans, Garlic, Lady's Finger, Onion, Tomato, Sugar-White, Cumin seed/Jira, Cooked Meals, Zarda/kimam/Surti/Gutka, Leaf Tobacco, Tailoring Charges, Trouser Pants readymade, Leather Sandal/Chappal/Slippers,

Trade pact bolsters exports to Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: India's exports to Australia have increased by 14 per cent to \$5.8 billion in April-November this fiscal on account of healthy growth in various sectors like engineering, pharma and electronics, a senior official said Friday.

Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal said businesses of India and Australia are gaining from the interim free trade agreement, implemented December 29 last year.

He also said negotiations to widen the existing trade agreement into a comprehensive deal are "progressing well".

"We expect to have some negotiations on rules of origin during January. That is one area where we have to work out detailed product-specific rules, and it takes time," Agrawal noted.

Foreign direct investments have risen too from Australia to India at an annual average of \$30-40 million to \$300 million this year, he added.

India's imports from Australia, however, dipped by 19 per cent to \$11.14 billion during April-November this fiscal.

According to the data provided by the department, bilateral trade during the period fell 10 per cent to \$17 billion.

Export sectors, which have recorded healthy growth during the seven-month period of



APRIL-NOV FY23-24

EXPORTS TO OZ ROSE BY 14% TO \$5.8BN

IMPORTS DECREASED BY 19% TO \$11.14BN

BILATERAL TRADE DIPPED BY 10% TO \$17BN

this fiscal, include engineering, pharma, electronics, spices, coffee, textiles, marine products, cashew and plastic.

"We are gaining market share in Australia. Preferential duties are working in favour of industry. We are diversifying our trade basket with Australia," Agrawal said.

However, exports of gems and jewellery, and handicrafts have reported a negative growth.

On the import side, inbound shipments of gold jumped to \$1.56 billion during April-October 2023 from \$436 million in the same period last year.

Other import sectors recording healthy growth include pulses, metals, iron and steel, wood and wood products, machine tools and newsprint.

McD Malaysia sues Israel boycott movement for \$1 million in damages

REUTERS

Kuala Lumpur, Dec 30: McDonald's Malaysia has sued a movement promoting boycotts against Israel for "false and defamatory statements" that it says hurt its business, seeking damages amounting to 6 million ringgit (\$1.31 million).

Malaysia, a majority-Muslim country, is a staunch supporter of the Palestinians, and some Western fast-food brands in the country, as in some other Muslim nations, have been targeted by boycott campaigns over Israel's military offensive in Gaza.

Gerbang Alaf Restaurants Sdn Bhd, which is the licensee of McDonald's in Malaysia, is suing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Malaysia movement for a series of social media postings allegedly linking the fast-food franchise, among other companies, to Israel's "genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza".

According to a writ of summons dated December 19 signed by Reuters, Gerbang Alaf Restaurants alleged that BDS Malaysia incited the public to boycott McDonald's Malaysia, which led to a loss of profit and job cuts, among other damages, due to closures and shortened operating hours of its outlets.

TESLA'S FIRST PLANT LIKELY IN GUJARAT

INDIA'S EV MARKET HAS THE POTENTIAL TO ACHIEVE OVER 40% PENETRATION WITH \$100BN REVENUE BY 2030

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 30: Elon Musk looks all set to enter the burgeoning Indian electric vehicle (EV) market in the New Year after several years of dilly-dallying, giving the masses a hope that owning a cheaper Tesla Model 3 may soon be possible with local manufacturing of battery components and a robust EV supply system.

Reports say that the world's richest man is set to arrive in India during the 'Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit' January 10-12 as Gujarat, with its strategic location and favourable business environment, has emerged as the "preferred destination for Tesla's manufacturing plans".

The announcement by Musk to manufacture in India is likely to be made in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the flagship event, although the government or Musk are yet to



make this mega news official.

According to industry experts, Tesla prices are nearly the same across the globe and currently, the base variant of the Tesla Model 3, which is the cheapest model available, is priced at \$40,240 (approximately ₹33.5 lakh).

Importing this model into India will incur a cost ranging between ₹60-66 lakh. India imposes a 100 per cent import tax on electric vehicles (EVs) priced above \$40,000.

If all goes well, Tesla can reportedly produce 5 lakh electric vehicles annually that starts from ₹20 lakh, as the electric car-maker plans to set up its auto parts and electronics chain in India, along with incentives and tax benefits.

While India's official stance is that no subsidy will be provided on imports of EVs, reports recently surfaced that Tesla may be granted the ability to import fully-built cars at a concessional import duty of 15-20 per cent, a

significant reduction from the current 100 per cent duty on such imports.

"This import duty can be eliminated by setting up local production, paving the way for a cheaper, affordable Tesla car," senior analyst Soumen Mandal from Counterpoint Research told IANS.

This cost reduction could also be achieved if Tesla models manufactured in India have fewer features compared to the ones available in the US.

"For example, certain hardware required for Full Self-Driving (FSD) could be eliminated and, instead, Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS) Level 2 could be included," Mandal added.

The battery pack, imported from China, could have a capacity lower than 50kW and the electric motors could be of lower power.

Additionally, the in-vehicle

electronics could be reduced and a smaller centre display used, according to analysts.

According to reports, if the government has to consider giving incentives to Tesla, then it will be for all the EV makers and foreign entrants.

To resolve the deadlock, Tesla officials have had marathon meetings with the government officials and industry executives in India in recent months.

"The possibility of a Tesla in India at potentially around ₹20 lakh depends on an array of variables, including potentially attractive policy incentives, and Tesla's ability to accomplish efficiencies in supply chain and costs to effectively leverage local manufacturing. All said, pricing decisions will be driven by Tesla's business strategy," according to Prabhu Ram who heads the Industry Intelligence Group (IIG) at CyberMedia Research (CMR).

TIDBITS

No second trial for FTX's Bankman-Fried

WASHINGTON: United States prosecutors have chosen not to pursue a second trial for FTX cryptocurrency exchange founder Sam Bankman-Fried, who has already been found guilty of fraud and money laundering, and proceed instead to sentencing. Prosecutors said in a letter filed in a New York court on Friday that pursuing a second trial for the disgraced tycoon would only serve to delay the case against him, which is already strong enough. "Given that practical reality, and the strong public interest in a prompt resolution of this matter, the Government intends to proceed to sentencing on the counts for which the defendant was convicted at trial," prosecutors said in the letter to Judge Lewis Kaplan, who presided over Bankman-Fried's first criminal trial last year. In November, a jury found Bankman-Fried guilty of seven counts of fraud, embezzlement and criminal conspiracy, among other charges. The 31-year-old was accused of using billions of dollars from customer deposits on FTX to cover losses at his hedge fund, pay off loans and buy luxury real estate, among other large personal expenses.

X fails to block US content moderation law

SAN FRANCISCO: A judge in the US has ruled that Elon Musk-run X cannot avoid a California law that asks social media platforms to disclose their plans for moderating harmful content and misinformation. US District Judge William Shubb has denied X's request for a preliminary injunction of the law. "While the reporting requirement does appear to place a substantial compliance burden on social media companies, it does not appear that the requirement is unjustified or unduly burdensome within the context of First Amendment law," Shubb said in his decision. The AB 587 law requires large social media companies to share descriptions of how they moderate content that contains hate speech or racism, extremism or radicalisation, disinformation, harassment, and foreign political interference.

Shardul gives India injury scare, gets hit on shoulder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Centurion, Dec 30: The Indian team Saturday received an injury scare after seam bowling all-rounder Shardul Thakur suffered a blow on his shoulder at nets while batting.

There is the possibility of him missing the second Test in Cape Town beginning January 3, but the extent of the hit could be ascertained through scanning if required. At this moment, it couldn't be confirmed if his injury warrants scans.

But Thakur was in considerable discomfort and couldn't bowl during the net session. Thakur, who was the first player to enter the throwdown nets, was hit on the left shoulder while facing throwdowns from fielding coach T Dilip.

It happened around 15 minutes into the net session when Rathour delivered a throwdown that kicked up from length. It had Thakur in a tangle like it happened in the second innings of the first Test when pacer Kagiso Rabada generated an edge for David Bedingham to complete a catch.

Here too, Thakur couldn't fend the short ball that hit his leading shoulder (left) and he immediately shrieked in pain. But the Mumbai all-rounder continued batting in the nets.

Once he finished batting, the physio put an ice pack sling around his shoulder and he didn't take any further part in the nets. This might be a simple bruise but it will be interesting to see how quickly the injury subsides.

Thakur was a big disappointment in the first Test having given away over 100 runs in just 19 overs and was below par with the bat as well.

Coetzee ruled out
South African pacer Gerald Coetzee has been ruled out of



the second Test starting January 3 after suffering from pelvic inflammation. The 23-year-old developed the inflammation during the opening Test here and the discomfort only worsened as he gradually bowled further in the match which ended within three days.

"Fast bowler Gerald Coetzee will miss the second Betway Test against India after developing pelvic inflammation during the first Test at SuperSport Park," Cricket South Africa wrote on X.

Coetzee could bowl only five overs during the second innings. The pacer had gone for scans Friday, which showed the extent of the injury. Although no replacement has been announced yet by Cricket South Africa, head coach Shukri Conrad has deemed Coetzee's rest "as a precautionary measure".

Coetzee is the second South African cricketer to be ruled out of the series after skipper Temba Bavuma suffered the same fate, picking up a hamstring injury here.

Eves lose to Aussies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 30: Richa Ghosh's career-best 96 (117b, 13x4) and Deepti Sharma's 5/38 went in vain as Australia Women clinched a thrilling three-run win to take an unassailable 2-0 lead against India in their three-match ODI series here Saturday.

Chasing 259, Ghosh led India's reply with a fine knock but the hosts stuttered in the death overs to suffer their ninth consecutive defeat to Australia at home. India managed 255/8 in their 50 overs with Deepti (24 n o, 36b, 1x4) and Shreyanka Patil (5 n o) at the crease when the match came to an end.

Apart from Ghosh's heroics with the bat, India also had their vice-captain Smriti Mandhana providing early fireworks with a 38-ball 34 (3x4, 1x6). Jemimah Rodrigues (44, 55b, 3x4) and Ghosh laid the foundation with an 88-run third wicket stand but could not deny Australia from maintaining their record in India of never losing a series.

In a contest wherein both teams dropped more than 10 catches combined, Litchfield eventually made the difference with two sharp catches after dropping one early on, which followed a fine knock of 63 (98b, 6x4) in the first innings to top-score for her side.

Positioned at cover, Litchfield helped break the third-wicket stand to dismiss Rodrigues off Georgia Wareham (2/39) at a crucial juncture in the 34th over.

Later on, when Ghosh was one stroke away from her maiden ton, Litchfield pulled off another superb grab at cover off Annabel Sutherland (3/47) to deny her the feat and in effect, India a win.

Having kept wickets for all 50 overs of Australia's first innings,



DEEPTI SHARMA

the 20-year-old Ghosh batted with gusto and tremendous application. Ghosh also capitalised on two lifelines — one of which she got on the first delivery itself when Litchfield put down a tough chance at first slip soon after Yastika Bhatia (19) was dismissed.

Ghosh kept India in hunt with her partnership with Rodrigues, but Australia capitalised after finding a breakthrough. India's hopes suffered a serious dent when Ghosh, who was cramping up in the later stages of her innings, fell in the 44th over and Amanjot Kaur (4) in the 46th.

With Deepti failing to get a move-on — she had contributed only eight runs in her 47-run stand with Ghosh — the task became even more challenging for

the likes of Pooja Vastrakar (8) and concussion substitute Harleen Deol (1), who had replaced Sneha Rana for the remainder of the game in the second half.

Earlier, off-spinner Deepti stymied Australia's surge with a stellar five-wicket haul but seven dropped catches by India allowed them to post a challenging 258/8.

Deepti exploited a dry and turning surface to a fine degree, but her hard work was undone by the hosts' horrendous fielding. She accounted for Ellyse Perry (50, 47b, 5x4, 1x6), Beth Mooney (10), Tahlia McGrath (24), Wareham (22) and Sutherland (23) for her career's second fiver.

Alana King, who was dropped



RICHA GHOSH

once each by Deepti and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, hammered three sixes to make an unbeaten 28 (17b) in a late surge to take Australia past the 250-run mark, which at one stage looked beyond the visitors.

Australia looked in complete command until the 22nd over; powering to 117/1 through a 77-run stand for the second wicket between Perry and Litchfield.

Brief scores
Australia Women 258/8 (Phoebe Litchfield 63, Ellyse Perry 50, Alana King 28 n o; Deepti Sharma 5/38) beat India Women 255/8 (Richa Ghosh 96, Jemimah Rodrigues 44, Smriti Mandhana 34, Deepti Sharma 24 n o; Annabel Sutherland 3/47, Georgia Wareham 2/39) by 3 runs.

DAVIS CUP TENNIS AITA hopeful of getting clearance for travel to Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Karachi, Dec 30: The Indian team is likely to get clearance to travel to Pakistan for the upcoming Davis Cup tie against the neighbouring nation, the national federation said Saturday. The All India Tennis Association (AITA) had recently written to the Sports Ministry, seeking advice if they can send the national team to Pakistan for the World Group I Play-off tie February 3-4.

"We have not yet got the approval in writing but it is likely that we will get clearance soon. We have been told that since it is not bilateral tournament and the one organised by the ITF, the government does not have a policy to interfere in such events," said AITA Secretary General Anil Dhupar.

"There is process involved. The sports ministry has forwarded the request to the MEA and the Home Ministry's view will also be taken before a final decision is made. We are hoping to get the clearance soon. We are preparing for the tie and the travel," he added.

Saleem Saifullah, the Pakistan Tennis Federation President, said there was a deadline for the AITA to send final arrival confirmation and if they didn't travel to Pakistan the International Tennis Federation (ITF) would consider the Davis Cup tie as forfeited, awarding full points to the hosts.

The Indian Davis Cup team last travelled to Pakistan in 1964 with the visitors winning 4-0 in Lahore. India and Pakistan were drawn in 2019 and the tie was scheduled to take place in the Pakistan. On that occasion, the AITA managed to shift it to a neutral venue, Kazakhstan, citing political strife between the two countries.

Juggernauts suffer first defeat in UKK S2

PNN & AGENCIES

Cuttack, Dec 30: The defending champions Odisha Juggernauts Saturday suffered their first defeat at the Ultimate Kho Kho Season 2 (UKK S2) as Gujarat Giants produced a phenomenal all-round display to beat the hosts 34-29 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium here. Chennai Quick Guns overcame Mumbai Khiladis challenge 36-31 earlier in the day.

P Narasayya scored the most (8 points) for the winning team, whereas Abhijit Patil and Shubham Thorat stayed on the mat for more than four minutes to clinch dream run bonus points.

The Giants started the match on the front foot and won 18 points in the first turn while conceding only a dream run bonus point. The following turn proved to be one of the best moments for Gujarat in this season as their first batch of Patil, Thorat and Deepak Madhav earned four dream run bonus points to give the team an 11-point lead before the end of the first inning.

The Juggernauts made a remarkable comeback in the third turn with the batch of Rohan Shingade, Vishal and Thorat also claiming four dream run



bonus points to reduce the deficit. However, Gujarat notched up 12 points in the attack during the third turn as well and in the end, a 14-point last turn wasn't enough for the defending champions to register a victory.

Earlier, Ramji Kashyap scored 10 points including three skydives for Chennai and also stayed on the mat for more than four minutes to earn crucial dream run bonus points for the winning side.

Chasing first, Mumbai began the contest on a positive note and earned a total of 16 points. However, Chennai also managed to earn a dream run bonus point that helped them increase their lead in the following turn.

They claimed 18 points before the end of the first inning courtesy of a startling performance from Kashyap, who won six points during the second turn to put his team in a comfortable position.

Subhasis Santra and Hrushikesh Murchavade notched up eight points while attacking in the third turn as Mumbai Khiladis got 14 points to increase the difference between the teams. However, Chennai chased the target easily in the last turn to register their third win in the league.

Sunday's match-ups will see the Juggernauts take on Telugu Yoddhas and Rajasthan Warriors' face off with Mumbai Khiladis.

JUNIOR ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS NAT'L C'SHIPS CONCLUDES

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 30: The Junior Artistic Gymnastics National Championships at the newly-built Gymnastics Centre in the Kalinga Stadium here concluded Saturday.

Nishika Agarwal from Telangana hogged the limelight in the women's category as she clinched a total of five medals in the competition having won gold medals in vault, uneven bars as well as in the all-round category, while she secured a silver in the floor exercise and a bronze in the balance beams.

Odisha's Biru Chandra Rao and Alok Kumar, who are Odisha AM/NS India Gymnastics High Performance Centre cadets had a memorable tournament. Biru clinched a bronze in the floor exercise, while Alok bagged a bronze in the all-around of the men's category.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu's Oceana Renee Thomas, who also trains at the Gymnastics HPC in Odisha won medals in balance beams (gold) and floor exercise (bronze) in the women's category.

Thiem survives a brush with venomous snake



Dominic Thiem looks on during the stoppage of play due to snake incident; (inset top) Snake handlers catches the eastern brown snake (inset bottom)

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brisbane (Australia), Dec 30: Former US Open champion Dominic Thiem had a brush with one of Australia's most venomous snakes during a qualifying match at the Brisbane International Saturday.

The former World No.3 was a set down to 20-year-old Australian James McCabe in a first-round qualifying match when fans court-side spotted the snake. Security personnel quickly arrived, but the umpire had to stop play as the snake slithered onto the court to the shock of the players and fans.

"I really love animals, especially exotic ones," Thiem said. "But, they said it was a really poisonous snake and it was close to the ball kids, so it was a really

dangerous situation. It's something that has never happened to me and is something I'll definitely never forget."

The snake — identified as a 50-centimetre eastern brown snake and one of Australia's most deadly reptiles — was soon safely removed allowing play to resume.

But, Thiem was not yet out of danger as he had to save three match points before levelling the match by winning the second set tie-break. The 30-year-old then went on to clinch the deciding set for a 2-6, 7-6(7-4), 6-4 win.

The Austrian, currently ranked No.98 after several years with a troublesome wrist injury, will face either Italian Giulio Zeppieri or another Australian, Omar Jasika, in the final qualifying round.

Savita to lead India in Olympic Qualifiers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Dec 30: Veteran goalkeeper Savita Punia will continue to lead the side and Vandana Katariya will be her deputy as Hockey India Saturday named an 18-member Indian women's team for the Olympic Qualifiers scheduled to be held in Ranchi from January 13 to 19.

India will take the field in Ranchi looking to finish as one of the top three teams in the competition and secure qualification for the Paris Olympics 2024.

"The FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers Ranchi is an important tournament on our Paris Olympics journey. It is imperative that we live up to the expectations and all the players in the squad are working to secure qualification," Indian Women's chief coach Janneke Schopman said in a release.

we have chosen a well-balanced team with immense skill and experience in all departments. Also, Savita and Vandana have faced high-pressure situations numerous times in their career so far. They are well equipped to guide the rest of the team as the Captain and Vice-Captain," she added.

India will open their campaign against the United States January 13, followed by a match against New Zealand January 14. They will go up against Italy in the last Pool B match January 16.

THE SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Savita Punia (Captain), Bichu Devi Kharibam; Defenders: Nikki Pradhan, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, Monika; Midfielders: Nisha, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Neha, Navneet Kaur, Salima Tete, Sonika, Jyoti, Beauty Dungdung; Forwards: Lahremsiami, Sangita Kumari, Deepika, Vandana Katariya.

Vinesh leaves awards at Kartavya Path

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: Multiple World Championship medalist Vinesh Phogat Saturday returned her Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award, keeping the two awards lying in the middle of national capital's Kartavya Path after Delhi Police stopped her from reaching the prime minister's office.

Tuesday, the Asian Games gold medalist grappler had decided to return her Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award to the government, saying such honours have become meaningless at a time when wrestlers are struggling to get justice. Phogat had announced her decision in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Saturday, she attempted to reach the prime minister's office to return her awards but the police prevented her from reaching the PMO. As a mark of protest, she left the awards at the Kartavya Path and they were later picked up by Delhi Police.

Phogat, along with Olympic medallists Sakshi Malik and



Bajrang Punia, had protested against the election of Sanjay Singh, a close aide of former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who had been accused of sexual harassment by the three well-known grapplers. Sakshi had also announced her retirement from wrestling soon after Sanjay Singh's appointment as WFI Chief.

However, the Sports Ministry had later suspended the newly-elected panel for not following the provisions of its own constitu-

tion while taking decisions while asking the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to constitute an ad-hoc panel to manage the affairs of the sports body.

In her letter posted on X (formerly Twitter), Phogat had said that their lives are not like those "fancy government advertisements" that talk about women's empowerment and upliftment.

Acting on the sports ministry directive, the IOA Wednesday constituted a three-member ad hoc committee to run the day-to-day affairs of the WFI.

SAMAD MAKES CUT; INJURED JEAKSON, MARTINS MISS OUT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 30: Grappling with injuries to key midfielders, India on Saturday named a 26-member squad for the upcoming AFC Asian Cup with Sahal Abdul Samad making the cut but Jeakson Singh and Glan Martins missing out due to issues related to fitness.

Top defensive midfielder Jeakson, who underwent shoulder injury in November, was always doubtful and so was Mohun Bagan's Martins, who got injured recently. Both of them were among the 50 probables.

However, Samad, who had also picked up an injury early this month, managed to get into the side that will be spearheaded by seasoned striker Sunil Chhetri. The Indian senior men's team head coach Igor Stimac announced the squad.

The Blue Tigers are due to arrive in Doha later Saturday, ahead of marking their fifth appearance

in the Asian Cup. India will play their opening Group B match against Australia January 13 at the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium in Al Rayyan before facing Uzbekistan January 18 at the same venue. Stimac's men will then move to the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor to take on Syria January 23.

THE SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Amrinder Singh, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Vishal Kaith; Defenders: Akash Mishra, Lalchungnunga, Mehtab Singh, Nikhil Poojary, Pritam Kotal, Rahul Bheke, Sandesh Jhingan, Subhasish Bose; Midfielders: Anirudh Thapa, Brandon Fernandes, Deepak Tangri, Lalengmawia Ralte, Liston Colaco, Naorem Mahesh Singh, Sahal Abdul Samad, Suresh Singh Wangjam, Udanta Singh; Forwards: Ishan Pandita, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Manvir Singh, Rahul Kannoly Praveen, Sunil Chhetri, Vikram Partap Singh.