



## FEARLESS DIVA

Actor Nargis Fakhri says she is not embarrassed or shy talking about her private life

LEISURE P2



## MARINE SPECIES IN DANGER

A barrage of threats like pollution, diseases and climate change affects marine species, as per reports

INTERNATIONAL P10



## ARGENTINA ADVANCE

Lionel Messi and goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez helps Argentina beat the Netherlands for a place in FIFA World Cup semis

SPORTS P12

# HONOURS DEGREE AFTER FOUR YEARS

The draft 'curriculum and credit framework for four-year undergraduate programmes' prepared in accordance with National Education Policy is likely to be notified Monday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Students will be able to get an undergraduate (UG) 'Honours' degree after completing four years instead of three, according to new draft norms prepared by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

The draft 'curriculum and credit framework for four-year undergraduate programmes' (FYUP) prepared in accordance with National Education Policy is likely to be notified Monday.

"Students will be able to get a UG degree in three years on completion of 120 credits (measured through the number of academic hours) and a UG Honours degree in four years on completion of 160 credits. If they wish to go for a research specialisation, they will have to undertake a research project in their four-year course. This will get them an Honours degree with research specialisation," the draft read.

"Students who have already enrolled and are pursuing a three-



## UGC'S NEW NORMS

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year UG programme as per the existing Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) are eligible to pursue a four-year undergraduate programme. The university may provide bridge courses (including online) to enable them to transition to the extended programme," it added.

Currently, students get an Honours degree after completing three years of UG programmes.

The FYUP also allows multiple entry and exit options for stu-

dent. If they leave before three years, they will be allowed to re-join within three years of their exit and will have to complete their degree within a stipulated period of seven years.

The curriculum for FYUP, as suggested in the document, consists of major stream courses, minor stream courses, courses from other disciplines, language courses, skill courses, and a set of courses on environmental education, understanding India, digital and technological solutions, health and wellness, yoga education, and sports and fitness.

At the end of the second semester, students can decide to continue with their chosen major or change their major.

Students will also have the option to go for a UG either with single major or double majors.

"A student has to secure a minimum of 50 per cent credits from the major discipline for the 3-year/4-year UG degree to be awarded a single major," read the document.

# 210 AN ISHAN MASTERCLASS

131 BALLS

6s 10

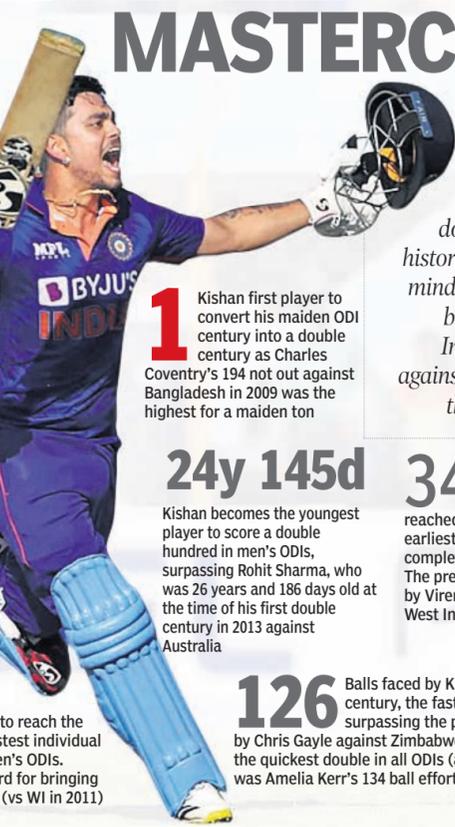
4s 24

103

126

24y 145d

34.6



Displaying insane power-hitting, Ishan Kishan smashed the fastest double-century in the history of ODI cricket – a mind-boggling 210 off 131 balls – and propelled India to 409 for eight against Bangladesh in the third game Saturday

1 Kishan first player to convert his maiden ODI century into a double century as Charles Coventry's 194 not out against Bangladesh in 2009 was the highest for a maiden ton

24y 145d

Kishan becomes the youngest player to score a double hundred in men's ODIs, surpassing Rohit Sharma, who was 26 years and 186 days old at the time of his first double century in 2013 against Australia

34.6 Overs played in the innings when Kishan reached 200 in Chattogram, the earliest point any batter has completed the landmark in ODIs. The previous was in 43.3 overs by Virender Sehwag (219 vs West Indies in 2011)

126 Balls faced by Kishan for his double century, the fastest in ODI cricket, surpassing the previous best of 138 balls by Chris Gayle against Zimbabwe in 2015 World Cup, while the quickest double in all ODIs (across men and women) was Amelia Kerr's 134 ball effort against Ireland in 2018

MORE P12

## PRADHAN HINTS AT EARLY POLLS IN STATE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Saturday indicated at early Assembly elections in Odisha.

Speaking to media persons here, Pradhan said, "I have heard that elections might be conducted early here (in state). The election may happen after eight months or 15 months. A lot of developments will take place in between."

A number of issues will crop up ahead of the next elections and political parties will fight the electoral battles with their own agenda, he said. "We have fought the 2019 general election and emerged as the principal opposition party in the state. People of Odisha have a lot of trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi and will continue it," he said.

Commenting on BJP's defeat in Padampur bypoll, Pradhan said, "We humbly accept the mandate of the people. Whoever made the comments on insulting women should not forget that BJP got 78,000 votes there, which includes women votes." On the other hand, the rising atrocities against women in Odisha shows the actual status of women in the state, he added.

Continued on P4



CHRISTMAS VIBE: Workers prepare a Santa Claus statue ahead of the Christmas celebrations in Kolkata, Saturday

## Babus-contractors nexus bleeds OCCL of ₹20 crore

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The nexus between the Odisha Construction Corporation Limited (OCCL) officials and contractors has resulted in the state-owned firm incurring losses to the tune of over ₹20 crore, if a recently released Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India report is any indication.

In a report, which was tabled in the recently-concluded Winter Session of the Assembly, the CAG said that OCCL, which is under the administrative control of Water Resources (WR) department, did not achieve turnover targets in three years—2017-18, 2018-19 and 2020-21. The actual turnover decreased by over 52 per cent from ₹874 crore in 2016-17 to ₹422 crore in 2020-21.

It said the cost estimates of the projects were not prepared as per the schedule of rates. "Due to overblown cost of dredger and pipelines in the estimates, undue benefit of ₹7.72 crore was extended to the contractor in removal of shoal in the upstream side of

Mahanadi barrage," it pointed out.

OCCL incurred avoidable expenditure of ₹4.74 crore due to adoption of excess hire charges of machinery for compaction of earth in six test checked projects, it said.

"Undue benefit of ₹5.61 crore was extended to workers in two projects due to payment of prohibited conveyance charges on stones issued from the worksite," the CAG report read.

Advances of ₹3.66 crore relating to 138 works remained outstanding against suppliers for over a year. Similarly advances of ₹3.53 crore against 446 officials were lying outstanding as of March 2021, it added.

OCCL had neither prepared any three-year corporate plan nor annual plans for submission to the WR department. "In the absence of such plans, there was a high risk that the company did not have a clear-cut, well documented strategy in place to achieve its aims and objectives vis-à-vis the mandate assigned to it when it was set up by the administrative department," the CAG pointed out.



Comptroller and Auditor General of India

## Sukhu to be crowned Himachal CM today



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Dec 10: Sukhinder Singh Sukhu, who headed the Congress campaign committee in Himachal Pradesh, will be the next Chief Minister of the hill state.

Mukesh Agnihotri, the leader of the opposition in the outgoing Assembly, will be the Deputy Chief Minister, the party said after a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP). Sukhu, the 58-year-old MLA from Nadaun in Hamirpur district, was elected the CLP leader and will take oath as the CM Sunday, the party said. In a meeting Friday, the MLAs had unanimously passed a resolution authorising the party president to pick the legislature party leader. The Congress wrested power from the BJP in the northern state winning 40 of the 68 Assembly seats.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



If we are corrupt, it obviously means the party which defeated us is more corrupt

# France to make condoms free even for minors

THE MOVE BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AIMS AT CURBING SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

AGENCIES

Paris, Dec 10: France will make condoms free in pharmacies for anyone up to age 25 in the new year, President Emmanuel Macron has announced.

The move comes as the government says sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are on the rise among young people, and as this year's exceptional inflation is cutting especially deeply into the budgets of France's poorest.

Girls and women 25 and under already can get free birth control in France as part of government efforts to ensure that young people of all incomes can prevent unwanted pregnancy. Existing measures don't apply to men, however, or specifically address access for transgender or nonbinary people.

Macron had said Thursday that condoms would be free in pharmacies for anyone 18-25 starting

January 1. But after a French TV presenter and others challenged him on social networks Friday over why the condom measure did not include minors, the president agreed to expand the program.

"Let's do it," Macron said in a selfie video that he shot from the sidelines of a summit in Spain. He later tweeted: "A lot of minors also have sex ... They need to protect themselves too."

Macron, who was France's youngest-ever president when he was first elected in 2017 at age 39, also promised stepped-up efforts to prevent and test for HIV and other sexually transmitted viruses.

France's state healthcare system covers some birth control costs but not all, and doctor appointments for low-income patients often require long waits. Abortions in France are available free for everyone. Several other European countries offer free or subsidised contraception.

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But after a French TV presenter and others challenged him on social networks Friday over why the condom measure did not include minors, the president agreed to expand the program

Abortions in France are available free for everyone



"We are not very good on this subject. The reality is very, very different from the theory," he said.

The new measure comes alongside other health initiatives targeting the spread of STDs and improving access to contraception.

In 2018, the French government started reimbursing the costs of condoms to individuals, if purchased in a pharmacy with a prescription from a doctor or midwife.

Earlier this year, the government made contraception free for all women up to 26 years old - a move that affected three million women. Contraception had previously been free for women and girls 18 or younger.

Macron added in a tweet that the healthcare measures include free emergency contraception for all women in pharmacies, and free STD screenings without a prescription, except HIV, to those under the age of 26.

## Stuck in borewell for 80 hours, MP boy dies

AGENCIES

Bhopal, Dec 10: The boy, who fell into a deep borewell in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh Tuesday evening, could not be rescued as his body was found Saturday morning. The rescue operation was started soon after the incident was reported, but the boy had stopped responding by Wednesday.

NDRF and SDRF teams under the supervision of district administration continued rescue operation. They dug a tunnel at the side of the borewell. However, the process took more than 80 hours and by the time, they could reach to the boy.

The rescue operation completed by early Saturday and the doctors declared the boy dead. Betul district administration later issued an official statement Saturday, stating that the boy died hours before he was rescued. CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan expressed his condolences and announced a compensation of ₹4 lakh to the family.

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MIN	19.7°C	17.0°C
	MAX	26.0°C	25.0°C
	Humidity	64%	67%
	Rainfall	Nil	Nil
	Forecast	Clear sky mainly	

# leisure



## TAYLOR SWIFT TO MAKE DIRECTORIAL DEBUT WITH HER ORIGINAL SCRIPT

Singer-songwriter-hitmaker Taylor Swift is set to leave the audience enchanted with her foray into feature filmmaking. She has written an original script, which will be produced by the Oscar-winning studio behind *Nomadland* and *The Shape of Water*, reports *Variety*.

## ELTON JOHN QUITS TWITTER, SAYS IT'S DIVIDING THE WORLD

Musician Elton John is the latest celebrity to leave Twitter following Elon Musk's takeover of the platform. The singer wrote: 'All my life I've tried to use music to bring people together. Yet it saddens me to see how misinformation in Twitter is now being used to divide our world.'



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
The stars today may play some tricks, which may land you in some sort of problem. But by mid-day, things will calm down and you will forget it. Ganesh says that in the evening, you will be calm and pensive which is an excellent thing.

**TAURUS**  
Your thinking is likely to be very clear and purposeful, this day says Ganesh. You will be eager to do something new, meaningful and exciting today. And you will be smart enough to think things out carefully and make elaborate plans before you make a move. This day is expected to become less stressful, more relaxed and trouble free compared to your average days.

**GEMINI**  
Today is an auspicious and fruitful day for you. You will become excited by every very small accomplishments. You will need to fulfill the demands made upon you by your family and friends. You will probably find yourself balancing the cheque book at home, or buying appliances for the house, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
A lot can happen over a cup of coffee, and today a lot will. Things will be moving quite swiftly today; a little too swiftly to your liking. You will get a lot of authority at the workplace, and you will use it to the point of abuse. Your prime focus, however, will be your family.

**LEO**  
Surviving an earthquake will seem easier compared to getting through this day without ruffling your feathers, says Ganesh. It is not your best day, and you shall have to work really hard to meet your targets today. Business-wise, do not expect to gather the dividends you have been expecting so far.

**VIRGO**  
Sunshine time today, says Ganesh. The spotlight is on you, and it'll be one of those excellent days. Difference of opinions might crop up at work, but stroll over them, says Ganesh. Late in the day, candles and dinner will make you feel blessed. You'll make quite an impression today.

**LIBRA**  
Having an elderly hand to guide you and back you up is always a good thing. Today promises to be very advantageous to you when it comes to gaining from your seniors. It may have something to do with your exceptional skills in building rapport with people, or your ability to perform truthfully.

**SCORPIO**  
Get your family together today and spend most of the time with them, says Ganesh. If being practical is important, then have your close friends over at your place too. A romantic dinner with your beloved is on the cards today.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Self-righteousness, and a sense of duty set the mood for the day today. You'll be a miserly scrooge in the afternoon. But later in the day, expect dinner with your sweetheart to be extravagant and blissful.

**CAPRICORN**  
You may have craved for a mini vacation to some place quaint and peaceful for long, and would have given up the idea every time because of the burgeoning work pressure. But it's time to get impulsive. Give your imagination a free rein today, and go where it takes you, for travel is on the cards, and that too with your sweetheart, says Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
It's time for some family bonding! You realise that you've neglected your near and dear. Now, you need to do something substantial to win back your family's approval. However, your sincerity alone will melt their hearts. Holding your sweetheart's hand at dinner is a perfect way to end the day, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
You will need to enlist the cooperation of your colleagues while chalking out strategies at the workplace today, if you desire to make substantial progress, says Ganesh. The good news is that your efforts are likely to fructify. Some important decisions will be delayed if left unattended until the evening.

## 'I'm not shy talking about personal life'

**Mumbai:** Nargis Fakhri recently opened up about her views on her private life. According to her, it gets highlighted more than other important stuff like work.

In an interview with a news portal, Nargis said that she is honest and authentic and doesn't have a problem if people ask her about her personal life. However, the issue is that they highlight that instead of important stuff like work. The actress added that she is not embarrassed or shy about talking about her personal life. But she would rather highlight her work.

Elaborating further, Nargis also added that there are some people who deny or don't talk about their love lives. However, according to her,

that's also fine as their privacy needs to be respected. The actress went on to point out that the business is very strange. Everyone knows everything. So, there is hardly anything left for her and she needs to be given something that's only for her.

Nargis went on to add that even the phone knows what we think because they register our keystrokes. Social media knows what we usually look at. According to her, the internet has distorted the definition of privacy. The actress added that sometimes she feels annoyed thinking why do people care about who she dates? However, she tries to be nice about it.



**Mumbai:** Parineeti Chopra recently expressed her desire to be a part of a south film. According to her, they make the kind of cinema that we like to celebrate on screen.

Parineeti said that no one can imagine how much she is dying to do south films. According to her, she has been looking for a good film in another language for the longest time. Whether it is Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, or Kannada, the actress just wants to be a part of the film.

Elaborating further, the actress added that she just wants a good film, a script and a director because she thinks they make fantastic films and superb cinema. The kind of films we all like to watch and we like to celebrate on screen. "If someone knows any great director, please consider me," a desperate Parineeti said.

On the work front, Parineeti was last seen in Sooraj Barjatya's *Uunchai*. The film starred Amitabh Bachchan, Anupam Kher, Boman Irani, Danny Denzongpa, Neena Gupta and Sarika in lead roles. It received positive reviews from the audience and the critics alike.

## Parineeti desperate to be part of a south film



## Why Fatima couldn't say no to Ritviz's Taj

**Mumbai:** Actress Fatima Sana Shaikh, who most recently featured in the music video *Taj* composed by Ritviz of *Hum Toh Udd Gaye* fame, has shared that she said yes to the project in an instant.

To quote her, she "didn't even think twice before saying yes." The video also features Tahir Raj Bhasin, who was last seen in the Taapsee Pannu-starrer *Loop Lapeta*. The actress can be seen in a nerdy, geeky look in the romantic song. She revealed that the song is quite special to her, "The moment I heard the storyline of the song from the director, I found it extremely beautiful and I instantly connected with it. The song revolves around a girl who has grown up in a toxic household, with parents who hurt more than love and how against all odds she dares to dream." She further mentioned, "How a little nudge of hope helps her break free. It's been such a wonderful experience working on this song. It'll always remain special for me."

On the movie front, Fatima will next be seen in *Dhak Dhak* which has been directed and co-written by Tarun Dubeja, and co-produced by Taapsee Pannu, Pranjal Khandhdiya, and Ayush Maheshwari.

## Spl film fest Dhvani to kick off Mar 21

**Bhubaneswar:** A three-day special film festival titled *Dhwani* on the theme "Celebrating Diversity and Inclusion" will be held here from March 21, 2023, announced the organising committee at a City hotel here, Saturday.

The event, in its ninth year, will be a collaboration of Aaina, an Odisha-based NGO and FICCI-FLO.

Jitendra Kumar Biswal, chairperson of the committee, said, "There is no better or greater medium than films when it comes to sending out any message or creating sensitisation on an issue in the society. *Dhwani* is a unique film festival that encourages filmmakers to make films on disability issues, exhibit them and win prizes. This year, the duration



Members of the organising committee at a presser in Bhubaneswar

of the movies will be in three categories- One-minute, five-minute and 30-minute."

Aaina's secretary Sneha Mishra said, "The main objective of the festival is to create

awareness amongst the public about the issues faced by people with. It also aims to sensitise the masses about the need for equal rights, opportunities and equal access for the people with disabilities and to foster integration in our society."

The top three films of the festival will be given cash prizes of Rs. 45,000, Rs 30,000 and Rs 20,000 respectively, she added.

The contest is open to everyone - professional filmmakers, film students, amateurs, or anyone with a good idea and filmmaking skills. Interested participants can log on to [www.aaina.org.in](http://www.aaina.org.in) for information on the submission of films. The last date for receiving films for the contest is March 10, 2023.

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

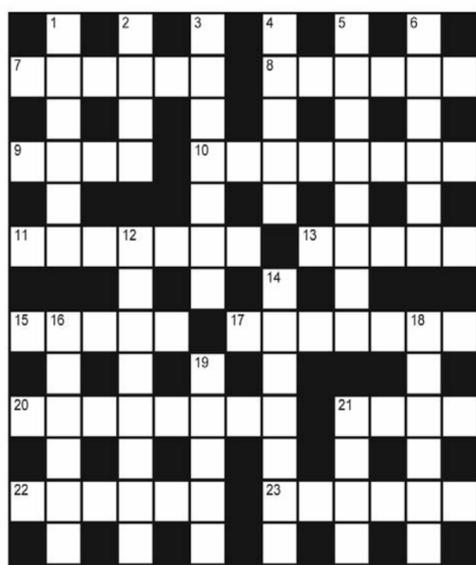


### BREVITY



### FUN post

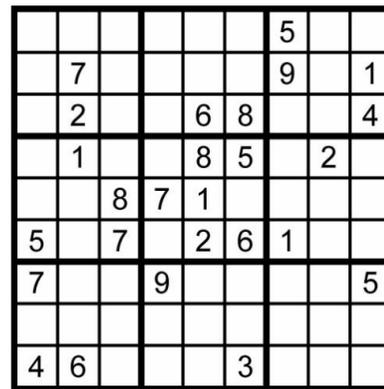
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Examine closely
  - 8 Forty winks
  - 9 Lift up
  - 10 Indefatigable
  - 11 Car sale part, at times (5-2)
  - 13 Emboss
  - 15 Stop
  - 17 Dessert item
  - 20 Runway
  - 21 Plant fiber
  - 22 Surrender (4,2)
  - 23 Smother
- Down**
- 1 Plywood layer
  - 2 Golf shot
  - 3 Relate
  - 4 Fruit of the oak tree
  - 5 Active
  - 6 Two-wheeled horse-drawn covered carriage
  - 12 Catastrophe
  - 14 Intention
  - 16 Draw out
  - 18 Tea maker
  - 19 Burst
  - 21 Prison

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD

#### SUDOKU



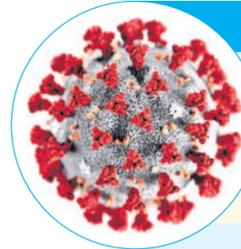
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## NZP EXPANSION

Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra takes stock of the expansion works for Nandankanan Zoological Park, on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Saturday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	65,32,17,024	62,88,11,780	66,57,680
India	4,46,74,649	4,41,39,948	5,30,654
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204



Hues from the second day of the national-level dog show being organised by Odisha Kennel Club at Unit-VI playground in Bhubaneswar, Saturday OP PHOTOS



# Chief Secy told to pay ₹5 lakh aid in Barbil custodial death

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 10:** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has asked the Chief Secretary to pay Rs 5 lakh as compensation to the next of kin of a man who died by suicide in police custody at Barbil in Keonjhar in 2019.

Hearing a plea filed by Supreme Court lawyer and human rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy, the commission also asked the Chief Secretary to submit the compliance report along with proof of payment within six weeks.

In his petition, Tripathy had sought the intervention of the commission and demanded compensation for the next of kin of Suresh Naik who committed suicide in the custody of Barbil police in Keonjhar district November 21, 2019.

Taking cognizance, the commission served a notice on the Keonjhar superintendent of police (SP) seeking his response over the allegations in the petition. The Keonjhar SP submitted the copy of magisterial enquiry report of incident along with chemical examination report June 17, 2022.

The NHRC examined the enquiry report by the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) of Barbil who denied fetching any evidence indicating foul play or ill-treatment on the deceased by the police officials at the Barbil police station.

However, the NHRC observed that had the guard deployed to keep a watch on Naik, been alert, the deceased could not have got an opportunity to die by suicide and



Suresh Naik died by suicide in the custody of Barbil police in Keonjhar district November 21, 2019

Hearing a plea filed by Supreme Court lawyer and human rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy, the commission asked the Chief Secretary to submit the compliance report along with proof of payment within six weeks

“for this, the state cannot escape its liability for the death of the person in police custody.”

“Nevertheless, there is no apparent foul play or ill treatment to the deceased by public servant as it reveals from the enquiry report of the magistrate, but it remains sacrosanct that arrest can cause in calculable harm to a person's reputation and self esteem and therefore, it rests upon the police official to keep a proper vigil over the arrestee/detenué to minimize self-inflicting harm also,” the commission observed in its order.

The NHRC reiterated that as the deceased was under the custody of police so it was the responsibility of the latter to take all precautionary measures to ensure that a person under its custody does not harm himself. The commis-

sion also referred to the observations of the Supreme Court in DK Basu vs. State of West Bengal 1997(1) SCC 416 over the matter.

The NHRC found that the state or its machinery fails to discharge the vicarious liability under the law and the state cannot escape liability for the death of the person in police custody. On May 30, 2022, the NHRC had issued a show cause notice upon the Chief Secretary seeking his response as to why the compensation of Rs 5 lakh should not be granted to the next of the kin of Naik.

The Chief Secretary was directed to submit his reply by July 17, 2022. The commission recommended for the compensation after the state failed to submit any response in this regard within the stipulated time period, it was learnt.

# State bags 1st prize for generating highest ABHA IDs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 10:** Odisha Saturday bagged the first prize for generation of highest number of Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) IDs during a special campaign from October 12 to December 8 this year.

National Health Mission Odisha director Brundha D received the award from Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya at an event organised by the Ministry of Health to commemorate 'Universal Health Coverage Day - 2022' at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, Saturday.

ABHA ID is a unique health ID for citizens to access medical records anytime and anywhere in India. It



gives complete digitised history of their health, which gives a better understanding of their health status to doctors and other health-care providers for appropriate and timely diagnosis and treatment, it was learnt.

According to sources, the United Nations officially designated December 12 as 'International

Universal Health Coverage Day' in 2017. The theme for this year is 'Build the World We Want: A Healthy Future for All', which underscores the role and importance of health coverage in building a healthy future for all.

In order to achieve the feat, the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department undertook intensive

campaign across the state with special emphasis on ABHA ID creation, improving utilisation of e-Sanjeevani (telemedicine services) and strengthening of all e-Health initiative at sub-centre level from October 12, 2022, a senior official said.

In response to the target of 21.90 lakh ABHA ID creation, Odisha created 43,61,895 (199 per cent) ABHA IDs by using different portals like NCD portal, RCH portal, e-Sanjeevani, PMNDP and Nikshya Portal (NTEP), the official said, pointing out that the top 10 ranking districts — Bhadrak, Jajpur, Cuttack, Ganjam, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Kendrapara, Balasore, Puri and Keonjhar — in India are from Odisha.

# State to host 3 G20 meets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 10:** Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Saturday said three G20 sub-committee meetings on education, energy and culture will be held in Odisha in April next year.

Konark and Bhubaneswar are likely to be among the venues for 200 such meetings to be held in the run-up to the main summit.

On December 1, India assumed the presidency of the G20 forum, taking over from Indonesia.

G20 is an inter-governmental forum that addresses global economic issues such as financial stability, climate change mitigation, and sustainable development. It comprises Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the UK, the US and the European Union, with representatives of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

# BJD will win over 125 MLA seats in 2024, says Singh

BJP claims to form government; Congress says it will get 60 seats

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 10:** Following the Dhamnagar and Padampur byelections, three principal political parties in the state — BJD, BJP and Congress — have made tall claims for the next Assembly election due in 2024.

Senior BJD MLA Susanta Singh expressed confidence and said that his party will win the Assembly elections with more than 125 seats, no matter when the elections are held.

During the 2019 election, BJD lost some seats with a small margin. However, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will prepare a special roadmap for the election and tickets will be given on the basis of performance, popularity and ground report in 2024, he said.

“From 36 seats in the western Odisha, BJD will win over 30 seats. We will request the Chief Minister to contest the 2024 elec-

tion from western Odisha,” Singh claimed. Leader of Opposition Jai Narayan Mishra claimed that his party will form government in the state with two-third majority in 2024.

On the other hand, Congress MLA Suresh Routray claimed that his party would get about 60 MLA seats in 2024. The Congress along with another party will form a coalition government, he said.

The Congress leader also claimed that the BJD will come down to 30 in the next election.

Notably, the ruling BJD and BJP retained their seats in Padampur and Dhamnagar respectively in the recently concluded bypolls.

While the Dhamnagar bypoll was necessitated following the death of BJP MLA Bishnu Charan Sethi, the byelection to Padampur Assembly constituency was necessitated by the demise of BJD MLA Bijaya Ranjan Singh Bariha.



# Wearing masks for longer time can hamper cognitive performance

Wearing a face mask can temporarily disrupt decision-making in some situations, hampering cognitive performance in certain sports, and professions like language interpreters, performers, waiters and teachers, a new study has revealed.

The University of Queensland (UQ) research, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, analysed almost three million chess moves played by more than 8,000 people in 18 countries before and during the pandemic.

It found wearing a mask substantially reduced the average quality of player decisions.

“The decrease in performance was due to the annoyance caused by the masks rather than a physiological mechanism, but people adapted to the distraction over time,” said Dr David Smerdon from UQ's School of Economics.

The data showed masks were more likely to decrease performance in situations where there was a demanding mental task with a high working memory load.

“This is something to keep in mind for occupations in the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics



**The decrease in performance was due to the annoyance caused by the masks rather than a physiological mechanism, but people adapted to the distraction over time**

DAVID SMERDON | UQ'S SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

as well as other professions that demand a high level of working memory such as language interpreters, performers, waiters and teachers,” Smerdon added.

Dr Smerdon, an Australian chess Grandmaster, said while mask mandates had helped to curb the spread of Covid-19, almost nothing was known about their impact on cognitive performance.

“At the moment there are no large studies on the impact of mask wearing on the general population,” he said.

The study found that while mask wearing had a negative impact on chess performance, the effect subsided after four to six hours of playing.

“The results suggest that the effect of masks may depend on the type of task, the duration of the task and working memory load,” he added.

Understanding the impact of mask wearing on decision-making could help individuals and organisations better evaluate when and how to use them.



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# Bar members' agitation still persistent

**ADVOCATES ARE DEMANDING ESTABLISHMENT OF PERMANENT BENCH OF HIGH COURT IN WESTERN ODISHA**

general public staged picketing at the Kacheri square November 30 and raised slogans by using mikes/loudspeakers on demand of establishment of permanent bench of High Court in Western Odisha.

"The persuasion of the District Judge to them to refrain from doing so by referring to the orders of apex Court did not yield any result. The police personnel present though tried several times to clear up the road but failed. As a result, the District Judge, Sambalpur as well as other Judicial Officers were prevented from entering the court premises and had to return without being able to hold court. As a result, none of the 924 cases listed in the Sambalpur District Courts could be taken up thus causing enormous inconvenience to the litigant public," the report reads.

Citing the report of Sambalpur district judge, Orissa HC informed the apex court that the members of Bar staged dharna December 7



again but the entry of judicial officers was not obstructed.

It was further submitted that Bar Council of Odisha had written a letter to the BCI seeking action against the advocates named in FIR but no information is available till date whether BCI has taken any action against the agitating advocates.

The Bar members also held ag-

itations in Koraput, Balasore, Ganjam, Deogarh and Dhenkanal, the HC submitted.

The Registrar General further submitted that the averments made by the Central Action Committee of All Bar Associations of Western Odisha regarding boycott of the Court of the Chief Justice of the High Court of Orissa from October 27 to November 9 are misleading and incorrect. Out of 943 cases listed, 665 cases were disposed of during this period as the advocates and litigants appeared in either virtual or physical mode, the HC submitted.

"It may be humbly stated that there was no occasion to place such facts before the apex Court as no judicial working hours was lost during the period under reference. The Court of the Chief Justice has been functioning in hybrid mode thereby allowing the advocates/litigants to pursue their litigations in either of the modes i.e. physical and virtual," the status report reads.

# BJD stance unclear on Uniform Civil Code

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Dec 10: The winter session of the Parliament that commenced December 7 saw a smooth functioning until Friday when a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP introduced a private member bill on Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the Rajya Sabha. The move brought the wrath of opposition parties.

While the opposition parties criticised the introduction of the bill and termed it unconstitutional, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has kept its cards close on the bill.

The Bill was introduced in the Upper House by BJP MP from Rajasthan Kirodi Lal Meena. The bill seeks the constitution of the National Inspection and Investigation Committee for preparation of UCC and its implementation across the country. The members of opposition parties including Congress, Trinamool Congress Party, DMK, AAP, SP, NCP, RJD among others lodged strong protest against the introduction of the sensitive bill. TMC MP Jawahar Sircar termed the bill unethical

and anti-secular. He said the bill is being introduced as a private member's Bill by an indulgent government



**ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT**

to test the waters in a very dangerous game.

Meanwhile, the stand of the BJD remained unclear on the bill in the Upper House. The sources said that the party would clear its stand on the sensitive issue when it comes up for discussion.

Besides, the Odisha MPs raised the issue of GST hike on the Kendu leaves, delay in release of crop insurance claims and reiterated de-

mand for recognition of tribal languages among other issues during the first week of the Winter Session. Highlighting the significance of Kendu leaves for tribal communities, the BJD requested the Union government to withdraw GST levied on Kendu leaves. The ruling party also pleaded for inclusion of three tribal languages in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution. It highlighted the plight of horticulture farmers and sought increase in the assistance under the Area Expansion Programme so that more farmers get benefits of Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture to double their incomes.

BJP had apprised the lower house about the issues related to disbursement of crop insurance claims to farmers of Western Odisha and requested the Union government to look into the matter. Meanwhile, Congress MP Saptagiri Ulaka reiterated the demand for setting up of Rayagada Rail division. He also sought extension of Naupada-Gunupur railway line.

Continued from P1

## Pradhan hints at early polls in state

BJP, he said, is fully aware of its responsibilities towards the state and its people and it will discharge its duty sincerely.

Reacting to the statement of Pradhan, senior BJD leader Prasanna Acharya said, "Pradhan said this because they may dissolve Lok Sabha early or he wants to boost the morale of his party workers."

## Nexus Esplanade hosts Christmas Cake Mixing ceremony



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Nexus Esplanade hosted Christmas Cake Mixing ceremony December 10 inside the mall atrium. Chefs from hotel industry, delegates, social media influencers, retail partners and customers along with the mall management team were part of the event.

The cake mixing ceremony is done as a part of CSR initiative. The mix will be stored at a bakery and later on the cakes will be made and distributed among different NGOs for Christmas celebrations. The Centre Director, Parth Pratim Nayak, was immensely happy that they could connect to everyone through this social cause. The main thought behind this initiative was to spread happiness to everyone this Christmas.

## Man dies, 8 hurt in road mishap

Cuttack: A man died and at least eight others suffered critical injuries in a road mishap near Nakharagada on Jagatpur-Salipur Road here Saturday evening. The deceased was identified as Subash Sahoo of Badamba Narsinghpur of the district. While two of the injured were undergoing treatment at a local private healthcare facility, six others were being treated at SCB Medical College and Hospital here, it was learnt. According to Satyanarayan Rout, an eyewitness, the incident took place around 6pm. "The driver of a long trailer from Kendrapara lost control over the vehicle following which it rammed into a roadside eatery at Pir Bazar Square here. The vehicle later hit a car, just 300 metre away from the ill-fated eatery. Later, the trailer also hit a few more vehicles nearby," Rout said. The series of mishap left a man dead and eight others injured, added Rout.

## INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY



**OBSERVING HUMAN RIGHTS DAY:** Several organisations including the Bharat Scouts and Guides and Civil Society Forum on Human Rights making a human chain at Sailashree Vihar in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

## Awareness campaign organised at OHRC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Saturday organized an awareness campaign on the occasion of International Human Rights Day at its office at the Conference Hall of Toshali Plaza in Satya Nagar area here. The guests who participated in the event hailed the role played by OHRC in facilitating the underprivileged and downtrodden victims including children, women

in distress, people in custody or under treatment, the elderly and infirm.

"With the passing of every year the conviction has grown in the Commission on the right to life with dignity and it has tried to address the issues that are responsible for the deprivation of these rights," informed OHRC sources.

The OHRC has also focused on the issues that are responsible for the deprivation of these rights of the common citizens and people

in distress. The speakers claimed that people are gradually realizing the importance and power of OHRC in connection with human rights violation cases.

The OHRC has received as many as 2528 petition as on December 1 this year.

Notably, the OHRC was constituted by the state government January 27, 2000 under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. The Commission started functioning from July 11, 2003.

The residents of the Odisha are gradually realizing that the OHRC can enquire any violation of human rights of a common citizen. The awareness campaign was presided over by Justice BK Patel, the Chairperson of OHRC. Several other dignitaries including Pranabindu Acharya, Special DG of Police-cum-Director Investigation, Sunil Kumar Nayak, OHRC Secretary and Rajib Lochan Sahu, OHRC registrar also attended the awareness programme.

# Lots of 'breakthroughs', still no cure for dementia

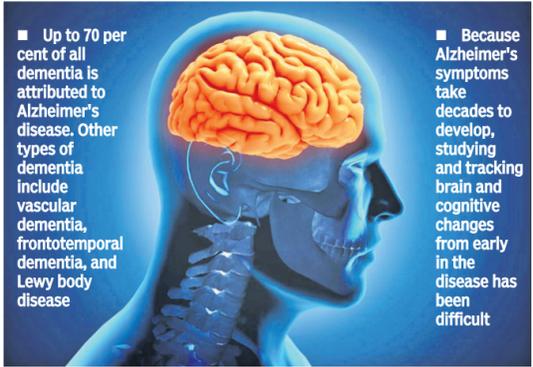
We often hear about 'dementia breakthroughs' in the news - new genes being discovered, new blood tests being developed, new drugs being tested.

However, there remains no effective or accessible cure for dementia. This is of great frustration to people living with dementia, and their carers and loved ones.

Two new 'breakthrough' drugs have been in the news. While they may not bring much relief to those living with the disease today, we are learning more about dementia, and getting closer to a treatment. A bit about dementia

Dementia is an umbrella term to describe a group of conditions characterised by a loss of brain function. This includes the ability to remember, plan and make decisions.

Up to 70 per cent of all dementia is attributed to Alzheimer's disease. Other types of dementia include vascular dementia,



frontotemporal dementia, and Lewy body disease. Because Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia, most "dementia breakthroughs" often refer to 'breakthroughs' in Alzheimer's.

Searching for treatments

Alzheimer's disease takes a long

time to develop, up to 30 years or more. For a long time, scientists had only a limited understanding of the disease. To develop the right drugs, it's crucial to have the right tools to be able to understand how the disease progresses.

Over the past 20 years, break-

throughs in brain imaging, brain fluid analysis and, more recently, blood tests, have enabled us to measure key Alzheimer's proteins - amyloid and tau - in living people. This has allowed scientists to understand how these proteins develop over time.

We have also been able to clarify which risk factors - age, sex, genetics, environment, lifestyle - contribute to the development of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's. This provides important insights into who and what to target.

Studies now suggest Alzheimer's begins with the buildup of amyloid in the brain. As amyloid builds up, tau then begins to develop. Researchers think it's this tau buildup that leads to brain cell death and cognitive decline. Some scientists refer to amyloid as the "trigger", as once the trigger has been pulled, the "bullet" (tau) is on its way.

Two new drugs  
Two drugs that have received a

lot of attention in recent weeks are aducanumab (marketed as Aduhelm) and lecanemab. Both drugs showed substantial reduction in amyloid in the brain. But whether this reduction in amyloid resulted in a meaningful benefit in memory and thinking is less clear.

In two aducanumab trials, patients did not show any meaningful benefit. But six months later, the drug maker Biogen released and subsequently published new data reporting participants on the highest dose had 22 per cent slower cognitive decline compared to participants on a placebo.

Recently, drug companies Eisai and Biogen announced the results of a lecanemab trial. Around 1,800 participants with early Alzheimer's were given the drug or a placebo over 18 months. They found a reduction in brain amyloid and tau levels in those taking the drug when compared to participants taking a placebo.

Importantly, lecanemab resulted in a 27 per cent slower decline in memory and thinking ability. This was also accompanied by greater quality of life, as reported by participants and their caregivers.

This translates to roughly a six-month benefit in memory and thinking ability. This is not much. In addition, questions have been raised about whether the drug may be less effective for people with higher risk of developing Alzheimer's, including those with certain genes, women, and culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

There are also substantial side effects that accompany both drugs. Of most concern are brain swelling and small brain bleeds as detected on brain scans. These were observed in 21-40 per cent of participants. The risk of these side effects will need to be an important discussion between patients, their families and their doctors.

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# Spread of lumpy virus sparks panic in Bhadrak villages



**Pregnant cows may die if they are not provided treatment in time. As treatment is expensive, farmers demanded free vaccination of their livestock. CDVO said that LSD is spreading in Aradi and assured preventive vaccination soon**

**POST NEWS NETWORK**  
**Aradi, Dec 10:** Lumpy skin disease (LSD) has broken out in several panchayats under Chandbali block of Bhadrak district. The LSD is spreading fast among livestock in a number of villages under the coastal block, triggering panic among locals.

Reports said, scores of cattle have been affected by the LSD in Sundarpur, Olaga, Aradi and Nandapur panchayats. As the infection is spreading, locals demanded immediate step for preventive treatment of the disease.

Unofficial sources claimed that over 50 cattle are now infected by the lumpy virus in the four panchayats. Both cows and calves are getting infected. Though there is no cure, the disease has preventive vaccines, it is said.

Livestock farmers lamented that Sundarpur LI centre has no facility of preventive vaccination. The animal husbandry department is doing little for prevention of the disease, locals alleged.

In such situation, farmers have to spend a lot while seeking service of private veterinary doctors for preventive vaccination.

On the other hand, the LSD is



making harsh economic implications on the farming community in the coastal pocket. It is going to pose a major threat to human health too, locals feared.

The disease is characterised by 2-5 cm-wide nodules that appear all over the body, particularly around the head, neck, udders and genitals. The lumps open up into large, deep wounds. The virus also causes prolonged morbidity among the affected cattle.

The affected cattle may die if their treatment is delayed. Lumpy skin disease is a viral infection that afflicts cattle and water buffaloes. There is no treatment for this disease, although the symptoms can be managed and healthy animals recover, said a local livestock

inspector. He added that the LSD virus is a poxvirus that belongs to the same genus as sheep pox and goat pox viruses. It spreads through blood-sucking insects like mosquitoes, flies and ticks as well as through saliva and contaminated water and food.

On the other hand, pregnant cows may die if they are not provided treatment in time. Whatever treatment is available now is expensive, said farmers. Livestock farmers demanded free preventive vaccination of their livestock.

Chief district veterinary officer Subhendu Mishra said that the LSD is spreading in Aradi area. He assured that quick steps will be taken to address the disease through preventive vaccination.



**SPLENDID PERFORMANCE:** Differently-abled girls performed at a block-level sports and cultural programme held at Charda Kapileshwar ground under Binka block in Subarnapur district, Saturday

## Jharkhand jumbos on damaging spree

**POST NEWS NETWORK**

**Patana, Dec 10:** A herd of 23 elephants from Jharkhand unleashed a reign of terror in Patana range in Keonjhar district late Friday night. The animals stormed into Dendua village last night and damaged several houses, apart from damaging paddy in hectares of land in Kendeipasi, Jamunapasi, Tangiri section, Manpur and Bhagpur. The herd was reportedly holed up in Kantiapada forest, Saturday.

For last several days, Jharkhand elephants have been damaging crops in other parts of the district. People have lost their sleep over the unrelenting elephant menace and demanded immediate step by the Forest department personnel to drive away the animals. They also pressed for survey on the loss of properties and crops.

## Plantation drives a damp squib due to irregularities in Phulbani

**CRORES SPENT FOR THE PURPOSE HAVE GONE DOWN THE DRAIN**

**POST NEWS NETWORK**

**Phulbani, Dec 10:** The Forest department is pumping crores of rupees in plantation drives in forested areas, but in many cases, the exercise has allegedly become futile in Phulbani range of Kandhamal district due to irregularities and lack of post-plantation care, reports said.

It was alleged that funds to the tune of crores have been misappropriated in the name of forest regeneration in many blocks of Kandhamal district.

Here is a case in point. Under MGNREGS, a massive plantation drive was undertaken in Ganjuguda panchayat under this range in 2021-22 fiscal.

The forest department planted 10,000 saplings of different species on a patch of 50 hectare of land near Baida village by spending ₹8.59 lakh. An information plaque was set up near the project, stated that ₹7.72 lakh was spent towards wages of job card holders while ₹87,000 was spent for sapling purchase. In fact, no one is sure how many



saplings were planted on the 50-hectare patch. Locals are very skeptical of the official information, given the present miserable condition of the plantation on the land. Only a few dry plants are found standing on the land, locals lamented.

Locals sought to know why the department planted saplings of khau, jackfruit, sishu, jamun and barada species inside a sal forest.

It was alleged that though some people had been engaged to take care of the saplings, the latter have died. Same is the situation at many

plantation sites under this range.

When asked about it, forester Monalisha Panda said that funds for sapling maintenance were provided up to December, 2021. "Fund was spent on weed cleaning, pit digging and re-plantation in places of dead trees. After December, 2021, no fund has been provided for post-plantation care. A proposal has been sent to the DRDA for post-plantation care of the saplings," Panda added.

The plantation sites will be inspected, said Phulbani DFO Prashant Kumar Patel.

## Officials give 'short shrift' to special gram sabhas

**POST NEWS NETWORK**

**Pottangi, Dec 10:** Officials of various departments are allegedly giving short shrift to special gram sabhas which assume much importance in decision making of local residents and people's representatives in implementation of developmental works and programmes at the village level.

This has happened in Galedaga panchayat under Pottangi block of Koraput district. Officials of the block administration were accused of ignoring the people's representatives' opinions.

Reports said, Sarpanch Rashmita Pedanti had written a letter to BDO Soumyasarthak Mishra, seeking to hold a special gram sabha in the panchayat to discuss various problems of villages and put forth proposals for developmental works.

Locals and people's representatives such as samiti members and ward members attended the meeting and apprised the sarpanch and the panchayat executive officer about their demands.



Block chairperson Trinath Kata and samiti members expressed their displeasure over absence of many officials.

"Many officials did not turn up for the meeting to know of the issues of the people. How action plans would be prepared for development works in the panchayats," they wondered.

They have demanded that the district and the block administration should take action against the officials playing truant.

## Irregularities galore in MGNREGS projects

**POST NEWS NETWORK**

**Nayagarh, Dec 10:** Irregularities have allegedly been marring objectives of various projects being executed under MGNREGS in Nayagarh district. Cases of irregularities are reportedly surfacing from some blocks with each passing day. MGNREGS funds worth over ₹40 crore have been misappropriated through forged bills in Bhapur block while over ₹50 lakh was embezzled in Odagaon block.

Around ₹5 lakh has been misappropriated in Dasapalla block. Moreover, irregularities worth ₹1 crore have been committed by the Forest department under MGNREGS in Odagaon block.

It was alleged that while irregularities are increasing, the administration has failed to contain them.

According to an allegation, ₹8.99 lakh was sanctioned for renovation of Poibadi Bandh in Tendabidha panchayat in 2020-21. However, the pond was not renovated, but ₹5 lakh meant for renovation has been embezzled through a forged bill. An information plaque was set up near the project, but dates of project's starting and deadline have not been mentioned. "The pond has been leased out to an SHG in September 2021 for three years. Its water has not been drained out. How and when its renovation work was carried out," locals sought to know.

A tribal resident of Poibadi village on condition of anonymity said that this is how development works are being carried out. "All development works are confined to pen and paper. The administration is taking no action against the corruption. Hence, irregularities are growing up in many panchayats. In Dasapalla block, there are several instances of irregularities," he added.

Executive officer of Zilla Parishad, Subash Chandra Ray said that the irregularities will be investigated and action will be taken against those involved in the scam. "After receiving allegations, we are investigating and taking action in different blocks," he added.



**STUDENT UNREST:** Students of Plus Three second year third semester staging a demonstration outside the main gate of Seemanta College at Jharpokharia in Mayurbhanj district in protest against falling of 75 per cent of the students in English subject, Saturday

## Maoist camp busted in Kalahandi, explosives seized

**POST NEWS NETWORK**

**Bhawaniapatna, Dec 10:** Security forces busted a Maoist hideout and seized a huge cache of explosives and other Maoist articles inside Pahadpadar reserve forest near Kanchanmuhin village under Bijepur police limits in Kalahandi district, Saturday.

The ultras fled the scene on seeing the jawans. This was stated here by Kalahandi SP Abilash G in

a press release issued to the media persons, Saturday.

On being directed by the SP, security forces along with local police and jawans of special operation group (SOG) launched a combing operation in the forest from December 9. They were on the lookout for the ultras when they traced a Maoist camp inside the forest near the Kanchanmuhin village. The jawans gheraoed the camp while the ultras managed to es-



cape from the place. They searched the camp and seized nine detonators, two improvised explosive devices (IEDs), blankets, electric

wires, medicines and other articles of daily use from inside the camp. Police said over 10 Maoists were holed up in the camp. The leaflets seized from the camp indicated that the camp was being run by BGM division and Niyamgiri division of Maoists. Preliminary investigations suggested that two dreaded Maoists Indu Majhi and Kuna Majhi of Niyamgiri division were staying in the camp. Currently, further search operation is on.

## ITI student drowns in pond

**POST NEWS NETWORK**

**Hinjilicut, Dec 10:** A student of Government ITI drowned in a pond near his hostel at Pochilima under this block in Ganjam district, Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Sanjeev Tripathy, a student of first year electronics department at the Industrial Training Institute (ITI). Sanjeev, son of Shibaram Tripathy of Baunshalundi village under Bhanjanagar block was staying in the hostel.

The incident occurred when he along with his friends went to take bath in a pond near his ITI hostel. He accidentally slipped into water. Locals and his friends rushed him to the Hinjilicut hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. Police registered a case and launched an investigation.

## Roadside parking of heavy vehicles triggers traffic snarls

**POST NEWS NETWORK**

**Kaliapani, Dec 10:** Traffic problem is becoming acute in Kaliapani mining area in Jajpur district as it takes nearly an hour on a bike, a car or by walking to cross a distance of 1 km, a report said.

This has sparked resentment among local people and guardians of schools and college going students as they warned of taking to the streets if the routine traffic problem is not resolved at the earliest.

Reports said, cargo trucks compete among themselves to reach various mines as fast as possible after implementation of the policy - first-come-first-loading of minerals in the mines. Kaliapani mining region has 12 mines out of which mineral extraction is being carried out presently in six mines. Truckers visiting the mines of

Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC), IMFA, Tata Steel and Facor Vedanta chromite mines to carry minerals park their trucks on both sides of the road leading to unprecedented traffic jams on the road. Commuters travelling on their bikes, cars or by walking are left stranded on the road for hours due to traffic jam as they have little space to travel on the road with trucks parked on both sides of the road.

Such severe traffic jam was witnessed recently when commuters were left stranded on the road for hours together. The situation turned tense as students of OMC Kaliapani High School, Stewart School, Saraswati Sishu Vidya Mandir and other schools were left stranded on the route for over two hours on way back from their schools. The mining officials leaving for office failed to reach in scheduled time. They reached their office an hour



late. People were expecting the situation will improve, but things turned from bad to worse as the road was gridlocked. As a result, a school bus carrying students from Kolipasi area was left stranded on the route for two hours. The traffic jam was so severe that an ambulance also failed to get passage and was left stranded on the route.

The traffic jam often gets so severe that it continues till late in

the evening. The situation often crops up as hundreds of trucks are parked on both sides of the road from the Tata Steel gate to the OMC mines gate at Kaliapani. However, the local police allegedly do not take any steps to clear the road for smooth movement of vehicles.

Locals alleged that the traffic jam was recently so severe that it was impossible to walk or go on a bicycle.

They alleged that trucks visiting the OMC-owned South Kaliapani mines, Sukurungi mines, Facor-Vedanta's Ostapal and Bhimatangar mines and IMFA mines to carry chromite are lined up on Tomka-Mangalpur road to get their serial number for entry into mines. However, the drivers are parking the trucks on both sides of the road hours before their entry time in the mines.

Security personnel of the mines are allegedly showing favouritism and handing out serial numbers to truckers at their will for which the trucks are illegally parked on the road for hours together. South Kaliapani mines have separate gates for entry of 10, 12 and 14-wheeler trucks opposite the IMFA and Tata Mines.

Hundreds of trucks are often parked on both sides of the road stretching up to six km.

FOCUS TECHNOLOGY

# DISRUPTING THE DISRUPTORS



With today's macroeconomic disruption, policymakers have an opportunity to make up for years of laissez-faire policies

ment to steer the tech industry in more desirable directions. For years, the industry – particularly the social-media platforms – has weakened democracy, undermined public health, and jeopardised public safety. To the extent that policymakers have done anything to rein in the industry, they have focused on privacy and competition – efforts that have accomplished too little and come too late.

The focus of policymakers and regulators should shift from symptoms to root causes: namely, the industry's culture, business models, and structure. The culture of the industry is hyper-focused on speed, scale, and profits, without regard for consumer safety. Too many products – including major internet platforms, self-driving cars, artificial intelligence, smart devices, crypto, deep fakes, and facial recognition – are simply unsafe. There are no rules requiring tech companies to put consumer safety first; worse, the economic incentives encourage exactly the opposite kind of behaviour. Similarly, the "surveillance capitalism" business model – which uses big data and behavioural economics to manipulate behaviour – is an assault on human autonomy analogous to child labour. And it is an assault that has spread from internet platforms to many other industries, including healthcare, transportation, and financial services.

Finally, the concentration of economic power in the tech industry prevents new ideas and business models from coming to market. With today's macroeconomic disruption, policymakers have an opportunity to make up for years of laissez-faire policies. Tech companies should be forced to demonstrate safety as a condition of market access. Surveillance capitalism should be banned. Monopolistic business practices must be outlawed, and monopolies broken up.

Protecting democracy, public health, and public safety is good politics. It also happens to be the right thing to do. There will never be a better time.

The writer is an early investor in Facebook, Google, and Amazon. #PROJECTSYNDICATE

like Facebook and Instagram, costing Meta as much as \$12.8 billion this year. Meanwhile, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg has made a huge bet on virtual reality, attempting to create a general-purpose operating system for an industry that does not yet exist. The company has already spent \$36 billion on this vision, with little to show for it.

Other tech companies are also retrenching, owing to a broader post-pandemic reversion to the trend line for online retail, as well as disappointing results from some individual products. But more to the point, I believe the global economy is in the early stages of a structural change that will leave the tech industry – the biggest beneficiary of the prior economic regime – particularly vulnerable to disruption.

The economic environment of the past decade was ideal for business. Interest rates and inflation across the advanced economies were exceptionally low. Peaceful relations among major powers underpinned easy access to global markets and sustained supply chains that optimised labour costs. But while prolonged economic stability benefited market leaders in every industry, it lulled executives, investors, and politicians into complacency. Many took on more risk, seemingly without consequence, leading to a mispricing of risk throughout the economy. When the pandemic hit in early 2020, it shocked most of the economy. But lockdowns and quarantines were great for tech com-

panies, which kept hiring through the first half of this year, seemingly unaware that they, too, might be subject to disruption.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine changed everything, catching most corporations and even governments off guard. I believe it will be remembered as the trigger that ushered in a new economic era, with interest rates, inflation, geopolitical tensions, and instability at significantly higher levels than in the past decade. There has been a loss of trust among major powers, and it will be many years before governments are once again willing to subordinate other issues to economic interests.

For tech, a new economic environment presents both challenges and opportunities. Many tech businesses will not recover. Crypto, Twitter, and Meta's best days appear to be behind them. Other tech businesses, probably including Amazon and Apple, will recover, but perhaps more slowly than they would like. Some new opportunities will emerge. Enterprises that are restructuring manufacturing and supply chains will need technology. As workers leverage their newfound bargaining power to demand a greater share of the returns, demand for tech-based automation will likely increase. And as consumers adjust to new economic realities, they will stand to benefit from a range of applications and services that do not exist today.

While it may be too much to ask, policymakers should seize this mo-

After a decade of unconstrained growth – when it seemed that a new billionaire was minted every day – the tech industry has finally hit a rough patch. Elon Musk's erratic behaviour following his takeover of Twitter has left the financially leveraged platform in a precarious state. The crypto exchange FTX's sudden implosion has vaporised a business that was recently valued at \$32 billion, taking many other crypto firms with it. Meta is laying off 11,000 people, 13% of its workforce, and Amazon is shedding 10,000. What are we supposed to make of these setbacks? Are they isolated incidents, or signs of structural change?

Twitter was already struggling. After taking on debt and overpaying for the platform, Musk immediately began cutting costs, declaring that the company was losing \$4 million per day. His first layoffs swept out 80% of the company's contractors and half of its permanent staff, including key engineers and most of the content-moderation team. Musk then reversed the bans on Donald Trump and thousands of far-right provocateurs, as well as ending the enforcement of rules against "harmful misinformation" about COVID and vaccines. Many advertisers have paused their campaigns to avoid having their brands associated with toxic content. As I write, Twitter is in chaos.

As the second-largest crypto exchange, FTX (and its founder, Sam Bankman-Fried) came out of nowhere, built a huge public profile, and then blew up – all in the space of a few years. Details are still emerging, but the bankruptcy specialist now serving as FTX's CEO, says he has never seen "such a complete failure of corporate controls and such a complete absence of trustworthy information." The ripple effects are being felt across the crypto industry.

Meta's layoffs reflect the company's stalled growth after a meteoric 17-year run. Young people have embraced TikTok, undermining the growth of Meta's Instagram platform, and Apple has introduced a tool that lets iPhone users opt out of sharing data with platforms



Roger McNamee

TECH COMPANIES SHOULD BE FORCED TO DEMONSTRATE SAFETY AS A CONDITION OF MARKET ACCESS



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

THE MOTHER

## Harmless Pretending

If one cannot actually be a leader one can pretend one is a leader. It is like wearing combat fatigues and strutting about like a real warrior. This is especially useful when the audience doesn't know one is pretending and media is in on the act.

The G20 was founded after the Asian financial crisis as a place to discuss global economic and financial issues. This means that it is a talking shop, unlike, say the United Nations Security Council, which wields real power. One key indicator that it has no power is that the G20 presidency is assigned by rotation and changes yearly. Meaning everyone gets it by turn. The honour, if one can call it that, of the presidency is to host the others in your country and at your taxpayers' expense. The G20 is meant to discuss trade but it includes nations which are currently in a trade war (America and China) or might not have a free trade treaty with the others. It is meant to discuss climate but includes the nations that were and continue to be the greatest villains in terms of carbon emissions. It includes nations that are treaty allies in the military terms (Europe and the US) meaning an attack on one of them triggers an attack on all of them. And it also includes nations against whom specifically these treaties have been written (Russia) and against whom these nations are currently arming rivals. It includes nations that have no borders and whose citizens can move and work and invest freely in each other's countries (European Union). It includes nations that are democracies but also those that are dictatorships and even kingships (Saudi Arabia).

The wealthiest G20 nation is America, which has an average per person income per year of over \$70,000 or ₹56 lakh. India is the poorest nation and our per person income is a little over \$2000 or ₹1.6 lakh per year.

Few know who held the previous G20 presidency (Indonesia) or the one before that or the one after this one (Brazil). This is because the presidency is not a position of power or prestige. But we are being told that it is a great honour that India has been 'chosen' as the current president, for a period of one year. We have heard it from the government and we have heard it from those it is associated with. We shall hear it endlessly over the next year, leading up to September 2023, when these presidents, kings and prime ministers will descend on India. Across the country events will be held, particularly in states that are important in 2024.

To manage this at our end, the prime minister has deputed the former head of the Niti Aayog, the body which replaced the Planning Commission. Meant to be a think tank for the government, nobody is quite sure of what the Niti Aayog had done other than act as cheer leader for the government. Perhaps there will be some real work in event management of the G20. There is no permanent secretariat of the G20 and the costs are shared by the current, previous and next holders of the presidency, meaning we will likely continue to bear some of the cost for another year after we have lost the presidency.

Among the other things that the G20 summit comprises of is a meeting of civil society or NGOs. It will be interesting to see what India has to say to these groups that it has waged war on since 2014, while they continue to work in many of the other G20 nations (the democracies among them, at least).

Other meetings include those with parliamentarians and perhaps India's Opposition might be given the chance at last to speak, though we will see if that happens. It might well be the case that they will continue to be muzzled and that our leader will use the opportunity to give the other G20 parliamentarians the benefit of his wisdom. We could be in for some dazzling words on freedom of expression and tolerance.

Our actual problems are less likely to be discussed. China does not want to talk about the border issue even with us, let alone with third parties. The problem in Ladakh with continue. Easier and cheaper access to these nations for our workers and tourists to other G20 nations is unlikely to come up or be considered. And this should not surprise us because talking shops are for talk and not for action.

Some 50 years ago, ZA Bhutto arranged an Islamic summit that was designed to show Pakistan as the leader of the Islamic world. It was no such thing of course but what is wrong with some harmless pretending?

The G20 summit will give our leader the chance to do event management on a truly global scale and one looks forward to it very much. It will be spectacle with little real meaning for the population but the entertainment will be assured. There will be no end to the claim that this is India's moment to lead the world, or at least lead it till the next leader takes over.



Aakar Patel

Few know who held the previous G20 presidency (Indonesia) or the one before that or the one after this one (Brazil). This is because the presidency is not a position of power or prestige

SPECTRUM DIPLOMACY

## Strategic concerns or economic interests

The Foreign Minister of Germany Annalena Baerbock was in India recently on a two-day visit. The purpose and the timing of the visit coincided with Germany finishing its term as the president of G-7 group this month as India takes over as the president of G-20 countries. Some observers suggest that it was a make-up visit after the Foreign Minister from the Green Party of Germany had advocated international involvement in resolution of the Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan.

However, in the words of the Foreign Minister, the focus of her visit consisted of three areas – economic cooperation, climate crisis mainly dealing with the energy question that enhances the use of renewables, and security. Germany leading in the replacement of fossil fuel will help India to make that change-over in the energy sector.

Let us decipher from her statements, and interactions with her counterpart and other officials, Germany's current strategy on India that may impact the growth of relations between two countries. It was assumed that the Western countries including Germany were looking for a substitute country to China for their investment.

Germany had specifically mentioned India as an obvious destination. This perception was clearly dispelled by Baerbock. She said "no" in response to a specific query that Germany was treating India as a replacement for China. Baerbock made a distinction between Germany's policy on China and that with India. She said that they have a value partnership with India whereas their relations with China are economic. Germany has been maintaining that China poses 'systemic threat to the world'. Baerbock reiterated that position in New Delhi.

Observers wonder whether the Minister's statements on China and Indo-Pacific sit somewhat awkwardly with the more conciliatory position towards China taken by Chancellor Olaf Scholz. The Chancellor recently visited China to meet with President Xi Jinping. Scholz was accompanied by a high-powered group of businessmen from Germany's largest corporations. China has been Germany's largest economic partner since 2016, with the latter's firms pouring around 10 billion euros in new investments into the Chinese market in 2022 alone. Scholz also controversially approved Chinese investments in Hamburg port, which is Germany's largest. The deal was pushed through

by the Chancellor despite concerns from numerous ministries about national security risks posed by it.

The clear gap between Scholz's actions and Baerbock's statements seem to signal a divide over China in the coalition government that replaced Angela Merkel in December 2021. Scholz belongs to centre-left Social Democratic Party while Baerbock belongs to the Alliance 90/The Green Party, another part on the left of the political spectrum.

Germany is the strongest economy in the EU. It has built its economic power systematically and assiduously. German foreign policy is a function of its economic strength. It will want to separate its economic interests from the security concerns. Whilst it may go with NATO for its security imperatives, it will deal with China for its economic needs. The Minister said it would be better if political values and economic needs are co-terminus. If not, economic interests will override other priorities. New Delhi has not yet grasped the urgency of building its economy. Given the size and potential of the market in India, the entire democratic world will like India to grow and be ready to absorb the investment. But the priorities of the leadership in Delhi do not

seem to respond to this need. China will continue to draw the attention of big economies until they find viable alternatives matching China's size and structures it has build so far. New Delhi must be wary of this gap.

Europe is wary of India's attitude towards Russia as New Delhi is about Europe's towards China. New Delhi could use it as bargaining tool by being proactive in the Ukrainian war in terms of bringing about a ceasefire if not complete cessation of the conflict.

Yet, the other strategic option is to explore a "third way" between being pro-USA or pro-China. Germany may be exploring this as a pragmatic and progressive line of thinking based on the concept of strategic autonomy. New Delhi has a similar approach. There is then a clear convergence between Germany and India. Is it worth pursuing? At the same time, if Europe can impress upon Beijing to give up its expansionism, and India can persuade Russia to avoid military aggression, we could fast progress towards a rule-based world order!

The writer is Professor, International Politics, JIMMC, GUINFA



DK Giri

NEW DELHI HAS NOT YET GRASPED THE URGENCY OF BUILDING ITS ECONOMY

WISDOM CORNER

- Formal education will make you a living; self-education will make you a fortune. JIM ROHN
- If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. MAYA ANGELOU
- However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. STEPHEN HAWKING

WORDSWORTH

Discombobulate

Another fine example of the speech of the wild frontier of the US of A, this came to life sometime in the 1830s to express the idea of confusing or disconcerting another person. Whose invention it was we have no idea, except that he shared the bombastic, super-confident attitude towards language that also bequeathed us (among others) absquatulate, bloviate, hornswoggle and sockdolager. It has much about it of the itinerant peddler, whose qualifications were principally a persuasive manner, the self-assurance of a man who has seen every sort of reluctant customer and charmed them all, and a vocabulary he had enlarged by gross disfigurement of innocent elements of the English language. In this case, the original seems to have been discompose or discomfit. In the early days, it sometimes appeared as discombobacate or discomboborate. Here's an example of a snake-oil salesman at work in 1860 (except that he was praising the water from the Louisville artesian well rather than any manufactured remedy). It was said to have been taken down verbatim: "It discomboborates inflammatory rheumatism, sore eyes, scrofula, dyspepsia, and leaves you harmonious without any defalcation, as harmonious systematically as a young dove". Worth a dollar a drop...

LOL



THE DEVIL'S OFFER

The devil visited a lawyer's office and made him an offer. "I can arrange some things for you," the devil said. "I'll increase your income five-fold. Your partners will love you; your clients will respect you; you'll

have four months of vacation each year and live to be a hundred. All I require in return is that your wife's soul, your children's souls, and their children's souls rot in hell for eternity." The lawyer thought for a moment. "What's the catch?" he asked.

Rising popularity

Sir, The defeat in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) election must have jolted the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), as the result has ended the 15-year rule of the saffron party at the helm of the civic body in Delhi. The defeat will also dent the BJP's efforts to subvert Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP's) political dominance in Delhi, and limit its chances in the 2025 Assembly elections. On the contrary, the results could jostle the BJP's mission ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The MCD elections have always drawn national attention. It is often said in political galleries that if Delhi sneezes, the rest of India catches cold. The AAP's win in the MCD elections is a validation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's claim of being targeted by the BJP due to its rising popularity. Taking on the AAP in any election may no longer be an easy task for the saffron party. Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Poll season lessons

Sir, The outcome of the recent Assembly elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh has come on expected lines. A landslide victory was predicted for the BJP in Gujarat so as a victory with a slight edge for the Congress in Himachal Pradesh. The mixed nature of the outcome also has made it mandatory for all the parties to get back to their drawing boards to start analysing what went right and where went wrong. Thus, before the country faces the new wave of state elections in the intervening period before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the political community will have a lot of thinking to do. The unprecedented performance of the BJP in Gujarat has made it clear that despite the Morbi tragedy or the massive restructuring of the government including dropping of many stalwarts from the elections, the Modi magic still works in the fore front. At the same time, the Congress has to do a lot of soul-searching despite its victory in Himachal Pradesh. The message that emerged from these election results is that if the Congress party really wants to be in electoral politics, it will have to change its way. The Grand Old Party's seat tally in Gujarat has gone down to a historic low. Even though former Congress president Rahul Gandhi has shown his readiness to fight a long battle through the Bharat Jodo Yatra that doesn't make up for the party's absence on the front of the electoral battle. The Aam Aadmi Party may have fallen far short of expectations in terms of seats, but it has created an alternative narrative of the opposition promising better governance on basic issues like electricity, water, medicine and education. Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

## Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

# national

## of the day quote

All parties should make a collective effort to implement a uniform civil code which will be good for the nation and humanity



NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

Virtual hearings amid COVID-19 helped in justice delivery



KIREN RIJU | UNION LAW MINISTER

The estimated number of cancer cases in the country in 2020 was 13, 92,179 and it is projected to increase by 12.8 per cent



MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Delhi Congress defector apologises

**New Delhi:** Hours after joining the Aam Aadmi Party, two newly-elected Congress councillors and party leader Ali Mehdi switched back to the grand old party and issued an apology. Posting a video on social media, Mehdi said he made a mistake by crossing over to the AAP and asserted that he is a "loyal worker" of the Congress and Rahul Gandhi. "I made a huge mistake. I accept my fault and ask for apology from Rahul Gandhi with folded hands," Mehdi said in the video.

### Ink attack on Maha minister

**Pune:** Ink was thrown at Maharashtra Minister Chandrakant Patil in Pimpri suburb of Pune on Saturday for his alleged remarks about Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, police said. The police have detained the man who threw ink on Patil and further investigation is underway, Pimpri Chinchwad police commissioner Ankush Shinde said. A video of the incident shows a man throwing ink at the senior BJP leader as he emerged out of a building in Pimpri Chinchwad. Security personnel around the minister immediately caught hold of the man.

### Man booked

**Mumbai:** An offence has been registered against a man for allegedly cutting birthday cakes with a sword at a party in Cuffe Parade area of south Mumbai, police said on Saturday. The matter came to light after videos of the birthday celebration went viral on social media, an official said.

### Gold seized

**Hyderabad:** Customs officials at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport Hyderabad on Saturday seized gold valued over Rs 1.37 crore from a passenger who arrived from Dubai. The customs officials intercepted a male passenger who arrived from flight FZ461 from Dubai in the early hours of Saturday. The officials checked the baggage of the passenger and found 24 carat gold weighing 1,547 grams and 18 Karat jewellery weighing 1,414 grams.

### 3 killed in accident

**Hyderabad:** Three persons were killed in a road accident in Nizamabad district of Telangana on Saturday. The accident occurred on national highway near Chepur village in Armoor mandal when a truck rammied into a car. Quoting an eye-witness, police said, the car which was trying to overtake another vehicle, collided with the truck coming from the opposite direction, leading to on the spot death of three people.



For us, the Gujarat results show the need for introspection and for taking tough decisions. In Gujarat the election results have been very disappointing and are far below our expectations. It is a very sad reflection on the state's organisation

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

## SC TO HEAR BILKIS BANO PLEA DEC 13

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear December 13 a plea filed by Bilkis Bano, who was gangraped and seven members of her family killed during the 2002 Gujarat riots, challenging the remission of sentence of 11 convicts in the case



## Six vehicles carrying areca nuts burnt down

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Aizawl, Dec 10:** Six vehicles carrying dry areca nuts were burnt down by "unidentified people" in Mamit district of Mizoram Saturday, the police said.

Mamit district Superintendent of police Lalthangpui Pulamte said that no one was injured in the incident and none arrested yet.



"The six vehicles carrying the dry areca nuts, not locally grown, contained 20 cartons and 122 big bags. Police are yet to ascertain their destinations and have not yet identified the traders of these products," Pulamte said.

She said that the police investigating the incidents and further details would be known after completion of the probe. Another police official said that the trucks were set ablaze between Zawluam and Zamuang villages of Mamit District, bordering Assam, Tripura and Bangladesh. The burning of the trucks happened two days after

Mizoram Rajya Sabha MP K. Vanlalvena raised the plight of Mizoram and Tripura areca nut growers in the Parliament.

Speaking in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, Vanlalvena informed the Parliament that majority of farmers in western Mizoram and the Jampui hills of Tripura have been depending on areca nut plantation as their main source of income for the past many decades.

"The market for areca nuts produced from Mizoram and Tripura was badly affected this year after the Assam government launched a crackdown on arecanut smuggled from Myanmar. However, the areca nut grown in Mizoram and Tripura had to transport in the other states of the country through the Assam territory only," the Rajya Sabha member had said.

He said that the Assam government was acting on the instructions of the Union Home Ministry to curb illegal import of areca nuts from Myanmar.

## WOMAN RESCUED, 31 ARRESTED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, Dec 10:** A day after a woman was kidnapped here, she was safely rescued from the abductors and 31 people were arrested in connection with the incident, police said on Saturday.

A group of about 50 people barged into the house of the woman, who is studying Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS), and kidnapped her under Adibatla police station limits on Friday.

The woman was forcibly taken away in a car, reportedly before her engagement, even as her mother suspected the hand of one man who had proposed to her daughter earlier.

"The woman has been rescued. She also attended her examination today. So far, 31 accused have been arrested. No one will be spared from stringent legal action," police said.

Asked about the incident and the person responsible for the kidnapping, a senior police official said: "It is a kidnapping case. She has been rescued and she is safe. We are further investigating".

The youngsters armed with sticks entered the house and ransacked it before taking the woman forcibly, police said, adding that the assailants attacked her relatives and neighbours when they resisted. The accused had also damaged some parked vehicles, according to CCTV visuals.



## BJP trying to 'buy' AAP councillors: Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 10:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Saturday said the "heavy BJP machinery" deployed during campaigning made the MCD polls the Aam Aadmi Party's toughest election so far and accused the saffron party of trying to "buy" its councillors.

The AAP national convener claimed that the BJP has started telephoning his party's councillors and offering them up to Rs 20 lakh each. "This election was very, very tough. A few people say it was an easy election, but it was not. The way they conspired against us and the way they used state machinery against us, it was the toughest elections we ever contested," Kejriwal said in his address to the newly elected councillors.

"Heavy BJP machinery deployed during campaigning made the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) polls the toughest election for AAP so far," he added. Referring to purported videos of jailed minister Satyender Jain getting special treatment, the chief minister said the BJP pressured the media to spread "propaganda against us".

"They (BJP) will try to buy you. They have started calling the councillors. Somebody is being offered Rs 10 lakh and some Rs 20 lakh," the AAP supremo said. "I am completely sure no one from you will fall for their offer. However, we need to expose them. Put your phone on recording and whenever there is a call from them, record it," he added.

"Despite all the tricks," Kejriwal said the BJP "could not breach the AAP's reputation" which it has earned through its work and trust. "Despite their propaganda, the people voted for us in the MCD. It means people trust what we did and earned in the last few years. The BJP thought people are gullible but they are not," he said, adding



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and others during the Bharat Jodo Yatra in Bundi

PTI PHOTO

## Bhupendra Patel to continue as Guj CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gandhinagar, Dec 10:** Bhupendra Patel will continue as the Chief Minister of Gujarat for a second straight term with the newly-elected MLAs of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) electing him as leader of the legislative party on Saturday.

After the meeting, Patel met Governor Acharya Devvrat at Raj Bhavan and staked claim to form a government, two days after the BJP won a record mandate in the Assembly elections by winning 156 out of the total 182 seats. The Governor invited Patel to form government and take oath at 2 pm Monday.

Patel will take oath as the 18th Chief Minister of Gujarat at a function at the Helipad ground near the new secretariat in Gandhinagar December 12. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah along with the chief ministers of other BJP-ruled states would attend the swearing-in function, party sources said.

Meanwhile, hectic consultations were underway for picking ministers of the new government. Patel and state BJP chief CR Paatil flew to Delhi in the evening and were expected to hold consultations with the top leadership of the party including Prime Minister Modi, Shah and BJP chief JP Nadda.

MLAs Kanu Desai, Raghavji

Patel will take oath as the 18th Chief Minister of Gujarat at a function at the Helipad ground near the new secretariat in Gandhinagar December 12

Patel, Rishikesh Patel, Harsh Sanghavi, Shankar Chaudhary, Purnesh Modi, Manisha Vakil and Raman Patkar are among those expected to be inducted in the ministry. The BJP would try to balance caste and regional representations while picking ministers, party sources said. Addressing a press conference after the legislative party meeting at the state BJP headquarters 'Kamalam', Bhupendra Patel said the implementation of promises made in the manifesto, including a Uniform Civil Code, will be the priority of his government.

"The newly-elected MLAs met today at 'Kamalam' where the proposal to name Bhupendra Patel as chief minister of Gujarat was unanimously approved," the BJP said in a statement. Patel's name was proposed by MLA Kanu Desai and supported by Shankar Chaudhary, Purnesh Modi, Manisha Vakil, Raman Patkar and the party's chief whip Pankaj Desai.



## Drug trials may soon be done on human tissues developed in labs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 10:** Pre-clinical trials of new drugs could soon be done on human tissues and cells developed in laboratories and not just on animals as the Union Health Ministry is working on bringing in amendments to the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019.

A recent draft notification to amend the rules stated that alternative technology platforms such as human organ on chips, micro-physiological systems and other in vitro or cell-based assays can be used prior to and in conjunction with animal testing to establish the safety and efficacy of new drugs before human clinical trials.

Pre-clinical tests are important for establishing the safety and efficacy of investigational drugs. In September, the US Congress approved a landmark FDA Modernization Bill that allows a pharmaceutical drug developer to use alternative methods - including cell-based assays, organ on chips, micro-physiological systems and other human biology-based test methods - for establishing the safety and effectiveness of new or investigational drugs in the laboratory, along with animal testing, ahead of human clinical trials.

Once the amendments to the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019, are approved and notified by the Union Health Ministry,



India will become the second country in the world after the US to adopt and promote such innovative and cutting-edge technologies that

promise a significant reduction in time as well as costs in bringing novel drugs and effective therapies while reducing cruelty on an-

imals, official sources said.

"Human bio-specimens such as blood, tissues and urine made available during planned surgeries through the informed consenting process are being used to develop in the laboratory organ systems, organoids and organ on chips that mimic actual human organs for pre-clinical testing of drugs before human clinical trials," an official source explained.

These alternative technologies have shown the potential to improve the success rate of pre-clinical and clinical discoveries by 70 per cent to 80 per cent compared to drugs developed using animal models alone which continue to show a failure rate as high as 80

to 90 per cent.

This reduces the risk posed to humans through exposure to ineffective and toxic drugs tested on animal systems alone that fail to replicate human systems. It also enables the discovery of new drugs in a time-bound and cost-effective manner which is likely to boost new drug discovery and clinical innovation in the country, the source explained.

Moreover, since there are genetic differences in different human races and ethnicities this technology will also be useful in testing the effectiveness of drugs in a given population when they have been tested previously on another population, ethnicity and geography.

CYCLONE MANDOUS

# Heavy rain lashes Tamil Nadu

Cyclone Mandous that touched ground at Mahabalipuram Friday night has led to heavy and intense rains in Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Karaikal

AGENCIES

**Chennai, Dec 10:** Cyclonic storm Mandous, which crossed the coast at Mamallapuram near here, has weakened into a deep depression but the weather system impacted the city and its neighbourhoods, uprooting a number of trees.

Around 400 trees fell in the city under the impact of 70 kmph wind speed when the weather system crossed the coast in the intervening night of December 9 and 10, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin said. Four persons were killed, he said without elaborating. Civic agencies, including the Greater Chennai Corporation here, were involved in removing the fallen trees.

"The cyclonic storm Mandous (meaning treasure box) weakened into a deep depression over north Tamil Nadu coast. To move nearly west-northwestwards and gradually weaken into a depression by noon of 10th December," the IMD Chennai said in a tweet in the early hours of Saturday.

Stalin, who reviewed the situation at Kasimedu area, told re-



A woman salvages her shop at the Marina beach following the landfall of the Cyclone

porters that the government anticipated the situation and put in all preventive measures and could therefore prevent major damage.

"With advanced planning, this government proved any disaster can be managed," he said. Around 400 trees fell due to the impact of the high wind speed. Many trees had fallen on electric poles but the clearing work was on in full swing, he said. Around 25,000 civic workers were involved in various activities. There was no waterlogging in the 22 subways in the city and vehicular traffic was smooth. Rescue work was being expedited in the neighbouring districts of Chengalpeta, Kancheepuram and Villupuram.

With the cyclone causing damage to electric poles and transformers, power had been sus-

pending in 600 places and it has been set right in 300 of them. The rest of the work will be over by evening, Stalin said.

Estimation of the loss was being done and if required Central assistance will be sought, the Chief Minister added. Earlier, state Revenue and Disaster Management Minister K K S S R Ramachandran said over 9,000 people have been lodged in 205 relief centres.

Between 6 am Friday and 6 am today, 30 domestic and international flights were cancelled as airport operations were affected due to the cyclone. The airport runway was briefly closed in the early hours today. Besides, nine outbound flights were cancelled while 21 incoming airplanes were diverted to other cities today.

# Strife within TN Cong escalates

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, Dec 10:** The strife within the Tamil Nadu Congress (TNCC) has escalated after senior leaders including former state unit chiefs like KV Thangabalu and EVKS Elangovan complained about the functioning of current state President KS Alagiri.

A group of Congress workers owing allegiance to legislator Ruby Manoharan ransacked the TNCC headquarters, Satyamoorthy Bhavan. This was following a dispute in the Tirunelveli district Congress committee. Manoharan was unhappy that "his followers were sidelined" while sharing block-level party posts and that the district president, Jayakumar had "filled the

posts with his own supporters".

This resulted in cadres and middle-level leaders supporting Manoharan and reaching the party headquarters in three buses, which followed the ransacking of the office premises.

After this, the TNCC suspended Manoharan but within hours this was stayed by the AICC secretary in charge of Tamil Nadu, Dinesh Gundurao. This led to several senior leaders owing allegiance to KS Alagiri coming out against Dinesh Gundu Rao.

Sources in the Congress party told IANS that several senior party leaders were against the functioning of KS Alagiri and wanted to remove him from the post.

Former Union minister and senior leader, Dhanushkodi



Adityan while speaking to media persons said that "group revival in the party was a clear indication that the Congress was being strengthened in the state". In Tamil Nadu, the Congress

had won eight seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Dr S Swaminathan, a retired Professor of Political Science from a prominent University of Tamil Nadu, while speaking to IANS said, "The Tamil Nadu Congress in alliance with DMK has gained much ground and this is the cause for group war in the party. Congress being a democratic party, group wars and dissent are normal and ultimately the party is gaining ground in Tamil Nadu which is good for the grand old party which is puffing and panting in several parts of the country".

With Congress trying to rejuvenate itself in the state, the group and dissident activities are also on the rise.

# Tamil Nadu to increase salt production

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, Dec 10:** The Tamil Nadu Salt Corporation will increase its production and commence manufacturing in an area of 3,000 acres in Ramanathapuram district.

Presently the Corporation is producing salt in 5,236 acres of land.

The state government has its own salt, 'Neythal Uppu', which is iodine-mixed rock salt and iodine-mixed powder salt.

The Corporation which is producing 'Neythal Uppu' has so far sold 25 tonnes in the market.

The state government is also



■ THE STATE GOVERNMENT HAS ITS OWN SALT, 'NEYTHAL UPPU', WHICH IS IODINE-MIXED ROCK SALT AND IODINE-MIXED POWDER SALT

■ THE CORPORATION WHICH IS PRODUCING 'NEYTHAL UPPU' HAS SO FAR SOLD 25 TONNES IN THE MARKET

planning to make the salt available through the Public Distribution System (PDS) shops to increase sales

The idea is to distribute salt

mixed with iron through the PDS shops and to provide this to the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) so that children are benefitted.

The state's Department of Industries has already directed the Managing Director of the Corporation to increase production and to procure more land for the same. The Department has also directed to increase employment opportunities across the state and through an increase in the production of salt and sale through PDS shops to improve the popularity of the salt. A senior Corporation official told IANS: "The Tamil Nadu Industries Minister has told us to try and scout for land to increase the production of salt. Neythal Uppu is our product and we want to increase its sale."

# Surrogacy rules to be stricter in Bengal

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, Dec 10:** West Bengal government is in the process of making surrogacy rules stricter and stringent in the state.

A formal notification has been issued by the state government in lines of the new surrogacy rules framed by the Centre.

The only situation where an issueless couple would be able to go for surrogacy in the state is only when there is no chance for them to have a child naturally.

A certificate from the related nodal medical officer on this count will be the

pre-condition, when such a couple would be allowed to opt for surrogacy.

Figure-related issues or pretexts of professional life to be hampered will not be considered a valid reason for permission to opt for surrogacy. A couple already having a child in the regular process will also not be allowed to opt for surrogacy.

The option will also be denied for couples in live-in-relationship. However, a single-mother will be allowed to opt for it, an official from

the state secretariat of Nabanna said.

In case of married couples opting for surrogacy, the age bracket for the husband will be between 26 and 50 years, while that of the wife will be between 23 and 50 years.

There will be conditions also for the woman, whose womb will

be used for the purpose of surrogacy. Only married women with at least one child will be given permission on this count. The couple going for surrogacy will have to give a written undertaking in the form of an affidavit that they will be bearing the expenses of the premium for medical insurance of the woman lending her womb for the next three years.

"All these documents will have to be submitted in the office of the district nodal medical officers on this count, who will evaluate whether all the documents and related papers and finally give approval for the process," the state government official said.

- FIGURE-RELATED ISSUES OR PRETEXTS OF PROFESSIONAL LIFE TO BE HAMPERED WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED A VALID REASON FOR PERMISSION TO OPT FOR SURROGACY
- A COUPLE ALREADY HAVING A CHILD IN THE REGULAR PROCESS WILL ALSO NOT BE ALLOWED TO OPT FOR SURROGACY
- THE OPTION WILL ALSO BE DENIED FOR COUPLES IN LIVE-IN-RELATIONSHIP
- HOWEVER, A SINGLE-MOTHER WILL BE ALLOWED TO OPT FOR IT, AN OFFICIAL FROM THE STATE SECRETARIAT OF NABANNA SAID



Fishermen shift a boat at the Kasimedu Fishing Harbour following the landfall of Cyclone Mandous in Chennai

PTI PHOTO

# 'Don't spread rumours of wild animal attack'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, Dec 10:** The Tamil Nadu forest department has warned people not to spread rumours of wild animal attack after it found out that a woman had given false information that she was attacked by a leopard.

The Gudalur division forest department officials found that the claim made by the woman, A R Suseela of Puthiravayal, Gudalur, that she was attacked by a leopard was false.

The woman had alleged that while she was returning home from the office on a two-wheeler November 30, she was attacked by a leopard at Marthomanagar road.

Forest range officer N Rajendran who conducted the investigation told media persons that the woman did not have a two-wheeler driving license and she had met with an accident after ramming her scooter into the rear of another vehicle.

The forest official also said that there were no pug marks or hair of the leopard in the place where the woman had claimed that she was attacked by the big cat.

The forest officer said that the department monitored the area for six days and had found that there was no leopard in the area.

# WB should adopt TN's Climate Resilience model, say experts

THE STATE IS FIRST TO LAUNCH ITS OWN CLIMATE CHANGE MISSION TO MAKE TAMIL NADU A CLIMATE SMART STATE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, Dec 10:** As the severe impact of climate change had hit West Bengal in a major way during the last few years, a number of environmentalists have urged Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee to take key learnings and implement Tamil Nadu's Climate Resilience model.

They have noted that in order to address this climate change issue, the Tamil Nadu government has set up a special-purpose vehicle, named Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company (TNGCC), and thus become a pioneer among the Indian states on this count.

According to them, the TNGCC is supposed to formulate plans to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions in the state besides developing strategies to reduce emissions through green energy and renewable energy and increasing forest cover in the state among others. According to city-based prominent lawyer and environment activist, Subhash Dutt, West Bengal has been blessed at the same time by the Sundarbans in south Bengal



and the Himalayan foothills in north Bengal.

"However, both these are witnessing the impacts of climate change. For a huge state like ours whose people and their livelihood are extremely vulnerable to risks posed by climate change, exploring and setting up a unique mission to build climate resilience or take key learnings from a state like Tamil Nadu is ideal. It is extremely important that the mission is under the leadership of the chief minister as it will ensure accountability and implementation on the ground," he added.

According to Anjal Prakash, research director and adjunct associate professor of Indian School of Business, recently it was

witnessed how the mangrove forests of Sundarbans, the first line of defence against climate changes in West Bengal, was affected because of frequent cyclones.

"There is an urgent need for protecting the people against the recent rise in extreme weather events, particularly cyclones. At the same time, Himalayans in north Bengal are equally vulnerable. In such a situation the political leadership in West Bengal should work towards a programme, especially a cell that could actually help integrate climate change and climate science into new understanding and new knowledge by using information from key reports," he added.

According to Nabo Dutta, a city-based environmentalist, for the West Bengal government it is worth learning from the initiative taken by the Tamil Nadu government on this count. "Setting up such a mission or dedicated body to work on climate issues will yield results only when their suggestions and recommendations are implemented on the ground," he added.

# Heads roll in Safari Park as 27 spotted deer die in 2 months

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, Dec 10:** Heads have started rolling at Bengal Safari Park at Siliguri in Darjeeling district in West Bengal over frequent deaths of spotted deer there.

On Friday, IANS reported that as many as 27 spotted deer died within a period of just two months at the Bengal Safari Park reportedly due to gross negligence on part of the safari park authorities. Even before 24 hours have passed since then, the state forest department has issued a notification transferring both the director and assistant director of the safari park.

Confirming the transfers, state forest minister, Jyotipriyo Mullick said that he has taken the matter quite seriously and the director and the assistant directors of the Bengal Safari Park have been removed. A thorough probe has been ordered to find out the reason behind so many deer deaths and to suggest corrective measures to avoid such tragedies in future," Mullick said.

It is learnt that the Bengal Safari Park director, Dawa Sangmu Sherpa has been transferred as the divisional forest officer of the Raiganj division and she has been replaced by Kamal Sarkar, who is presently DFO of Raiganj division.



Similarly, the assistant director of the Bengal Safari Park, Anuradha Rai has been transferred to the records section of the planning & working division at Darjeeling.

The allegation against the Bengal Safari Park authorities was that they ignored repeated warnings from wildlife activist groups about the broken fencing walls of the deer enclosure within the safari park premises. Because of the broken fencing walls, the deer reportedly used to come out of the enclosure and consume waste food near the staff canteen and mushrooms which resulted in food poisoning.

This week, an Australian Kangaroo Alex, which was rescued from the clutches of the wildlife smugglers in north Bengal and sheltered in Bengal Safari Park, died reportedly because of food-poisoning after consuming mushrooms.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

of the day quote

We can only appeal social media platforms to heed to the new rules. However if they still violate them, then we will remove them from using safe hours provisions and they will be liable for prosecution

While most of the Indian students pursuing medical education in Ukraine have returned to India since the conflict began, around 1100 Indian students are currently in Ukraine

The Modi government admits that the promise of 2 crore jobs a year is 'fake!' In the last 3 years, the Modi government has given 4,374 jobs a year or 12 jobs a day. At this pace, it'll take 16,66,667 days in every year to give 2 crore jobs. Will Modi ji now change days in a year from 365 days to 16,66,667 days

SHORT TAKES

Couple found dead in UP

Lakhimpur Kheri (UP): A couple was found dead under mysterious circumstances here, police said Saturday. The deceased have been Bhagauti Prasad Dixit (50) and his wife Ramrati Devi (45), residents of Kannapur village, they said. While Devi was found lying in a pool of blood on the roadside, Prasad was found hanging from a nearby tree on Thursday. Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Arun Kumar Singh. A motor-stained iron rod and a motorcycle, belonging to the deceased, were recovered from the spot, he said.

CoBRA battalion inspector injured

Chaibasa (Jharkhand): An inspector of CoBRA battalion was injured on Saturday after an improvised explosive device (IED) went off during an anti-Maoist operation in a forest of Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, police said. The incident occurred in the forest between Rengrahatu and Tumbahaka villages under the Tonto Police Station limits when a joint team of CRPF, CoBRA, Jharkhand Jaguar and district armed police personnel was conducting the operation, DIG (Kolhan) Ajay Linda said.

Boy detained

Mumbai: A 17-year-old boy has been detained for allegedly raping a girl of the same age after blackmailing her with a selfie, a Mumbai police official said Saturday. The girl and boy are known to each other and the latter had clicked a selfie of the duo kissing while celebrating her birthday in Bandra's Carter Road area on October 10, he said. From October 10 to November 26, the accused raped the 17-year-old girl several times by threatening to circulate this selfie. The incident came to light when he reached her college recently and assaulted her when she refused to go out with him," the Khar police station official said.

3 children rescued

Thane: Police have arrested the manager of a factory for allegedly employing three children as workers at his unit in Thane district of Maharashtra, police said. The Anti-Human Trafficking Cell (AHTC) of the Mira Bhayandar-Vasai Virar Police Commissionerate took the action Friday and rescued the three children.



Criminal activities are on the rise in Bihar and Nitish Kumar government is unable to prevent it

CHIRAG PASWAN | LOK JANSHAKTI PARTY RAM VILASH PRESIDENT

PM IN GOA TODAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Goa today. During his visit, he will inaugurate the Mopa International Airport and also address the valedictory session of the 9th World Ayurveda Congress



Punjab police station hit by rocket launcher



There was no casualty in Friday night's RPG attack in which windowpanes of a building adjoining the Sarhali police station were damaged, officials said

Earlier in May, a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) was fired at the Punjab Police's intelligence headquarters located in Mohali

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tarn Taran (Punjab), Dec 10: A rocket-propelled grenade was fired at a police station in Punjab's border district of Tarn Taran, the second such attack in the state in the last seven months with DGP Gaurav Yadav on Saturday describing it as a "strategy of the neighbouring nation to bleed India by a thousand cuts".

There was no casualty in Friday night's RPG attack in which windowpanes of a building adjoining the Sarhali police station were damaged, officials said. According to preliminary information, it was a military-grade hardware, the DGP said, adding it was suspected to have been smuggled from across the border.

"There is a clear indication that it is a strategy of the neighbouring nation to bleed India by a thousand cuts," the DGP said pointing to Pakistan which has been sponsoring terrorism in India.

In coordination with the BSF and central agencies, the Punjab Police will investigate the matter, he said. Some unidentified people fired the projectile which hit the Saanjh Kendra adjoining the Sarhali police station on the Amritsar-Bathinda highway on Friday night, police said.

Saanjh Kendra centre provides services like copy of FIRs, passport verification and no-objection certificates. Earlier in May, a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) was fired at the Punjab Police's intelligence headquarters located in Mohali.

Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav, who visited the site, said that according to preliminary investigation, the grenade was fired by using an RPG from the highway at 11:22 pm and it hit the Suvidha Centre of the Sarhali po-

Man caught with lover kills son

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dewas, Dec 10: A 45-year-old man allegedly chopped off his minor son's hands and strangled him to death after the latter saw him in a compromising position with a relative in Madhya Pradesh's Dewas district, police said Saturday.

The incident took place in Bangarda village of Barotha police station area on Monday, while the accused and his paramour were arrested on Friday, superintendent of police Dr Shivdayal Singh said.

The accused allegedly chopped off his 15-year-old son's hands and threw them in a 400-feet deep borewell. He then strangled the boy and dumped the body in some bushes close to a field, he said.

lice station. "We have registered an FIR under UAPA (Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act) in this regard," the DGP told the media here. Yadav said police have recovered the rocket launcher and propeller.

"We are investigating technically and forensically. We are collecting clues from the scene of the crime to reconstruct what happened," the DGP said. A forensic team and a squad of the army have reached the site.

The DGP said that the "cowardly attack" was carried out at night as the "enemy nation was feeling rattled" after the seizure of huge quantities of heroin and cache of arms and ammunition in the last one month which were sent through drones.

"This year alone, there were more than 200 drone crossings and in the last one month, several drones were intercepted, heroin, weapons and ammunition seized," he said. "It appears that our enemy nation was feeling rattled and to distract this, the cowardly attack was carried out at night," the DGP said.

The police are exploring all angles and theories. The handlers and operators in Pakistan and elements which were in touch in Europe and North America and their links are also being probed to arrest the real perpetrators, he said.

The DGP further said the movement of drones has increased, especially in Tarn Taran and Amritsar, and last month many drones were shot down.

To a question, the DGP said there appears to be many similarities between this attack and the Mohali RPG attack incident, though forensic details were being examined.

The boy had allegedly seen his father and his 35-year-old aunt in a compromising position. The accused had been in an illicit relationship since the last five years, another officer said. According to the police, the boy's body was found on Tuesday evening and a search was launched for the severed hands.

A post-mortem revealed that the teen had been strangled to death, following which a case of murder was registered against an unidentified person. The boy's father was questioned about why he had not reported his son missing and after hours of grilling, he admitted to the murder, police said. The police have recovered the severed hands and a rope and sickle used in the crime, they said.

Assets of Baghel's aide, others frozen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Top Chhattisgarh government bureaucrats including Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel's deputy secretary Saumya Chaurasia and IAS officer Sameer Vishnoi and some coal traders allegedly linked to them "used" their relatives to create "benami" assets, the ED said Saturday as it attached their properties worth more than ₹150 crore.

The federal probe agency, in a statement, alleged that a "grand conspiracy" was hatched in the natural resources-rich state to perpetrate a coal levy 'scam' in which ₹540 crore has been "extorted" over the last two years.

The ED launched a money laundering investigation into the alleged scam in October after it raided Vishnoi, an Indian Administrative Service officer of the 2009 batch who was working as the CEO of the Chhattisgarh Infotech Promotion Society (Chips).

He had earlier served as the director of the geology and mining department and was the MD of Chhattisgarh Mineral Development Corporation (CMDC) during the incumbent Congress

Bulldozer razes terrorist's house in Pulwama

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 10: The residence of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) militant commander Ashiq Nengroo was demolished by the authorities in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district Saturday, officials said.

The two-storey house at New Colony in Rajpora had come up on state land, the official claimed. It was demolished by the district administration in the presence of police.

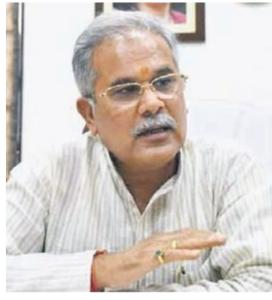
Nengroo is a wanted JeM commander and an accused in the 2019 Pulwama attack in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed. In April this year, the central government declared Nengroo as a "designated terrorist" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.



In a notification, the Union home ministry said Nengroo has been involved in the infiltration of terrorists into Jammu and Kashmir and has also been responsible for perpetrating various terror incidents in the Union Territory.

He is running a terror syndicate in Kashmir and is now "engaged in a perilous campaign to orchestrate terror in Jammu and Kashmir", remote controlled from Pakistan, the ministry had said. Meanwhile, militant outfit The Resistance Front (TRF) opposed the demolition of the house and threatened officials and police personnel with dire consequences.

Police officials, however, sought to downplay the threats issued by TRF a shadow outfit of the JeM, saying this was a desperate attempt by the terrorists who had been cornered.



The federal probe agency, in a statement, alleged that a 'grand conspiracy' was hatched in the natural resources-rich state to perpetrate a coal levy 'scam' in which ₹540 crore has been 'extorted' over the last two years

government led by Chief Minister Baghel. It had undertaken multi-city raids in Chhattisgarh where it also covered the premises of the "main kingpin of the scam" Suryakant Tiwari, his relatives and a few other coal traders. The federal probe agency issued a provisional order for the attachment of some movable and 91 immovable properties like flats, jewellery, coal washeries and plots belonging to the accused in the case, on Friday under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The assets are worth a total ₹152.31 crore, the Enforcement Directorate said.

The frozen assets include 65

properties belonging to Suryakant Tiwari, 21 properties of Chaurasia, a powerful bureaucrat of the state administrative service posted in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), and five assets of Vishnoi apart from that of another coal businessman of Chhattisgarh, Sunil Agarwal and some others.

These include, the ED said, agriculture lands measuring 63.38 acres in Hirri, Potiya and Sevati in Durg district, agriculture lands measuring 10 acres in Rasni and Arang in Raipur and commercial land measuring 12 acres in Thakuraintola (Durg district) and some farmhouses. All these four people, apart from another

businessman Laxmikant Tiwari (uncle of Suryakant Tiwari), have been arrested by the ED in the case. The money laundering case stems from an Income Tax department complaint that was registered following raids by the taxman in June.

The ED investigation relates to "a massive scam in which illegal levy of ₹25 was being extorted for every tonne of coal transported in Chhattisgarh by a cartel involving senior bureaucrats, businessmen, politicians and middlemen", the agency has said. The probe found, it said, an amount of at least ₹540 crore has been "extorted" in the last two years.

"ED has analysed thousands of handwritten diary entries. ED has not merely relied on the diary entries but has done a detailed investigation including bank account analysis, analysis of seized WhatsApp chats, recording of the statements (of about 100 individuals), etc. To corroborate the diary entries, "ED has unravelled the modus operandi where influential members of the extortion syndicate like Suryakant Tiwari, Saumya Chaurasia, Sameer Vishnoi, etc. Have used their relatives to create benami assets," it alleged.



Devotees participate in the annual Jagannath Rath Yatra in Amritsar

PTI PHOTO

Child sexual abuse still a hidden issue, says CJI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Sexual abuse of children remains a hidden problem as there is a culture of silence and therefore the state must encourage families to report abuse even where the perpetrator is a family member, Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said Saturday.

Speaking at a two-day national programme on the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the CJI said it is an unfortunate fact that the criminal justice system functions in a way that sometimes compounds the victims' trauma and the executive must therefore join hands with the judiciary to prevent this from happening.

"The long-lasting implications



The CJI said the families of victims are hesitant to file a complaint with the police. So one must be very careful about entrusting excessive powers to the police

of child sexual abuse make it imperative for the state and other stakeholders to create awareness regarding the prevention of child sexual abuse and its timely recognition and the remedy available in law. Children must be taught the difference between safe touch and unsafe touch. While this was previously couched as good touch and bad touch, child rights activists have urged parents to use

the word safe and unsafe because the word good and bad have moral implications and may prevent them from reporting the abuse. "Above all, there is an urgent need to ensure that the so-called honour of the family is not prioritised above the best interest of the child." He said the state must encourage the families to report abuse even when the perpetrator is a family member.

Kashmir valley soon to get connected by train with rest of India

In this direction, the Railways recently completed a major portion of work on the longest rail tunnel in the country in the Ramban sector of Jammu region

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, Dec 10: Jammu and Kashmir will have a lot of positive things to look forward in 2023. The Kashmir valley will get connected with rest of India through train as all the bottlenecks at the railway tracks would be removed.

In this direction, the Railways recently completed a major portion of work on the longest rail tunnel in the country in the Ramban sector of Jammu region.

The project manager of this tunnel said that major portion of the work on the rail tunnel which is 12.75 km long in the entire Udhampur-Baramulla-Srinagar Rail (UBSR) Link in Jammu and

Kashmir, has been completed. The engineers have named this tunnel as T49, and they are very keen to complete it as soon as possible so that Kashmir valley is linked by train to the rest of the country. The project manager said that it was very difficult to complete so much of work on this tunnel as it surpasses the Peer Panjal Tunnel (11.2 km) in length and the work has been very challenging so far.

This all-weather and cost-effective connectivity shall prove to be a boon for the economy of Jammu and Kashmir besides catalysing industrialisation, movement of raw materials, trade, tourism and employment generation as well, stated a monthly newsletter cov-



ering government policies and initiatives. After completion, this line will be an all-weather convenient and cost-effective mass transportation system and will act as a catalyst for the overall development of the northern most alpine region of the country, reported the Greater Kashmir.

Sustainable connectivity to this region is very important for national security, prosperity and socio-economic development of the region. Despite vast resources, Kashmir valley lagged behind in terms of development due to a lack of railway connectivity. Time to time, the Central and the UT governments

made serious efforts to establish rail connectivity to the region for which a number of railway projects have been initiated which are under execution in different stages.

Constructing the railway route to this isolated region has involved significant engineering challenges. Far from being an ordinary scheme, the 345 km route crosses major earthquake zones, and is subjected to extreme temperatures of cold and heat, as well as inhospitable terrain.

Further proposals emerged in the mid-20th century, but it wasn't until 1994 that Indian Railway Minister Jaffer Sharief made headway in building a line to Baramulla and the Kashmir Valley.

In 2001, the Kashmir Railway

received National Project Status from the Central government and has seen unlimited funds provided to it. The Railway Ministry itself does not have sufficient funds to tackle the project. Institutions like IIT Delhi, IIT Roorkee, Geographical Survey of India and DRDO are providing expertise in the project planning and its implementation. This route will also see the construction of the world's highest railway bridge and India's first cable-stayed Railway Bridge, reported the Greater Kashmir. It is one of the most remarkable projects by the government and once completed will be revolutionary for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

# international

## of the day quote

The reports of atrocities and other crimes committed by the M23 and other armed groups are gravely concerning

BINTOU KEITA | UN SECY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR CONGO

We just have to be really careful not to agree to pay demands that have the opposite of the intended effect, and lock in high inflation

JEREMY HUNT | BRITISH FM

A case in point is Haiti where armed gangs, reportedly supported by economic and political elites, control more than 60 per cent of the capital

VOLKER TURK | UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

## SHORT TAKES

### Hostage situation ends in Dresden

Berlin: German police say they have ended a hostage situation in the eastern city of Dresden, following reports of shots fired Saturday morning. Police had urged people to avoid an area in the city center and ordered Dresden's Christmas market to remain closed while the operation was underway. Shortly after noon police announced on Twitter that the hostage situation was over. "Two outwardly uninjured people are in our care," they added. It wasn't immediately clear whether the suspect had been arrested. Radio Dresden reported that a gunman earlier tried to enter a building where the broadcaster is based, near the city's main train station.

### Peru's new Prez hints at early polls

Lima: Peru's new President Dina Boluarte acknowledged the possibility of holding the next elections earlier than scheduled amid protests. "If the situation warrants it," the government will be in talks with the political and democratic forces of Congress on bringing forward elections, Boluarte told local media Friday. Boluarte took office Wednesday when Congress impeached her predecessor Pedro Castillo just hours after his failed attempt to dissolve the legislature, reports said.

### Sikh woman stabbed to death

Toronto: A 40-year-old Sikh woman died in Canada after being stabbed multiple times at her home in Surrey, British Columbia, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said. Police said they found Harpreet Kaur suffering from multiple and life-threatening stab wounds in a home in the 12700-block 66 Avenue just before 9.30 pm on Wednesday, the CBC News reported. Kaur's husband was taken in as a suspect but has since been released. She was taken to hospital, where she succumbed to her injuries.

### SL bans transport of beef, mutton

Colombo: Sri Lanka Saturday suspended the transportation of beef and mutton at district and provincial levels after a large number of cattle and goats died in the last two days due to unusually cold weather in areas of north and eastern provinces. President Ranil Wickremesinghe issued the orders to ensure public health safety, officials said. According to the statistics by the Department of Animal Production and Health, 358 cattle and 191 goats have died in the northern province, while 444 cattle, 34 buffaloes and 65 goats died in the eastern province.

# Russia grinds on in eastern Ukraine

AGENCIES

Kyiv, Dec 10: Russian forces have turned the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut into ruins, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, while Ukraine's military Saturday reported missile, rocket and air strikes in multiple parts of the country that Moscow is trying to conquer after months of resistance.

The latest battles of Russia's 9 1/2 month war in Ukraine have centered on four provinces that Russian President Vladimir Putin triumphantly — and illegally — claimed to have annexed in late September.

Zelenskyy said the situation "remains very difficult" in several frontline cities in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk provinces. Together, the provinces make up the Donbas, an expansive industrial region bordering Russia that Putin identified as a focus from the war's outset and where Moscow-backed separatists have fought since 2014. "Bakhmut, Soledar, Maryinka, Kreminka. For a long time, there is no living place left on the land of these areas that have not been damaged by shells and fire," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address, naming cities that have again found themselves in the crosshairs. Some buildings remain standing in Bakhmut, and the remaining residents still mill about the streets. But like Mariupol and other contested cities, it endured a long siege and spent weeks without water and power even before Moscow launched massive strikes to take out public utilities across Ukraine.

The Donetsk region's governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko, estimated seven weeks ago that 90% of the city's prewar population of over 70,000 had fled in the months since Moscow focused on seizing the entire Donbas.

The Ukrainian military General

## Ukraine gets more US aid

KYIV: The United States announced new military aid for Ukraine on Friday and vowed to disrupt Russian ties with Iran, which a British envoy said involved Moscow seeking hundreds of ballistic missiles and offering unprecedented military support in return. Tehran and Moscow have denied Western accusations that Russia is using Iranian drones to attack targets in Ukraine, where officials warned Friday of a winter-long power deficit after repeated Russian attacks on its energy infrastructure.

Staff reported missile attacks, about 20 airstrikes and more than 60 rocket attacks across Ukraine between Friday and Saturday. Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun said the most active fighting was in the Bakhmut district, where more than 20 populated places came under fire. He said Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks in Donetsk and neighboring Luhansk.

Meanwhile, the winners of this year's Nobel Peace Prize from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine shared their visions of a fairer world and denounced Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine during Saturday's award ceremony in the Norwegian capital. Oleksandra Matviichuk of Ukraine's Center for Civil Liberties dismissed calls for a political compromise that would allow Russia to retain some of the illegally annexed Ukrainian territories, saying that "fighting for peace does not mean yielding to pressure of the aggressor; it means protecting people from its cruelty."



## ANTI-HIJAB PROTESTS Iran again summons UK, German envoys

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Tehran, Dec 10: Iran Saturday again called in the British ambassador, marking the 15th time in less than three months a foreign envoy has been summoned, as protests shake the country. The foreign ministry called in British ambassador Simon Shercliff, a day



after his German counterpart, Hans-Udo Muzel, had to appear, the state news agency IRNA said.

This brings to at least 15 times in about 10 weeks the number of times envoys, almost all from Western countries, have been summoned.

"This is a reaction of Iranian diplomacy to unprecedented pressure against Iran," IRNA said. Shercliff has now been summoned five times since the demonstrations sparked by the death of Kurdish-Iranian woman Mahsa Amini, 22.

She died in custody on September 16 after her arrest by the morality police in Tehran for allegedly violating the country's strict dress code for women. Iran calls the protests "riots" and says they have been encouraged by its foreign foes.



Imran Khan needs to consider, there are so many allegations against him with evidence mounting of his alleged corruption  
NAWAZ SHARIF | DEPOSED PAK PM

## PAK CLERIC SANCTIONED BY UK

A Muslim cleric from Pakistan who is accused of being responsible for forced conversions and marriages of girls and women from religious minorities, including Hindus, is among 30 human rights violators, corrupt officials and entities to be sanctioned by the UK



Protesters destroy an effigy of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during a rally as they commemorate International Human Rights Day in Manila, Philippines. Hundreds of people marched in the Philippine capital Saturday protesting what they said was a rising number of extrajudicial killings and other injustices under the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr

# Massive protest against Hasina's govt in Dhaka

Tension was high in the capital after security forces stormed the headquarters of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party Tuesday

AGENCIES

Dhaka, Dec 10: Tens of thousands of supporters of Bangladesh's main Opposition party BNP Saturday held a "grand rally" in the capital here demanding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation and fresh elections.

Seven lawmakers of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) announced their resignations to protest against the government led by Hasina. Dhaka's Golapbagh area, the venue of the rally, was under heavy security surveillance. The party activists chanted "Sheikh Hasina is a vote thief" as the party leaders addressed the rally eastern part of the capital Dhaka city.

Residents of the capital, including office-goers, faced difficulties and many were seen waiting for public transport on the road since morning. Activists say the rally could attract 1 million people. The ruling Awami League activists also staged several pro-govern-



ment processions. Seven BNP lawmakers announced their resignation at the rally. "We had joined the Parliament in line with the party's decision but now there is no difference between staying or quitting... We have already emailed our resignations (to parliament secretariat)," BNP lawmaker Rumin Farhana told the rally.

She called the incumbent government an "autocratic" one and

alleged it came to power by "rigging the polls", torturing the Opposition party leaders, carrying out forced disappearances, extra-judicial killings, and engaging in corruption. "I am resigning in protest (against the government activities)," Farhana said, adding that she and six other fellow BNP lawmakers would deliver their resignations by hand to the Speaker's office Sunday.

## NARCOTICS CASE Pak court acquits interior minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, Dec 10: A Pakistani court Saturday acquitted the country's Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah in a narcotics case filed against him during the previous administration led by ousted premier Imran Khan.

The minister from the ruling PML-N, who is very close to party supremo and former premier Nawaz Sharif, was arrested in July 2019 by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Lahore team near Ravi Toll Plaza on the motorway. He was travelling from Faisalabad to Lahore. The ANF claimed to have



recovered 15 kg of heroin from his vehicle, while it arrested five others, including Sanaullah's driver and security guards. He was twice denied bail by the trial court but the Lahore High Court released him on December 24, 2019. During the hearing Saturday, two ANF officers retracted their previous statements and dismissed the charges against Sanaullah. "Two officers of ANF - Assistant Director Intiaz Ahmed and Inspector Ehsaan Azam - told a special court of Lahore that suspect Rana Sanaullah is innocent as no drug whatsoever was recovered from his vehicle during an ANF raid in July 2019," a court official said. In their affidavit submitted to the court, both officers said they were present when Sanaullah's vehicle was intercepted and he was arrested on the pretext that 15-kg heroin was recovered from it.

# HK tycoon Jimmy Lai jailed on fraud charge

REUTERS

Hong Kong, Dec 10: Pro-democracy Hong Kong tycoon Jimmy Lai was sentenced Saturday to five years and nine months in prison for fraud, convicted of violating a lease contract for the headquarters of a liberal newspaper he used to run.

Lai, 75, was found guilty of two counts of fraud for covering up the operations of a private company, Dico Consultants Ltd, at the headquarters of the now shuttered



Apple Daily newspaper, in what was ruled a breach of its land lease. Hong Kong's most prominent China critic, Lai has been behind bars since December 2020 and has

served 20 months for unauthorised assemblies. He was the head of Next Digital, the parent company of Apple Daily that shut down in June 2021 after a police raid.

Another Next Digital executive, Wong Kai-kung, 61, was found guilty of fraud and jailed for 21 months.

District Court Judge Stanley Chan wrote in a judgement that Lai had "acted under the protective umbrella of a media organization". Chan said this prosecution of a

media tycoon "wasn't equivalent to an attack on press freedom."

The judge deducted three months from his sentence as Lai had acknowledged much of the prosecution's case

Western governments including the United States have expressed concern about Lai's plight and condemned what they call a broader deterioration in protection for human rights and fundamental freedoms under a China-imposed National Security Law.

# Human activity devastating marine species: IUCN

Population of dugongs -- large herbivorous marine mammals -- and 44 per cent of all abalone shellfish species enter the IUCN Red List as threatened with extinction; the pillar coral has deteriorated to critically endangered due to accumulated pressures

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Montreal, Dec 10: The update to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species highlights a barrage of threats affecting marine species, including illegal and unsustainable fishing, pollution, climate change and disease.

The IUCN Red List now includes 150,388 species, of which 42,108 are threatened with extinction. More than 1,550 of the 17,903 marine animals and plants assessed are at risk of extinction, with climate change impacting at least 41 per cent of threatened marine species. "Today's IUCN Red List update

reveals a perfect storm of unsustainable human activity decimating marine life around the globe. As the world looks to the ongoing UN biodiversity conference to set the course for nature recovery, we simply cannot afford to fail," said Bruno Oberle, IUCN Director General. "We urgently need to address the linked climate and biodiversity crises, with profound changes to our economic systems, or we risk losing the crucial benefits the oceans provide us with."

Abalone species are sold as some of the world's most expensive seafood, with unsustainable extraction and poaching primary



threats compounded by climate change, disease and pollution.

Twenty of the world's 54 abalone species are now threatened with extinction, according to the first global Red List assessment of these species.

In South Africa, poaching by criminal networks, many connected to the international drugs trade, have devastated population of the endangered perlemoen abalone (Haliotis midae). Increasingly frequent and severe marine heat-

waves have caused mass mortalities, killing 99 per cent of Roe's abalones (H. roei) in its most northerly reaches of Western Australia in 2011.

Marine heatwaves have exacerbated abalone diseases worldwide, affecting the critically endangered black abalone (H. cracherodii) in California and Mexico, and the vulnerable green ormer (H. tuberculata), found from the English Channel to Northwest Africa and

the Mediterranean.

Marine heatwaves also kill the algae that abalones depend on for food. Pollution from agricultural and industrial run-off cause harmful algal blooms, which have eliminated the endangered Omani abalone (H. mariae), a commercial species found in the Arabian Peninsula, across half of its range. Toxins such as antifouling boat paint further deplete population. Dugong population in East Africa and New Caledonia have entered the IUCN Red List as critically endangered and endangered respectively; the species remains vulnerable globally.

There are now fewer than 250 mature individuals in East Africa and under 900 in New Caledonia. The primary threats are unintentional capture in fishing gear in East Africa and poaching in New Caledonia, and boat injuries in both locations.

## of the day quote

We will invest up to Rs 150 crore over the next three years to expand our business. It will be our own funding. We are not going to raise it from the market

**AAKANKSHA BHARGAVA** | CEO, PM RELOCATIONS

India has often been compared to other developed economies in terms of apprenticeship opportunities for the youth of today. To bridge this gap, we are trying our best to make apprenticeship opportunities reachable to trainees and students

**ATUL KUMAR TIWARI** | SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

We are pleased to enter into a partnership with Tamilnad Mercantile Bank. I am happy to share that we are aligned across several business parameters, the most essential being fulfilling customers' long-term financial goals through simple yet effective products

**S KRISHNAN** | MD AND CEO, TAMILNAD MERCANTILE BANK

## SHORT TAKES

### V-Guard acquires SEPL for ₹660cr

**Kochi:** Kochi-based V-Guard Industries (V-Guard) Saturday announced the signing of definitive agreements for acquiring 100 per cent stake in Sunflame Enterprises Private Ltd. (SEPL) for Rs 660 crore. The all-cash deal is expected to close by mid of January 2023, said a top V-Guard official and it would be funded through a mix of internal accruals and debt. The acquisition is in line with V-Guard's strategy to become a significant player in the domestic Kitchen Appliances segment. The Sunflame brand has a pan India presence with a strong brand recall.

### IOB revises interest rates

**Chennai:** Public sector Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has revised the interest rates on its domestic, foreign currency non-resident (banking) term deposits with immediate effect, the city-based lender said Saturday. Depositors of domestic, non-resident external would receive interest rates up to 7.30 per cent by opening a term deposit with a tenure of 444 days and up to 7.25 per cent for a period of three years and above, Indian Overseas Bank said in a statement here. Foreign currency depositors shall be paid an interest rate up to 4.25 per cent by opening FCNR (B) term deposits with the bank.

### Adani's nominees on NDTV Board

**Chennai:** The Board of New Delhi Television Ltd (NDTV) has approved a proposal to invite the Adani Group's RRPR Holding Private Ltd to nominate two Directors to the former's Board. The decision was taken at the Board meeting of NDTV that was held Friday and intimated to the bourses later in the day. RRPR Holding hold 29.18 per cent stake in NDTV. The appointment will be considered in the next meeting of Board of Directors, scheduled to be held December 23, NDTV said.

### Netlink Digital, Xebia ink pact

**Chennai:** Netlink Digital Solutions Group, part of the US-based Netlink Software Group, has inked a pact with information technology consultancy and software development company Xebia for setting up its office in the city, the company said.



**India's public sector capital expenditure will continue, but may not need to expand at the same pace as it has in recent years**

**V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN** | CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISER, INDIA

## BMW LINES UP EIGHT LAUNCHES

With 2022 turning out to be the best ever year in terms of sales, luxury carmaker BMW India expects volume to remain robust in 2023 as well as it looks to drive in multiple products, including electric sedan i7. The carmaker, which sells products under BMW and Mini brands in the car segment and bikes under BMW Motorrad, is all set to introduce eight products over the next eight weeks in the country



## Musk likely to lose world's richest title

The abrupt decision to buy Twitter in April has put Musk in a difficult spot and at the risk of losing the famed title

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**London, Dec 10:** Tesla has lost nearly half its market value since its founder, Elon Musk, bid for Twitter in April, reducing his net worth by about \$70 billion and putting his title as world's richest person at risk.

Shares in the electric car company traded at \$340.79 April 13, the day before Twitter revealed in a securities filing that the billionaire had made a hostile bid to buy the social media company for \$43.4 billion, the Guardian reported.

Since then the Tesla share price has plunged by 49 per cent to \$173.44, also due to concerns

**Musk's net worth drops nearly \$70 billion**

**Tesla shares dip 49% after Twitter buy call**

**Musk sold \$20 billion of Tesla shares for Twitter**

Twitter's new boss Elon Musk who is also the CEO of electric carmaker Tesla and spacecraft engineering firm SpaceX briefly lost the spot of the world's wealthiest person to France's luxury goods brand LVMH's Bernard Arnault and family Wednesday

around disruptions at one of its factories in Shanghai. The Tesla boss has sold \$20 billion of Tesla shares since April to

fund the buyout. This means his claim to be the planet's wealthiest person is under threat, with France's

Bernard Arnault, chief executive of the luxury group LVMH, snapping at his heels. On Wednesday, share movements meant Arnault briefly took top spot, The Guardian reported.

However, Tesla shareholders worry about how he is dividing his time between the social media site and his many other ventures such as the rocket company SpaceX, and that running Twitter is too much of a distraction.

He is under pressure to turn around Twitter, which was already struggling before he bought it, making a \$221 million net loss last year, the Guardian reported.

## Air India nears deal for 150 Boeing 737 Max jets

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Dec 10:** Air India is close to signing an order with Boeing Co to acquire up to 150 737 Max jets, the Economic Times newspaper reported Saturday, citing sources.

The Tata Group-owned Indian carrier will likely place a firm order for 50 737 Max jets with an option to pick up as many as 150, the ET report said.

Industry sources had said in July that Air India was moving closer to a decision on a mega order worth \$50 billion at list prices to be split between Airbus and Boeing, which included up to 300 narrow-

body and 70 wide-body jets.

The reported order would be a win for Boeing, which has said that it was looking to boost its capacity in India to keep pace with rising demand in the world's fastest-growing major aviation market.

Boeing's last mega order in India came in 2021 when low-cost airline Akasa struck a deal to buy 72 737 MAX jets, valued at nearly \$9 billion at list prices.

Indian skies are dominated by low-cost carriers including IndiGo, SpiceJet and AirAsia India, with majority of them operating Airbus narrow-body planes. SpiceJet, Boeing's biggest customer in India, has 155 MAX planes on order.

## BSNL's total net loss ₹57,671 crore since its inception

MTNL LOSS STANDS AT ₹14,989 CRORE

High employee cost over the years, debt burden, stiff competition in the market, and lack of 4G services are the reasons for losses of BSNL, MTNL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 10:** Since inception, the total net loss of BSNL is Rs 57,671 crore while that of MTNL is Rs 14,989 crore as March 31, 2022, the Parliament was told Friday.

As per the Ministry of Communication, the reasons for losses of the BSNL and the MTNL are high employee cost over the years, debt burden, stiff competition in the market, and lack of 4G services (except on a limited basis in certain areas).

"On October 23, 2019, the government approved the revival plan for BSNL and MTNL. It inter-alia approved the reduction in employee costs through Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS), debt restructuring by raising of sovereign guarantee bonds, administrative allotment of spectrum for 4G services through capital infusion, monetisation of core and non-core assets, and in-principle approval of merger of BSNL and MTNL," the Rajya Sabha was told in a written reply.

As a result of these, BSNL and MTNL have become EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and amortization) positive since the financial year 2020-21.

Further, to transform BSNL into a viable public sector undertaking, the government approved a revival package for BSNL amounting to Rs 1.64 lakh crore July 27, 2022.

The revival measures focus on infusing fresh capital for upgrading BSNL services, allocating spectrum, de-stressing its balance sheet and augmenting its fibre network by merging Bharat Broadband Nigam Ltd (BBNL) with BSNL. With the implementation of these measures, BSNL is expected to turn-around and become a profit earning entity, said the Ministry.

The Ministry informed that BSNL and MTNL have been playing a crucial role along with private telecom players in the development of the telecom infrastructure and expansion of telecom services.

BSNL and MTNL are important for implementing citizen centric schemes of the Government of India especially in the rural and remote un-covered areas.

BSNL has provided 24,58,827 FTTH connections as on September 30, 2022. Further, in line with the Atma-nirbhar initiative of the Government, BSNL was directed to deploy the Indian 4G stack. BSNL has floated the tender in October 2022 for its requirement of 1 lakh 4G sites, it added.

In late November, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and state-run ITI Limited submitted their bids for the roll out of BSNL's commercial fourth-generation or 4G network.

The merger of MTNL with BSNL, however, has been put on the backburner due to the high debt of the former telecom PSU



## Paytm buyback shows firm believes shares below intrinsic value

Social media is already abuzz with speculations about Paytm's move, with some even comparing the company's proposed move to Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway, a top US multinational conglomerate

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 10:** Paytm, India's leading mobile payments and financial services company, has informed the exchanges about its plans to buyback shares as its management believes that it will be beneficial for its shareholders.

The company said that its decision for the same comes from its strong financial position and liquidity. A board meeting will be held December 13 for the ap-

proval of the company's first ever share buyback.

Paytm's announcement has been welcomed by investors and analysts as the company's stock surged sharply during Friday's trading session.

A Twitter user pointed out how Paytm's proposed buyback move is quite like how Berkshire Hathaway has done it in the past, at a point when management believes shares are under their intrinsic value and its cash reserves



aren't greatly impacted. It may be noted that Berkshire Hathaway

is an investor in Paytm. The user also attached a

## THE DOMINANCE GAME

# In Saudi, Xi calls for oil, gas trade in yuan

THIS WOULD SUPPORT BEIJING'S GOAL TO ESTABLISH ITS CURRENCY INTERNATIONALLY AND COMES AT A TIME WHEN CHINESE FIRMS ARE FACING REGULATORY CONCERNS IN US AND ARE LEAVING THE TECH HUB

REUTERS

**Riyadh, Dec 10:** President Xi Jinping told Gulf Arab leaders that China would work to buy oil and gas in yuan, a move that would support Beijing's goal to establish its currency internationally and weaken the US dollar's grip on world trade.

Top oil exporter Saudi Arabia and economic giant China both sent strong messages during Xi's visit on "non-interference" at a time when Riyadh's relationship with Washington has been tested over human rights, energy policy and Russia.

Any move by Saudi Arabia to ditch the dollar in its oil trade would be a seismic political move, which Riyadh had previously threatened in the face of possible US legislation exposing OPEC members to antitrust lawsuits.

At the start of talks, Prince Mohammed heralded a "historic new phase of relations with China", a sharp contrast with the awkward US-Saudi meetings five months ago when President Joe Biden attended a smaller Arab summit in Riyadh.

Asked about his country's relations with Washington in light of the warmth shown to Xi, Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said Saudi Arabia would continue to work with all its partners. "We don't see this as a zero sum game," he said.

"We do not believe in polarisation or in choosing between sides," the prince told a news conference after the talks.

Though Saudi Arabia and China signed several strategic and economic partnership deals, analysts said relations would remain anchored mostly by energy interests, though Chinese firms have made forays into technology and infrastructure sectors.

"Energy concerns will remain front and centre of relations," Robert Mogielnicki, senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States

Move aims to weaken dollar's grip globally

Saudi had inked MoU with China's Huawei

Riyadh is also a top oil supplier to China

### China would also make full use of the Shanghai Petroleum and National Gas Exchange as a platform to carry out yuan settlement of oil and gas trade

XI JINPING | PRESIDENT, CHINA

Institute in Washington, told Reuters. "The Chinese and Saudi governments will also be looking to support their national champions and other private sector actors to move forward with trade and investment deals. There will be more cooperation on the tech side of things too, prompting familiar concerns from Washington."

Saudi Arabia agreed a memorandum of understanding with Huawei this week on cloud computing and building high-tech complexes in Saudi cities. The Chinese tech giant has participated in building 5G networks in Gulf states despite US concerns over a possible security risk in using its technology.

**NATURAL PARTNERS** Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies have defied US pressure to limit dealings with China and break with fellow OPEC+ oil producer Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, as they try to navigate a polarised

world order with an eye on national economic and security interests.

Riyadh is a top oil supplier to China and the two countries reaffirmed in a joint statement the importance of global market stability and energy collaboration, while striving to boost non-oil trade and enhance cooperation in peaceful nuclear power

Xi said Beijing would continue to import large quantities of oil from Gulf Arab countries and expand imports of liquefied natural gas, adding that their countries were natural partners who would cooperate further in upstream oil and gas development.

Beijing has been lobbying for use of its yuan currency in trade instead of the US dollar.

A Saudi source, speaking before Xi's visit, told Reuters that a decision to sell small amounts of oil in yuan to China could make sense in order to pay Chinese imports directly, but "it is not yet the right time".

Most of Saudi Arabia's assets and reserves are in dollars including more than \$120 billion of US Treasuries that Riyadh holds, and the Saudi riyal, like other Gulf currencies, is pegged to the dollar.

## Nov fuel demand at 8-month peak

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Dec 10:** India's fuel demand climbed to an eight-month high in November; government data showed, as festivals and a pick-up in industrial activity boosted sales in the world's No 3 oil consumer.

Consumption of fuel, a proxy for oil demand, was 2.4% higher than the previous month, and rose 10.2% year-on-year to 18.84 million tonne in November, according to the data from Indian oil ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC).

"The festive season has been supporting oil demand growth," said Refinitiv analyst Ehsan Ul Haq.

"Demand growth might slow slightly in the next few months as present expansion has been from a low base, but since the Indian economy is robust, we'll continue to see high consumption numbers," Ul Haq added.

Retail sales always peak during October-November, when the nation of 1.4 billion celebrates major festivals of Dussehra and Diwali.

India's factory activity in November expanded at its fastest pace in three months to 55.7, compared with 55.3 in October, showed the Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index, compiled by S&P Global.

Sales of diesel, which account for about four-fifth of India's refined fuel demand, were up 19.1% from 2021 at 7.76 million tonne, while sales of gasoline, or petrol, rose 8.1% at 2.86 million tonne, the PPAC data showed.

The rise in diesel demand "points to a strong economy," said Ul Haq, noting a pick-up in private as well as public transport demand along with a recovery in demand from the agricultural sector after the monsoon season.

Cooking gas or liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) sales increased 5.2% to 2.47 million tonne, while naphtha sales fell 18.2% to 1.01 million tonne.

Sales of bitumen, used for making roads, rose 30.3% while fuel oil use edged up 8.4% in November.



# ARGENTINA REACH SEMIS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Lusail, Dec 10:** Lionel Messi started the match by delivering another soccer clinic. The Argentina superstar ended it sporting a bloodied top lip, shouting abuse to opponents and even blasting the referee.

And of course there were goals, too, for one of the greats of the game whose bid to win the World Cup for the first time is still on track.

Messi is heading to the semifinals with Argentina after a chaotic penalty shootout victory over Netherlands that had just about everything on Friday.

Argentina took a 2-0 lead, conceded an equalizer in the 11th minute of second-half stoppage time to send the match to extra time at 2-2, and then won the shootout 4-3 amid a deafening noise inside Lusail Stadium.

Messi, who scored a penalty in regulation time, converted his penalty in the shootout while goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez made two saves to help Argentina secure a semifinal match against Croatia, which beat Brazil earlier Friday.

After Lautaro Martinez scored

the clinching penalty, Messi — with his arms outstretched — sprinted toward the goalkeeper, who had fallen to the ground to the side of the goal, and lay on top of him.

Messi did, especially, in an often violent match that featured 17 yellow cards — a record for a World Cup match — two of which went to Netherlands defender Denzel Dumfries, leading to him getting sent off after the game.

In a side of Messi rarely seen, he also broke off from his post-match interview on the field to shout abuse at the scorer of the Netherlands' two goals, Wout Weghorst. "What are you looking at, stupid?" Messi was

**THE HEROES:** Lionel Messi joins goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez for celebration after the penalty shootout, Friday

heard saying.

Messi and his teammates hung around on the field for 20 minutes at the end, taking turns dancing and jumping up and down in front of Argentina's celebrating, scarf-waving fans.

Messi said the late Diego Maradona was looking over the team. "Diego is watching us from heaven," Messi said of the former Argentina captain and coach who died two years ago. "He is pushing us. I hope it stays like that until the end."

It is only the second time Argentina has reached the last four since 1990. In 2014, Messi was part of the team that lost to Germany in the final and he looks in the mood to get there again in a tournament that he is turning into his own personal highlight reel.

Messi delivered a mesmerizing piece of skill and vision to set up the opening goal for Nahuel Molina in the 35th minute. He twisted free in central midfield and burst forward, unbalancing Netherlands defender Nathan Ake and then delivering a no-look reverse pass for Molina to finish for his first international goal.

His penalty in the 73rd minute, which came after Marcus Acuna was tripped by Dumfries, was his fourth goal of the tournament and

took him to 10 overall in the World Cup — tied with Gabriel Batistuta for the most for Argentina. Messi now has 94 goals in his 169 international games.

His team trailing 0-2, Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal sent on two tall strikers — Weghorst and Luuk De Jong — and even told center back Virgil van Dijk to play up front. The game suddenly changed.

Weghorst glanced in a header from a right-wing cross in the 78th — five minutes after coming on — and then scored the latest second-half goal in a knockout-stage game at a World Cup.

Off a cleverly worked free-kick routine learned by Weghorst at his Turkish club, Besiktas, Teun Koopmeiners feigned to take a shot at goal from the edge of the area but instead played it short and low into the middle of the area. It deceived the Argentine defense as Weghorst took a touch, held off his marker and slotted home a finish on the stretch.

Enzo Fernandez hit the post near the end of extra time and was then the only Argentine player to fail to score in the shootout. Martinez's saves were from attempts by Van Dijk and Steven Berghuis, after which he pulled his shorts high and danced a jig.

# Ishan overshadows Virat feat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chattogram, Dec 10:** Ishan Kishan (210, 131b, 24x4, 10x6) was an epitome of insane power-hitting as his record-breaking fastest double hundred provided a healing touch in India's crushing 227-run consolation victory over Bangladesh in the inconsequential third ODI here Saturday.

Despite the record margin of victory — biggest by any team against Bangladesh, the 1-2 series defeat will certainly rattle the Indian team as both matches slipped away from their grasp after being in pole position.

Virat Kohli (113, 91b, 11x4, 2x6) struck his 44th ODI hundred, which helped him surpass Australian great Ricky Ponting's 71 international centuries. Kohli now has 72 international centuries (44 in ODIs, 27 in Tests and 1 in T20Is) to his name, with only Sachin Tendulkar (100 centuries) ahead of him in the list.

The century came Kohli's way after nearly 40 months of barren spell but it was easily overshadowed by Kishan's blitzkrieg as his splendid knock formed the cornerstone of India's mammoth total of 409/8 after back-to-back inept batting performances.

The total was always going to be insurmountable and Bangladesh were never in contention as they were bowled out for 182 in 34 overs with all the Indian bowlers being amongst wickets.

Axar Patel (2/22), Shardul Thakur (3/30), Umran Malik (2/43), Mohammed Siraj (1/27) and Kuldeep Yadav (1/53) never really allowed the home team batters to dominate as they shared the spoils among themselves.

Kishan's blistering innings and the intent he showed while catching Bangladesh attack by the scruff of its neck would definitely put the team management under pressure to take some tough calls as it moves into the World Cup year. In fact, such was his domination that Rohit Sharma's world record ODI score of 264 was in danger of being history.

Apart from Rohit's three double tons, the two other Indian batters to achieve the feat are maestro Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag. Having completed his maiden ODI century in 85 balls, Kishan batted in T20 mode as records kept on tumbling. That 156 of his runs came in sixes and boundaries tells a lot about the relentless assault he unleashed on the Bangladeshi bowlers.

The West Indies' Chris Gayle held the previous record with his 138-ball double ton against Zimbabwe in 2015. After touching the three-figure mark, Kishan raced to next 100 runs in just 41 balls.



VIRAT KOHLI

**I got out with 15 (14.1) overs left. I could have got 300 also. (And) I am blessed to hear my name between such legends (double centurions for India - Sachin, Sehwag and Rohit)**

**I was batting with Virat bhai, and he was spot on with which bowlers I needed to select (to target). I was on 95 and wanted to bring up the hundred with a six but he calmed me down, saying it was my first hundred, get it in singles as it's your first**

ISHAN KISHAN

**BRIEF SCORES**  
India 409/8 (Ishan Kishan 210, Virat Kohli 113; Shakib Al Hasan 2/68) beat Bangladesh 182 (Shakib Al Hasan 43; Shardul Thakur 3/30, Axar Patel 2/22, Umran Malik 2/43) by 227 runs.



**HEAT IS ON:** Players of Argentina and the Netherlands involve in a fight

# Dhawan begin new innings in different field

AGENCIES

**Abu Dhabi, Dec 10:** Indian opener Shikhar Dhawan Saturday became the first Asian sportsman to launch a venture capitalist fund that will focus on innovation across sports spectrum.

The USD 75 million global investment fund consists of a green-shoe option of USD 25 million, stated the announcement made during the annual Abu Dhabi Global Market Finance Week here.

"I am elated to start a new innings and embark on this journey in the world of venture capital," Dhawan said in a release. "All this would not have been possible without the support of my commercial partners and the founding team's commitment to this fund, in readiness for this week's announcement and targeted deployment in Q1 2023-24."

"Da One Global Ventures (DOGV) will go beyond traditional investing models and will provide domain knowledge and unprecedented access to the sporting ecosystem across the globe. We are making a humble beginning but aim to scale this to greater heights and aspire to set new benchmarks for leading in Venture Capital, Sports and Technology. I have much gratitude to sports & I look forward to the contribution of this fund to the economic strength and growth of it," he added.

Dhawan has established a globally enriched and seasoned founding team who will lead the fund's investment thesis across the spectrum of Sports to include technology, esports, gaming, web3 & more. The deployment of funds will be global in nature, as is the LP community.

This year has been a spectacular year for SportsTech with investments to the tune of 12 billion dollars already. That is more than the total of the preceding three years combined and multiple segments illustrating rapid growth in this dynamic industry.

# MOROCCO'S DREAM RUN CONTINUES

*En-Nesyri header helps Morocco to pull off one of the biggest upsets in FIFA World Cup history as they send Portugal, Ronaldo packing to become the first African nation to reach the semifinals*

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Doha, Dec 10:** Morocco became the first African nation to reach the World Cup semifinals by beating Portugal 1-0 Saturday, likely ending Cristiano Ronaldo's chances of ever winning football's biggest prize.

Youssef En-Nesyri scored the winning goal in the 42nd minute to continue Morocco's improbable run that has generated an outpouring of pride in the Arab world during the first World Cup to be staged in the Middle East.

The 37-year-old Ronaldo, one of soccer's greatest players, didn't start for the second straight game but came on as a substitute in the 51st minute and missed a chance to equalise in stoppage time.

The five-time world player of the year is set to finish his career without capturing the World Cup or ever getting to the final. He headed right off the field after the final whistle and was crying as he walked down the tunnel.

Morocco will play either France or England in the semifinals. It is a seminal moment in World Cup history, with an African nation finally advancing to the levels typically only reached by European or South American teams. Cameroon (1990), Senegal (2002) and Ghana (2010) all reached the quarterfinals but got no further.

And off the field, this Morocco squad — coached by French-born Walid Regragui and containing 14 players born abroad — is uniting the Arab world, inspiring displays in Arab identity from fans in different countries.

There's no reason why Morocco cannot go all the way to the title, either, after topping a group that included second-ranked Belgium and fellow semifinalist Croatia and now taking down two of Europe's heavyweights in Spain —



after a penalty shootout in the round of 16 — and Portugal in the quarterfinals.

Morocco's defence has yet to concede a goal by an opposition player at this year's World Cup — the only one it has allowed was an own-goal — and it stifled a Portugal team which beat Switzerland 6-1 in the last 16 to thrust itself among the favorites.

A cross was swung in from the left and En-Nesyri leapt

between Portugal goalkeeper Diogo Costa and defender Ruben Dias to head into the empty net. Ronaldo, who will be 41 by the time of the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada, had been looking to reach the semifinals for only the second time after 2006.

Try as he might, he barely got a touch of the ball until stoppage time when he got in behind Morocco's defense off a long ball forward. His low shot was saved by goalkeeper Yassine Bounou, who hadn't had too much to do before that point.

Substitute Walid Cheddira was shown a red card for Morocco in stoppage time for collecting a second yellow card in as many minutes. Portugal center back Pepe then headed wide from inside the six-yard box.

Ronaldo fell to his knees in dejection. While Lionel Messi will be in the semifinals with Argentina, the other football great of this generation won't be.

# Boland puts Australia in control against WI

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Adelaide, Dec 10:** Pace bowler Scott Boland (3/9) took three wickets in an over Saturday to put Australia in command of the second cricket Test against West Indies.

Australia bowled out West Indies for 214 on Day 3 before declaring their second innings on 199/6 early in the last session, setting the visitors a target of 497 to win with more than two days remaining in the day-night match at the Adelaide Oval.

Boland then entered the attack in the sixth over and snared three second-innings wickets without conceding a run to have the tourists reeling on 15/3. He took a wicket with his first ball, having skipper Kraigg Brathwaite (3) caught behind with a delivery that straightened.

Boland also trapped Shamarr Brooks (0) lbw with a delivery that moved back off the seam two balls later and had Jermaine Blackwood (0) caught low at gully by Cameron Green.

Left-arm paceman Mitchell Starc (1/11) picked up an unexpected

wicket when Tagenarine Chanderpaul, after scoring a watchful 17 from 28 balls, feathered a catch down the legside to wicket-keeper Alex Carey as West Indies slipped to 21/4 in the ninth over. Devon Thomas and Jason Holder each scored eight to help West Indies reach 38/4 at stumps.

It was an eventful day, with West Indies resuming on 102-4 and losing two wickets before adding a run as they quickly surrendered a first-innings lead of 297. Great hope Chanderpaul (47) was run out off the fourth ball of the day when he prodded into space, took off, turned around and was caught short by a Starc direct hit.

Nathan Lyon finished with 3/57 while Starc ended up with 2/48 after having Holder caught behind for a duck and dismissing Roston Chase off a hook shot for 34.

**BRIEF SCORES**  
Australia 511/7d & 199/6d (Usman Khawaja 45, Travis Head 38 n o; Alzarri Joseph 3/33); West Indies 214 (Roston Chase 34; Nathan Lyon 3/57) & 38/4 (Scott Boland 3/9). Match to continue.



Scott Boland reacts after getting a wicket, Saturday