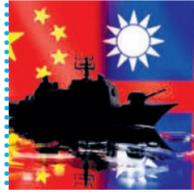




Ananya on equality

Actress Ananya Panday shares her displeasure on pay disparity between male and female actors

LEISURE | P2



Taiwan on high alert

Taiwan's defence ministry says China has nearly doubled the number of its warships operating around the island

INTERNATIONAL | P10



FDI milestone

Foreign direct investment inflows into India have crossed the \$1 trillion milestone in the April 2000-Sept 2024 period

BUSINESS | P11



Vital win for Gukesh

GM D Gukesh wins the 11th game against Ding Liren of China to take a crucial lead in the World Chess Championship

SPORTS | P12

SHORT TAKES

First flower shower, then teargas shelling

Shambhu (Punjab): Agitating farmers suspended their foot march to Delhi Sunday after some of them sustained injuries in teargas shelling by Haryana security personnel who thwarted yet another attempt by the protesters to cross the Punjab-Haryana border. As a group of 101 farmers resumed the foot march Sunday afternoon, they were halted by a multilayered barricade set up by Haryana security personnel who surprised the protesters by offering them tea and biscuits and also showering them with flower petals. Farmer leaders said they will decide the next course of action Monday.

DS Kutey sent on Central deputation

Bhubaneswar: Dharendra Sambhaji Kutey, a 1997-batch Odisha-cadre IPS officer, who was suspended by ECI for "unduly interfering in the conduct of the election" and reinstated later, has been appointed as Inspector General (IG) of the Border Security Force (BSF). The official notification regarding his appointment was issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs December 6, 2024. In an official letter addressed to the Chief Secretary, the Under Secretary to the Government of India conveyed the approval for Kutey's new role.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



CUSTODIAL TORTURE CASE

Ex-IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt acquitted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Porbandar, Dec 8: A court in Gujarat's Porbandar has acquitted former IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt in a 1997 custodial torture case, citing that the prosecution could not prove the case beyond reasonable doubt. Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Mukesh Pandya Saturday acquitted Bhatt, the then Superintendent of Police (SP) of Porbandar, in a case registered against him under IPC sections pertaining to causing grievous hurt to obtain confession and other provisions by giving him the benefit of the doubt due to lack of evidence. Bhatt was earlier sentenced to life imprisonment in a 1990 custodial death case in Jamnagar and 20 years in jail in a 1996 case relating to planting drugs to frame a Rajasthan-based lawyer in Palanpur. He is currently lodged in the Rajkot Central Jail. The court held that the prosecution could not prove the case beyond reasonable doubt that the complainant was forced to confess to the crime and made to surrender by voluntarily causing pain using dangerous weapons and threats. Bhatt had hit the headlines when he filed an affidavit in the apex court alleging then CM Narendra Modi's role in the 2002 Gujarat riots. A special investigation team debunked these allegations.

CELEBRATION AMID UNCERTAINTY AS SYRIAN REBELS FORCE PRESIDENT BASHAR AL-ASSAD TO FLEE

Stunning end to Assads' iron rule

AGENCIES

Damascus, Dec 8: Syrians poured into streets echoing with celebratory gunfire Sunday after a stunning rebel advance reached the capital, putting an end to the Assad family's 50 years of iron rule but raising questions about the future of the country and the wider region.

Joyful crowds gathered in central squares in Damascus, waving the Syrian revolutionary flag in scenes that recalled the early days of the Arab Spring uprising, before a brutal crackdown and the rise of an insurgency plunged the country into a nearly 14-year civil war.

Others gleefully ransacked the presidential palace and the Assad family residence after President Bashar al-Assad and other top officials vanished, their whereabouts unknown. Russia, a close ally, said Assad left the country after negotiations with rebel groups and had given instructions to transfer power peacefully. Assad and family are in Moscow and given asylum, Russian state news agencies reported.

Abu Mohammed al-Golani, a former al-Qaida commander who cut ties with the group years ago and says he embraces pluralism and religious tolerance, leads the biggest rebel faction and is poised to chart the country's future direction.

In a seismic moment for the Middle East, the Islamist rebels also dealt a major blow to the influence of Russia and Iran in Syria in the heart of the region

- allies who had propped up Assad during critical periods in the war but were distracted by other crises recently.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meanwhile said Israeli troops had seized a buffer zone in the Golan Heights dating back to 1974, after Syrian troops abandoned their positions.

The rebels now face the daunting task of healing bitter divides in a country ravaged by war and still split among different armed factions.

Syrian state television aired a video statement early Sunday by a group of rebels saying that Assad had been overthrown and all prisoners had been set free. They called on people to preserve the institutions of "the free Syrian state." The rebels later announced a curfew in Damascus from 4pm to 5am.

The rebels said they freed people held at the notorious Saydnaya prison, where rights groups say thousands were tortured and killed. A video circulating online purported to show rebels breaking open cell doors and freeing dozens of female prisoners, many of whom appeared shocked and confused. At least one small child could be seen among them.

Rebel commander Anas Salkhadi, who appeared on State TV later in the day, sought to reassure Syria's religious and ethnic minorities, saying: "Syria is for everyone, no exceptions. Syria is for Druze, Sunnis, Alawites, and all sects." "We will not deal with people the way the Assad family did," he added.

More P10

Nov 27 Syrian rebel groups launch attack on areas controlled by government forces, seize territory in western Aleppo

Nov 29 Insurgents breach Aleppo and clash with government forces for the first time since 2016, take the city the next day

Dec 5 The Syrian army withdraws from the central city of Hama after insurgents break through its defences

Dec 6 Insurgents enter the central towns of Rastan and Talbise, closing in on Syria's third largest city of Homs

Dec 7 Opposition forces reach the outskirts of capital Damascus, as government forces withdraw from much of Homs

Dec 8 Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad falls after the rebels' stunning advance across the country



An opposition fighter steps on a broken bust of the late Syrian President Hafez Assad, Sunday

CM launches ₹800 input aid for paddy farmers

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday launched the distribution of additional input assistance of ₹800 over and above the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of ₹2,300 per quintal of paddy to the farmers of the state.

The state government paid additional input assistance of ₹66 crore to more than 16,000 farmers through DBT Sunday. Addressing a gathering at Sohela in Bargarh district, Majhi said, "Today will be a historic day for Odisha. For farmers, this will be written in golden letters as the government has reached out to them to provide an accurate price for their paddy."

To give respect to the farm-



ers, the government has started providing additional input assistance of ₹800 over and above the MSP of ₹2,300 per quintal of paddy to the farmers of the state, he said.

"I am very happy with launching this initiative for the farmers," he said.

The government has selected Sohela to launch the distribution of the additional input sub-

sidy because the area is treated as a hub of farmers, he said.

Former chief minister Naveen Patnaik had given a false promise to provide a ₹100 bonus to the farmers in 2016, Majhi alleged.

"The previous government was exploiting the farmers through middlemen. It had promised to provide a bonus of ₹100 to the paddy farmers but

never implemented it. To give a befitting reply to the false promise, I came here today to distribute the input assistance," he added.

In its election manifesto, the BJP had promised to procure paddy from farmers at a price of ₹3,100 per quintal. Today, the promise was fulfilled, the Chief Minister said.

Majhi said that within one hour of taking oath, he called the first Cabinet meeting and took important decisions including distribution of ₹800 per quintal input assistance to paddy farmers.

What the previous government failed to do in its 24 years of rule, the BJP government implemented it within six months, he claimed.

CBI nabs PSU official, two more in ₹10L bribery case

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: The CBI has arrested a senior official of Bridge and Roof Company (India) Limited, a Central PSU, in connection with a bribery case after ₹10 lakh was seized from a luxury car in which he was travelling in Bhubaneswar, officials said Sunday.

Besides Chanchal Mukherjee, Group General Manager (GGM) of Bridge and Roof Company, two private persons - Santosh Moharana, Director of Penta A Studio Private Limited and middleman Debadutta Mohapatra - were also arrested for allegedly bribing Mukherjee, they said.

The Central probe agency had conducted a trap operation after

registering a case against four persons including the three arrested accused. According to the CBI, the accused were allegedly indulging in corrupt and illegal activities in the matter of awarding work orders of the PSU and clearing bills in lieu of undue advantage in the form of bribe.

It was alleged that accused Moharana met the group general manager (Mukherjee) at his Bhubaneswar office December 6 during which the GGM demanded ₹10 lakh and promised to adjust the said amount in future billings, a CBI spokesperson said.

After doing preliminary verification, the CBI laid a trap Saturday where Mukherjee was caught taking ₹10 lakh bribe in a Mercedes Maybach car.

French castle brings royal pains for American buyers

AGENCIES

Bordeaux (France), Dec 8: Julia Leach's childhood dreams of living in a fairy-tale château never faded. Growing up in San Diego, she obsessed over castles, reading British novels about inheritance plots, and spent a gap year in France. As an adult, Leach worked in New York City, but the pressure of 14-hour film set days pushed her to search for a new path. That's when a casual Google search—"Who lives in castles in France?"—led her to the world of château owners, including Stephanie Jarvis, who made a living renovating a 16th-century estate in the Loire Valley.

Inspired, Leach and her partner, Caroline Ibarra, decided to make their dream a reality. Along with Julia's parents and sister, they pooled their resources to buy a château. The family zeroed in on the Château de Puy Vidal in Charente, France—an imposing 14,000-square-foot structure dating back to 1267, with 88 windows and three towers. The \$2.6 million price seemed affordable compared to San Diego real estate, and they envisioned turning it into a creative retreat.

In early 2022, after selling their La Jolla home, the family relocated to France. Their project, Lady of the Château, would host workshops and retreats for



creative professionals. Julia and Caroline's "talent passports," which granted them residency, were approved quickly, and the family moved in, eager to embrace the challenge.

But the château quickly proved to be more work than they expected. The property,

though grand, was in disrepair—severe storms, plumbing failures, and even a small earthquake caused havoc. The couple learned the hard way that maintaining a centuries-old estate is no small feat. Their \$1 million renovation budget ballooned to \$1.5 million, and now, to achieve

their vision, they anticipate it could reach \$3 million.

Unexpected complications added to their stress. Much of the château is a historic monument, requiring approval for renovations from the French government. To complicate things further, the family discovered that their guests weren't just interested in the property but in the family's personal lives, creating an intense, sometimes overwhelming dynamic. In response, they shifted their focus from a traditional B&B model to more immersive, small-scale retreats.

Despite the challenges, the family is determined to make it work. They're still adjusting

to life in a 750-year-old home, navigating language barriers, cultural differences, and an unexpectedly tight living situation. After two years, their business has yet to turn a profit, and the pressure is mounting as the four-year visas they hold near their expiration.

Julia and Caroline remain optimistic, though. "I think what we're doing is, in a lot of ways, very American," Caroline reflects. "We're setting up a new world." As the family adapts to life in their château, they continue to host guests, hoping their retreats will eventually succeed—and provide a sense of home, despite the monumental effort it takes to create it.

leisure



IS BEN AFFLECK BACK WITH EX JENNIFER GARNER?

Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner seem to be getting closer as they continue to spend time together this holiday season. The ex-flames and co-parents were spotted again, spending their Saturday morning together driving around Brentwood in California together.

BARRY KEOGHAN DEACTIVATES INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT

Oscar-nominated actor Barry Keoghan famed for his role in *The Banshees of Inisherin* and *Saltburn* has deactivated his Instagram account after incessant trolling over his looks and character on social media, following his split from girlfriend, American singer Sabrina Carpenter.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

If you are about to begin some important work, today is not the day, says Ganesha. But keep yourself motivated, despite minor problems. Do something you've never done before. Think out-of-the-box: grow your own mint, make some chocolates.

TAURUS

You are hard working by nature but get highly frustrated when things do not end the way you had imagined, feels Ganesha. This may lead to anger against the system or the order in which things work. You will vent your frustration on your routine by longing for an alternate life-style, wishing and hoping for more relaxation and perhaps a spontaneous vacation.

GEMINI

You are likely to take your time and read a situation carefully before you take any important decisions, predicts Ganesha. In the afternoon, you may go on a pleasure trip to recharge your batteries.

CANCER

Both your physical and mental health will remain stable today, predicts Ganesha. In the afternoon, you may meet one of your clients for lunch. It is an auspicious day to propose and finalise wedding dates, hopes Ganesha.

LEO

Necessity is the mother of invention, and today, you will draw from your large pool of scientific and technological knowledge to achieve your goals at work. Family matters will keep you occupied in the afternoon, but do not let that come in the way of your evening activities that get your blood flowing through the veins, such as dance or music lessons. Also, Ganesha reminds you to make an effort to touch base with your foreign contacts.

VIRGO

The tempest of anger runs wild. You are most likely to blow hotter than Mount Vesuvius ever did, predicts Ganesha. In the afternoon, you may chalk out a big business plan. Peers will stand by your side at the workplace. But in the evening, try spending your time meditating and cooling those nerves, advises Ganesha.

LIBRA

Ganesha says the first blush of love will make your mind blissful today. You will be able to gain closeness with your beloved today. The afternoon will see you try to take part in religious matters. Ganesha says that today will be a good day to listen to religious discourses and make your mind and heart follow God.

SCORPIO

Power packed day in store for you, according to Ganesha. Your flamboyant attitude at work would leave your team mates awestruck. Your energy level is at an all-time high, which would find its way to the dance floor in the evening. Groove to some foot-tapping music and dance as if there's no tomorrow.

SAGITTARIUS

A delightfully emotional experience would stir up your soul today. Later perhaps, success will touch your feet either through the electronic media or through a brilliant idea. Love will steam and bubble as you expect to be asked out by your prospective life mate, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN

You will do a commendable job solving complicated problems at work, says Ganesha. In keeping with the circumstances, you will be spontaneous in coming up with solutions to pressing issues; and so accurate you may be in your assumptions about a likely situation that in future, your peers and subordinates will blindly accept whatever proposal you table.

AQUARIUS

Explore the world today, as luck is standing by your side and everything you touch will turn into gold, be it in your business or profession, foresees Ganesha. You are trying too hard to succeed, and you may get tempted to compromise on your moral values. Don't give undue importance to success, life is not all about strengthening bank balance, advises Ganesha.

PISCES

You will find yourself in a good mood today. Your co-workers will also enjoy being around you. You will be able to influence people for the positive with your respectful demeanor and your sense of humor. You could find yourself splurging on yourself at a spa or a beauty parlor, says Ganesha.

MUMBAI:

Actress Alia Bhatt, who was recently seen in the theatrical movie *Jigra*, ditched her swanky car, and took a quick ride as she sat in an autorickshaw.



Alia ditches swanky drive for autorickshaw

The actress was recently spotted at the Versova jetty in Mumbai, as she got down from the boat and took an autorickshaw. She was seen wearing an oversized striped shirt and a pair of wenge coloured pants.

Of late, many celebrities are opting for jetty rides from Versova to shooting spots in the Madh Island area of Mumbai as it saves time compared to the road ride of almost 90 minutes. Other actors like the Kannada superstar Yash, and Kira Advani were also seen taking the jetty in order to reach the shooting spots.

Recently, Alia kick started the month of December by installing a Christmas tree at her home. The actress took to the Stories of her Instagram and shared a video which showed the Christmas tree.

December is a special month for Alia and Ranbir as they also participate in the customary Christmas celebrations of the Kapoor family which takes place at Kunal Kapoor's house.

Last year, during the Kapoor family's Christmas celebrations, Ranbir and Alia had revealed the face of Raha for the first time to the media and the Internet.

Sonam on her best version

Mumbai: Actress and fashionista Sonam Kapoor currently in Dubai, shared glimpses of her family by the sea.

In the first picture, Sonam can be seen sitting with her husband, Anand Ahuja, on the seashore, enjoying the sunset view.

In the next few pictures, Sonam and her son Vayu can be seen playing by the sea.

Along with the pictures, Sonam added a caption that reads: "A friend recently asked me, 'If I had to drive to meet the person I wanted to be in my wildest dreams, who would that be?' The answer was so clear: it's just me. The best version of me—a diamond in the rough that experiences and life keep polishing and refining, making me better every day. Everything I've ever wanted, everything I've dreamed of being, is already here. This picture says it all. It's

not about becoming someone else—it's about embracing who I am, completely, and trusting the journey to keep shaping me. @anandahuja, love you #everydayphenomenal is only with you by my side."

On the work front, Sonam will next be seen in



Battle of Bittora, produced by her father Anil Kapoor and sister Rhea Kapoor.

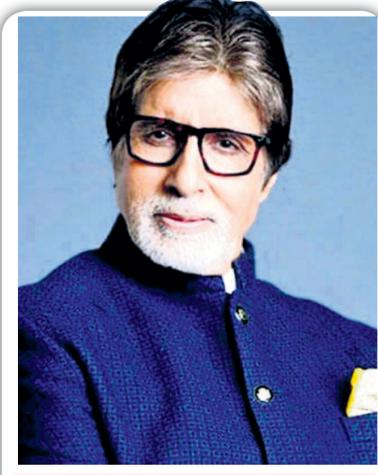
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



Big B shares cryptic post

MUMBAI: Veteran actor Amitabh Bachchan, who currently hosts the quiz based reality show *Kaun Banega Crorepati*, has slammed those who revel in the rumours of his son Abhishek Bachchan's separation from the latter's wife Aishwarya Rai.

Sunday, the senior actor took to his blog, and penned a long note, as he wrote in Hindi, "There is no shortage of fools and dim-witted people in this world; they try to hide their own misdeeds by writing about others".

He further mentioned, "Idiots and those with limited brain - never a dearth of such in this World; they make and print their own imbecile fakes each day to hide their own personal, brainless, half witted deficiencies".

He also took to his X, and posted, "T 5216 - People, who find their own meaning in every word, hide the misfortune of their personal life".

The rumours of Abhishek and Aishwarya's separation started doing rounds since last year when it was reported in the media that Aishwarya has left the Bachchan family's house, and has been living separately.

However, at the time, Aishwarya attended the premier of the streaming movie *The Archies* which marked the debut of Big B's grandson Agastya Nanda. During the event, last year, Aishwarya was seen in good spirits with the Bachchan family.

ANANYA STANDS FOR EQUALITY

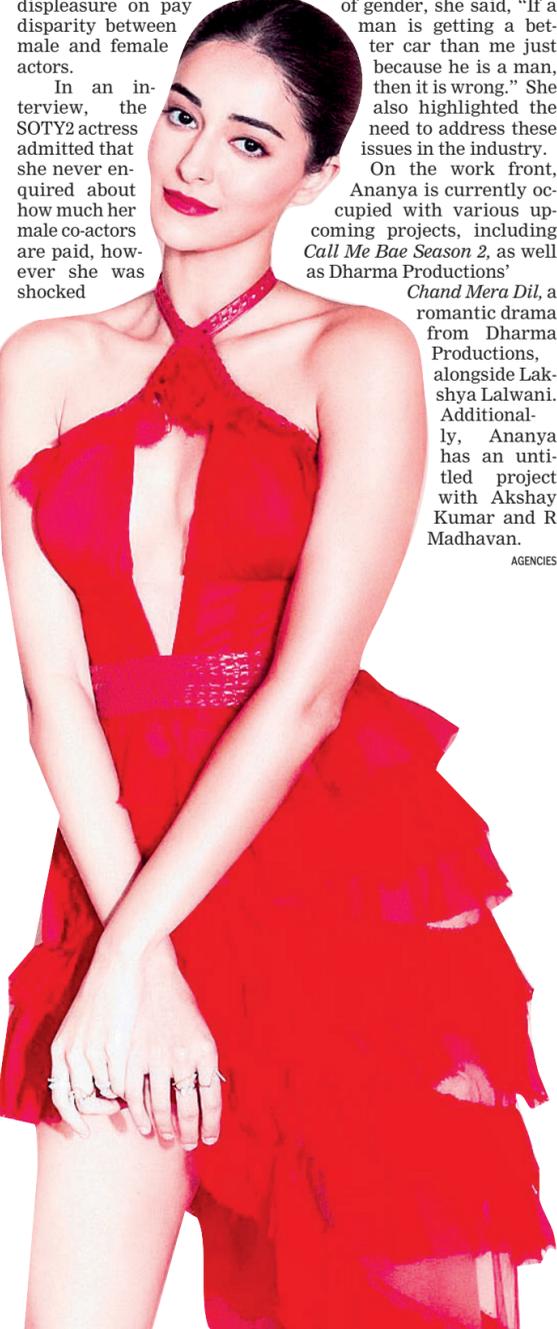
MUMBAI: Actress Ananya Panday, who wowed her fans with her impeccable performances in *CTRL* and *Call Me Bae*, recently shared her displeasure on pay disparity between male and female actors.

In an interview, the SOTY2 actress admitted that she never enquired about how much her male co-actors are paid, however she was shocked

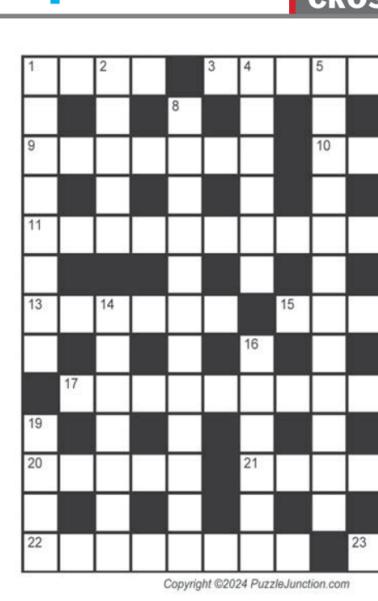
by some of the amounts the male actors are paid.

The 26-year-old actress said that she strongly opposes these unfair treatments on the basis of gender, she said, "If a man is getting a better car than me just because he is a man, then it is wrong." She also highlighted the need to address these issues in the industry.

On the work front, Ananya is currently occupied with various upcoming projects, including *Call Me Bae Season 2*, as well as Dharma Productions' *Chand Mera Dil*, a romantic drama from Dharma Productions, alongside Lakshya Lalwani. Additionally, Ananya has an untitled project with Akshay Kumar and R Madhavan.



FUN POST



- Across**
- 1 Pesky insect
 - 3 Honeycomb sites
 - 9 Ointment
 - 10 After belly or square
 - 11 Saskatoon locale
 - 13 Spanish capital
 - 15 Tourist's take-along
 - 17 Apathetic
 - 20 Choppers
- Down**
- 1 Macabre
 - 2 East Indian pheasant
 - 4 Tempt
 - 5 Ulterior motive (6,6)
 - 6 Like some wines and autos
 - 7 Flower holder
 - 8 Affiliation
 - 12 Collection of clothing
 - 14 Medieval castle part
 - 16 Come back
 - 18 Pulsate
 - 19 Stupefy

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

S	S	D	E	F	P
SCYTHE			SCREEN		
A	A	T	T	I	
CRAIG			DRESSAGE		
P	M	E	R	K	N
SPRAINS			NYLON		
E	D	A	I		
GABBY			OBSCURE		
C	R	O	I	A	
MEDIAEVAL			CANE		
F	G	U	I	H	O
BUSHEL			TREMOR		
L	T	E	Y	T	K

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

BUDDING TALENT

Artists perform during 'Shree Padmalaya' at Annapurna Theatre in Puri, Sunday



Chihuahua Tablet (left), which won the 65th championship, and American Cocker Spaniel Nathin, which won the 66th championship, at the 'All Breeds Championship Dog Shows' organised by Orissa Kennel Club at College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry in Bhubaneswar, Sunday



PICS: BIKASH NAYAK

1,002 GGY projects sanctioned illegally

RATNA BHANDAR REPAIR WORK LIKELY FROM DEC 16

POST NEWS NETWORK

CAG REPORT

During 2017-22, five Panchayat Samitis diverted ₹2.82 crore out of GGY funds for expenses not admissible under GGY. Out of it, ₹0.40 crore was pending for recoupment as of March 2022

In 20 Panchayat Samitis, 219 works could not be completed despite utilisation of ₹7.90 crore. Delays in completion of these works ranged from 30 to 1,438 days

AS PER GGY GUIDELINES, DEDUCTIONS FROM WORKS SUCH AS ROYALTY, LABOUR WELFARE CESS ARE TO BE REMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY. HOWEVER, ₹80.29 LAKH RECEIVED TOWARDS DEDUCTIONS FROM WORKS SINCE FY2017-18 HAD BEEN RETAINED BY EIGHT PSS IN THEIR BANK ACCOUNTS

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: As many as 1,002 projects worth Rs 19.64 crore under Gopabandhu Gramin Yojana (GGY) in three Zilla Parishads (ZPs) have been sanctioned by Collectors and funds have been released to the Panchayat Samitis (PSs) in an unauthorised way, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has flagged. According to the CAG's subject specific compliance audit (SSCA) on implementation of GGY, a fully state-funded scheme aimed at bridging gaps in rural infrastructure, district Collectors are required to place all proposals, received from the 'Palli Sabhas' through the PSs, before the District Planning Committees (DPCs) for consideration and approval. Finalisa-

tion of the list of projects to be taken up under the GGY vests with the DPC. "Audit, however, noticed that in three ZPs (Keonjhar, Jajpur and Ganjam), out of the seven test-checked districts, 1,002 projects, with an estimated cost

of Rs 19.64 crore, had been sanctioned by the Collectors without approval of the DPCs and funds had been released to the PSs for execution. Absence of approval of the competent body - DPCs - resulted in unauthorised sanction of Rs 19.64 crore.

This defeats the purpose of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 which aims to empower PRIs as autonomous decision-making bodies at the grassroots," it said. "Confirming the facts, the CDO-cum-EOs of these ZPs, stated June 2022 that the projects approved by the Collectors could not be placed in the DPC meetings, inadvertently," it added. During 2017-22, five PSs had diverted Rs 2.82 crore out of GGY funds for expenses not admissible under GGY. Out of it, Rs 0.40 crore was pending for recoupment as of March 2022, it said. As per GGY guidelines, deductions from works such as royalty, labour welfare cess are to be remitted to the appropriate authority. However,

an amount of Rs 80.29 lakh received towards deductions from works since FY2017-18 had been retained by eight PSs in their bank accounts, the auditor found. In 20 PSs, 219 works could not be completed despite utilisation of Rs 7.90 crore. Delays in the completion of these works had ranged from 30 to 1,438 days, it added. On utilisation of funds received by PRIs from State Finance Commission (SFC) Grants, the CAG said, six PSs and one GP had utilised Rs 1.09 crore on items (stationery, inverter and air conditioner) not admissible under SFC Grants. In 12 GPs, assets constructed during 2017-20 at a cost of Rs 1.05 crore remained idle, resulting in loss of revenue to these GPs, it said.

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is likely to start repair work for the Ratna Bhandar of Srimandir in Puri from December 16, an official said Sunday. The ASI has sought approval from the Niti sub-committee of the temple for the proposed repair work, ASI superintendent DB Garnaik said. "After getting the time slot, we will start the work, most probably from December 16," he said. Earlier, the ASI had conducted the GPR survey of the 12th-century shrine's Ratna Bhandar with assistance of Hyderabad-based National Geophysical Research Institute. The institute submitted its survey findings to ASI last month, the official said. The repair work will be conducted as per the survey report and with the approval of the temple management, he said. The Ratna Bhandar repair issue will be discussed during the meeting of Chhatisha Nijog, the confederation of servitors of Srimandir, scheduled for December 10, Puri Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain said. Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan said the state government has targeted to complete the inventory of the jewellery and ornaments, which were stored in two temporary treasuries inside the shrine, by next January end. "We have asked the ASI to complete the repair work soon. After that, we will again restore the ornaments in the Ratna Bhandar from temporary treasuries and then the inventory work will be carried out," he told media.

J'khand team to visit Odisha, learn ways to increase revenue

Ashish Singh new ITBP IG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MINING

Ranchi, Dec 8: Jharkhand's Finance Minister Radha Krishna Kishore said he would soon send a team to Odisha to study strategies to increase revenue from the mining sector. He said Jharkhand, which has 40 per cent of the country's mineral reserve, generates merely Rs 11,000-12,000 crore annually from the mining sector, while the neighbouring Odisha generates around Rs 40,000 crore. "We need to explore ways to increase the state's revenue. If we make a little effort in the mining sector, we can increase it," Kishore said. "I will ask senior officers of my department to send a team

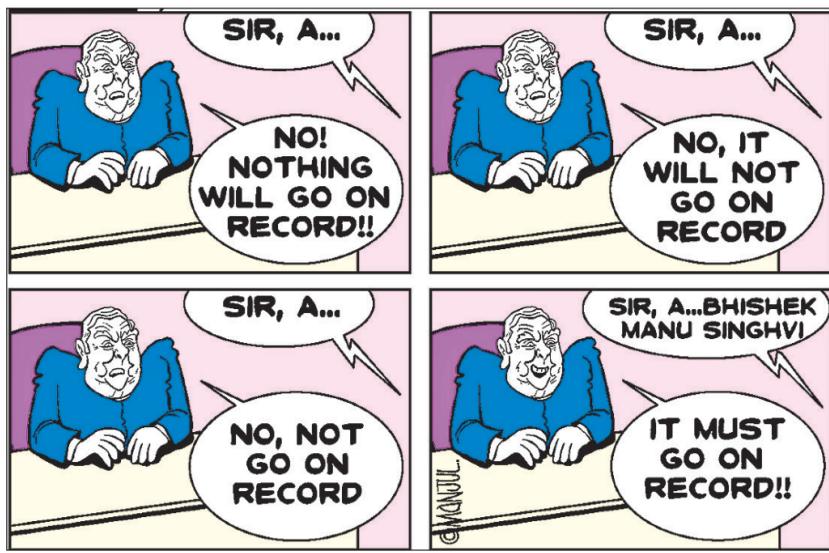
of mining officials to Odisha to study how they are generating revenue from the mining sector and what steps they have taken," he said. Kishore, a Congress leader, took charge of the office Friday. He said the objective of a separate Jharkhand was to ensure the economic and social development of people living in rural areas but it could not be achieved earlier. "After Hemant Soren came to power, he made efforts in this regard and launched several welfare schemes, including Maiyan Samman Yojana, to make rural people self-reliant," the Minister said.

Kishore said there were several households in rural areas that did not have even grain to eat. "They were given food security and women of the families were linked to the Maiyan Samman Yojana, under which Rs 1,000 was provided. Now, they would be given Rs 2,500 per month so that they do not have to borrow money from anyone even for the treatment of small diseases," he said. When asked about the funds to meet the expenses of welfare schemes, the minister said it would be managed from the state budget. Jharkhand witnessed two elections this year and that has affected the expenditure of the budget due to the imposition of the model code of conduct, he said.

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: IPS officer Ashish Kumar Singh has been appointed as the new Inspector General (IG) of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), official sources said. The Ministry of Home Affairs has issued a notification in this regard stating that Singh will remain in charge for a period of five years from the date of assuming the post. "It is requested that Ashish Kumar Singh, IPS, may be relieved immediately to enable him to take up his new assignment at the Centre," read the notification. The 2004-batch IPS officer was dragged into controversy for allegedly interfering in the election process.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Fifth PHW explores monastic traditions



POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Dec 8: Over 20 heritage enthusiasts gathered Sunday for the fifth edition of the Puri Heritage Walks (PHW)...

in Puri's religious festivities. Historians and researchers, including Sarangadhara Rayguru, Devi Prasanna Nanda, and heritage expert Sidharth Acharya...



SHOWING CREATIVITY: Students take part in painting and poster-making competition, organised by Plant Lovers Association and Regional Plant Resource Centre at IG Park in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

WEATHER BBSR CTC Max Temp 27.2° 25.0° Min Temp 21.6° 19.5° Humidity 81% 83% Rainfall Nil Nil FORECAST Mainly clear sky

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an Affidavit before Notary Public, Cuttack on 10.04.2024, I have changed my name from SUBRAT KESHRI NAYAK to Subrat Kumar Nayak.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Cuttack, Dt.12.11.2024. I Mrs. Pratima Naik, At-Kunarpala, PO-Abhimanpur, PS-Badambadi, Dist-Cuttack have changed my name from Gita Naik to Pratima Naik.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary, Jharsuguda, I CHANCHALA MAITRY, W/o- TIKESWAR SING GANDHARBA, R/o- At/P.O./P.S.- Hemgir, Dist.- Sundargarh, Odisha- 770013 declare that before marriage I was known as Doleshwari Maitry, D/o- Galaw Prasad Maitry. That both name is one and same person, that now onwards I shall be known as CHANCHALA MAITRY for all future purposes.

I Manmohan Mahapatra (69), S/o- Late Baranidhi Mahapatra, resident of G1/G2, Jail Street, A/P Lanjipalli, P/S B.N.Pur, Berhampur, Ganjam, Odisha declared by this affidavit No.-1234 dt.26.10.24 that now on words I shall be known as Manamohan Mahapatra for all future purposes.

Fourth edition of Puri Beach Marathon held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri / Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: The Bhubaneswar Cycling and Adventure Club (BCAC) hosted the 4th edition of its flagship event, the Puri Beach Marathon, Sunday. The unique marathon challenged participants to run on the sandy beaches of Puri...

The marathon featured two main courses: the Half-Marathon, a 10.55-km return route from Samuka Beach to Bali Harachandi Beach and back, and a 7-km fun run that also started at Samuka Beach and turned around at Bali Harachandi Beach.



Rly min receives 9-point demand from commuters

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Dec 8: A delegation led by Purnachandra Dash, representing the Regular Train Commuters' Association, Sunday met Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav to submit a memorandum listing their nine-point demands.

ing the need to address passenger congestion in the Bhadrak-Dasapalla and Jaleswar-Puri MEMU trains by adding eight more coaches to each train. They proposed introducing two new passenger trains connecting Jajpur Road to Bhuban and Kamakshyanagar through the newly-constructed Anugul-Sukinda Road rail line.

Prez to felicitate National Panchayat Award winners

Odisha is set to be honoured in seven categories, reflecting its significant contributions to community development and sustainable growth



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: President Droupadi Murmu will present the National Panchayat Awards 2024 December 11 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, recognising outstanding achievements in rural governance. Odisha is set to be honoured in seven categories, reflecting its significant contributions to community development and sustainable growth.

in Ganjam district for its impressive health and wellness programmes. This acknowledgment highlights how local governance can drive positive public health outcomes. Sahapur Gram Panchayat, also in Ganjam, will receive the Self-Sufficient Infrastructure in Panchayats Award for its remarkable progress in building sustainable infrastructure that supports community growth and resilience.

UP Govt invites Odisha to Mahakumbh-2025

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: Uttar Pradesh Minister for Labour and Employment, Anil Rajbhar, extended an invitation to Governor Raghuraj Das, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, and the people of Odisha to participate in the Prayagraj Mahakumbh-2025.

The iconic event is scheduled to take place from January 13 to February 26 at the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers. Rajbhar, during a roadshow in Bhubaneswar, highlighted the Mahakumbh as a celebration of unity within India's diversity. Addressing the media,

he said the event is expected to attract over 450 million pilgrims, saints, ascetics, and tourists. He emphasised the government's efforts to make the 2025 Mahakumbh historic with modern facilities, international participation, and an environmentally sustainable approach. "This Mahakumbh

will be clean, healthy, safe, and digital, with a strong focus on being single-use plastic-free, Rajbhar stated. Initiatives include the allocation of dona-pattal vendor shops within the Mela area and a "Har Ghar Dastak" campaign promoting eco-friendly practices.

Of 8,518 tested at AIIMS Bhub in 3 months, 31 test HIV+

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: The Integrated Counselling and Testing Centre (ICTC) at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here has recently tested 8,518 individuals for HIV and provided counselling to 8,538 people over the past three months. Out of the tested, 31 were found HIV positive and 27 have been linked to the Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) Centre (ARC).

HIV Counselling and Testing Services (HCTS) as a key entry point for HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and care. "Our efforts are aligned with national goals, and we aim to expand awareness and ensure timely treatment for those diagnosed with HIV," Biswas stated. As part of the observance of World AIDS Day, AIIMS organised a series of events to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, including an awareness programme held at the OPD foyer. The programme, supported by the Department of Communi-



ty Medicine and Family Medicine and the Department of Transfusion and Blood Bank, in collaboration with the Odisha State AIDS Society, centered around the theme "Take

the Right Path: My Health, My Right". The event was attended by esteemed dignitaries, medical professionals, staffers and community members. The event also featured a free

HIV testing camp and voluntary blood donation camp, with around 45 individuals taking the opportunity to get tested. Leaflets and booklets on HIV/AIDS prevention and care were distributed, and free condoms were handed out to promote safe practices. "The City AIIMS continues to lead the charge in HIV surveillance and epidemiology, being one of the eight regional institutes for HIV surveillance in India. The institute's coverage includes the states of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. AIIMS will also host

the 19th round of HIV Sentinel Surveillance in January 2025," said Biswas. While India has the second-largest HIV burden in the world, with approximately 24.67 lakh people living with HIV (PLHIV), the country has made significant progress in ART coverage, which stands at 68 per cent. Odisha, with 52,000 PLHIV, has an HIV prevalence rate of 0.14 per cent, with ART coverage at 49.7 per cent. The statistics highlight the need for sustained efforts to ensure the continued prevention, treatment, and care of people living with HIV.

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Nagavali changes course as illegal sand mining grows



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Dec 8: A concerning development has emerged in Rayagada district where the Nagavali river has reached dangerously close to human settlements after rapidly changing its course due to years of excessive illegal sand mining from the riverbed.

According to reports, the illegal extraction of sand has widened the river and significantly reduced its water levels, with grave repercussions for the local ecosystem and groundwater resources.

Illegal sand mining has not only affected the course of Nagavali river, but also the Vamsadhara river. It is alleged that massive quantities of sand is being illegally mined and later transported to the neighbouring Andhra Pradesh right under the nose of enforcement authorities. The unauthorised extraction of sand has also led to a significant decline in groundwater level in the areas. The sand mafia uses heavy machinery such as Poclain and Hitachi excavators, alongside JCB earthmovers, to extract sand from the riverbed. At prominent sites like the Badahansa sand ghat in Rayagada tehsil, these activities are

conducted openly in violation of the National Green Tribunal norms. After extraction, sand is stockpiled and loaded into tipper trucks, with hundreds of vehicles ferrying the material across state borders. Villagers living near the riverbanks face increasing risks as the Nagavali river widens and edges come closer to their homes and farmlands. This was prominently evident during the devastating floods of July 2017, which severely affected Kalyansinghpur, Kolnara, and Rayagada blocks. Despite the lessons from this calamity, illegal mining operations have only escalated.

Villagers alleged that the illegal activities continue unabated due to collusion between the mining mafia and corrupt officials. They said while the mafia pockets millions daily by transporting the illegally mined sand to Andhra Pradesh, the District Mining Officer, or other mining officials, are yet to form an enforcement team to crackdown on illegal sand mining and the sand smugglers.

Nagavali river's Badahansa sand mining lease was granted to one Bominayani Raghuram November 19, 2020. The lease permits excavation over an area of 4.856 hectare. However,

there is no approval for the use of machinery and equipment for mining in the riverbed. For the financial year 2024-25, permission was granted to mine 3,200 cubic meters (CM) of sand.

The mining department states that 2,600 CM of sand has been mined so far. However, villagers alleged that the leaseholder has illegally transported thousand CMs of sand beyond the approved limits. Additionally, sand is being sold separately in local areas using tractors.

In the Sesakhala police limits, extensive unauthorised sand mining has been reported at multiple locations. Sources said villagers who protest the goings on are faced with intimidation and harassment. Moreover, illegal sand mining and smuggling have also led to growing rivalries among operators involved in the trade.

On November 1, some miscreants set fire to a Poclain earthmover used for sand mining. Police suspect the incident stemmed from business rivalry.

Illegal sand extraction is rampant from the upper reaches of Kalyansinghpur block to the lower parts of Rayagada block.

Meanwhile, when contacted, District Mining Officer Parshuram Pradhan said the department investigates complaints when received. "The present allegations would also be thoroughly examined," he said while claiming that staff shortages hinder enforcement efforts.

Sources said that the persistent lack of enforcement and oversight is not only undermining environmental guidelines but also causing substantial financial losses to the state government.



TRIBAL BALLET: Artists perform traditional dance at the block-level Lok Mahotsav 'Chaiti' at Padmapur in Rayagada district, Sunday

OP PHOTO

24 ATVs allotted to 5 Similipal forest divisions

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Dec 8: In a significant move, the state government has allotted 24 state-of-the-art All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) to the Forest department in Mayurbhanj district with a view to enhance wildlife protection and prevent forest fires across five forest divisions of Similipal Wildlife Sanctuary.

The fleet includes Mahindra Thar ATVs, Tata Yodha fire-fighting vehicles, and Tata-410 fire response support vehicles. These vehicles will play a crucial role in safeguarding wildlife and managing forest fires, reports stated.

For Baripada Forest Division, one fire-fighting vehicle and a fire response support unit have been provided. Similarly, for the Karanjia Forest Division, the deployment includes an ATV, a Tata Yodha fire-fighting vehicle, and a Tata-410 fire response unit. The Rairangpur Forest Division has



also received one fire-fighting vehicle and a fire response unit.

The North Similipal Forest Division has been equipped with three ATVs, three Tata Yodha fire-fighting vehicles, and one Tata-410 fire response support unit. These additions aim to strengthen fire management and wildlife safety measures across the region, the reports added.

This comprehensive preparedness underscores the Forest

department's commitment to preserving biodiversity and mitigating risks to wildlife and natural habitats.

Six ATVs, three Tata Yodha fire-fighting vehicles, and one Tata-410 fire-response support unit have been provided for the Similipal South Forest Di-

vision. The vehicles have been independently customised and delivered by the manufacturing companies on behalf of the Forest department.

Each vehicle features customised sprinkler systems with water storage capacities of 1,000 liters, 500 liters, and 200 liters, respectively. Designed for rugged terrains, the vehicles can navigate steep hills, valleys, muddy paths, and water-logged areas. Additionally, they will be used for patrolling to ensure wildlife safety.

The Yodha vehicles will be deployed in high fire-risk zones, while the Tata-410 vehicles, with their capacity to carry more personnel and equipment, will be assigned to reach wildfire sites efficiently, reports stated.

The state-of-the-art vehicles will play a key role in wildlife protection and fire prevention

₹2cr brown sugar haul in Balasore; 1 nabbed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, Dec 8: In a major drug bust, the Excise sleuths in Balasore confiscated 2 kilograms of narcotic substance brown sugar from the residence of a trader in Adar Bazaar area, under Sahadevkhunta police station limits, here Sunday. The street price of the seized contraband has been estimated to be of ₹2 crore, Excise officials said.

The seizure followed the arrest of the trader, identified as Amjat Khan, while his younger brother, Sabir Khan, an alleged accomplice in the crime, managed to give the sleuths the slip.

An Excise official, who requested not to be named, said that department had received a tip off about the storage of brown sugar at Amjat's residence from an informer. Amjat is suspected to have sourced the narcotics from Madhya Pradesh and had kept it at home for peddling it in Balasore city and adjoining areas later.

Acting on the information, Excise Commissioner (and SP) Sushant Padhi formed a 15-member team to apprehend the traffickers. The operation was led by Mobile IIC Harihari Singh, Mobile OIC Bhakta Charan Swain, Sadar IIC Deeptimayee Sahu, and OIC Prajna Parimita Nayak, with support from the Sahadevkhunta police, an official said. Sources said the sleuths made a swoop at Amjat's house early Sunday morning. They seized the contraband along with ₹5,700 cash, and a mobile phone from the house during searches. Significantly, while they managed to lay their hands on Amjat, his brother Sabir managed to escape in the melee.

Amjat was taken into custody and booked under Section 21(c) of the NDPS Act (Case No. 288/24-25). He was produced before the special court which sent him to judicial custody after rejecting his bail application.

Focus on Mahseer fish conservation



POST NEWS NETWORK

Tentulikhunti, Dec 8: Close on the heels of discovery of two species of Mahseer fish in Indravati river of Nabarangpur district, researchers have emphasised on their conservation and artificial breeding.

According to sources, Mahseer fish (Tor tor and Tor putitora) species belong to Cyprinidae family, characterised by their large size and elongated bodies, often referred to as the 'king of Indian rivers'. Mahseer is considered one of the world's top 20 large freshwater fish species whose natural habitats include fast-flowing hilly rivers, and cold, clear mountain streams.

Indravati reservoir spans 110 km, suggesting immense potential for fish research and aquaculture development due to the discovery of these new species. Utilising this resource could benefit local communities, support scientific research, and enhance fish production, contributing to regional economic growth.

According to sources, the discovery was led by researchers Alok Kumar Nayak and Anirban Mahata under the guidance of Professor Sarat Kumar Palita, Dean of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources (SBCNR) at Central University, Koraput. Narayan Patra, a local intellectual, suggested naming the fish after

Indravati region to highlight its origin.

Professor Palita emphasised that genetic analysis of Mahseer species is nearing completion, necessitating immediate steps for their conservation and artificial breeding. The discovery of 'Tor putitora' is not only significant for southern Odisha but also establishes a new record for the Godavari river basin in India.

Currently, nine Mahseer species are found in India, with four species (Tor tor, Tor Mahnadi cus, Tor putitora, and Tor khudree Mahaseer) recorded in Odisha. These species, which thrive in fast-flowing mountain rivers, are now struggling to survive in the stagnant waters caused by dams.

To prevent their extinction, stakeholders are calling for the establishment of artificial breeding centres, which would significantly boost fish production and elevate the status of southern Odisha in fisheries research and aquaculture.

Tourism tag eludes Punjisil waterfall

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Dec 8: Punjisil waterfall in Koraput district continues to captivate visitors with its natural beauty, though it is yet to get the official recognition as a tourist destination.

Located in Mujang panchayat of Dasmantpur block, about 23km from the district headquarters, the waterfall has great potential to be a major tourist hub. However, it remains underdeveloped due to a lack of political will and administrative focus.

The district hosts several popular tourist spots, including Deomali, Galigabadar in Pottangi block, Rani Duduma, and Kolab Dam in Nandapur block, Duduma in Lamtaput block, and Gupteshwar in Boipariguda block.

Punjisil waterfall, which flows over a massive rock, offers a stunning view and is a popular destination for tourists, with many visitors engaging in water activities.

Despite the beauty of the site, the area suffers from poor infrastructure and maintenance. Although the district administration has used funds from the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) to build community



toilets and restrooms, these facilities are often unusable due to a lack of water supply, and the restrooms remain locked and poorly maintained. The two platforms constructed for tourists to sit and eat are often littered with waste, discouraging visitors from using them. Moreover, the water from the tube well installed there has been found to be contaminated, forcing tourists to seek other sources for clean water.

The onset of winter has seen an influx of visitors from

within and outside the state. However, some have been dissuaded by the poor state of the facilities.

Local residents, including Binda Badanayak, Dara Badanayak, Lochan Badanayak and Bhima Badanayak, have expressed concern and urged the government for immediate improvement of the site. They demanded that a local self-help group should take responsibility for maintaining the site and a committee formed to oversee its development. This, they

argue, would ensure a safer and cleaner environment for visitors.

Talina Pradhan, district tourism officer, expressed hope that the site would be recognised as a tourist destination by next year.

Koraput Sub-Collector Benudhar Sabar acknowledged the poor condition of the roads leading to the site. He has instructed Dasmantpur block development officer to focus on improving infrastructure and ancillary facilities at the site.

Criminal gang busted; 6 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Dec 8: Town police personnel here arrested six members of a criminal gang from Siddhamath forest during night patrolling Sunday evening.

During their arrest, police seized sharp-edged weapons and a vehicle from their possession. The accused were identified as Sheikh Rizwan, 24, Pramod Kumar Mallik, 28, Shrikant Sethi, 32, Sanjay Kumar Mallik, 31, Tukuna Majhi, 29, Dinesh Mallik, 26, all residents of Jajpur district, police said. It is suspected that they had assembled inside the forest and planning for some major offensive.

A Mahindra Bolero jeep (OD19A6080), cash worth ₹1,900, sharp-edged weapons, six lathis, seven mobile phones and five liquor bottles were seized from their possession.

A case was registered in this connection and further investigations were on, Srikanta Sahu, IIC of Town police station said.



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EMPLOYMENT NOTIFICATION No. CUG/02/2024-25

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The details of advertisement specifying specialization, eligibility criteria and terms and conditions etc. for appointments are available on the University website www.cug.ac.in. The commencement date of online Application is **09.01.2025**.

Date : 06.12.2024

Sd./- Registrar (Offg.)
CBC-21357/12/0004/2425

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
BHUBANESWAR (R&B) DIVISION NO. III
BHUBANESWAR

bbsrrandb03@yahoo.com

60Estg.No - 7489 Date - 07.12.2024

Government of Odisha "e"-Procurement Notice No (31) of 2024-25

Bid Identification No :- C.C. (R&B) 03

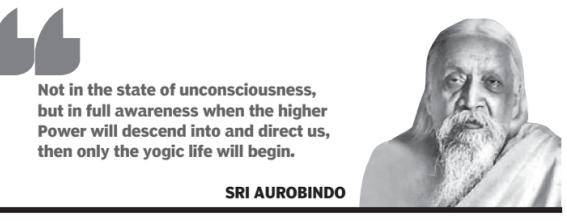
1 Name of the Work	Building Works
2 Total No. of works	02 Nos. work
3 Estimated Cost	i) Rs. 14,02,563.00, ii) Rs. 11,75,971.00
4 Class of Contractor	Sl. No. 1 & 2 "D" & "C" Class Contractors
5 Period of Completion	2 (Two) Calendar Months
6 Type of Tender	Single Cover System (Online)
7 Date & time of availability of bid document in the portal	From 10.12.2024 at 10.00 A.M. to 21.12.2024 at 5.30 P.M.
8 Last Date & Time for Receipt of bids in the Portal	23.12.2024, upto 5.30 P.M.
9 Name & Address of the Officer inviting Bid	Dr. Gayatri Patel, Superintending Engineer, Bhubaneswar (R&B) Division, No III, Bhubaneswar

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>

N.B: Subsequent corrigendum / addendum if required shall be available in the website as indicated above.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
BBSR (R&B) Division No.III, BBSR

OIPR-34089/11/0014/2425



SRI AUROBINDO

The Fall Of Assad

It's endgame for Bashar al-Assad, who ruled Syria with an iron fist for 24 years, the last 13 years witnessing a bloody civil war, as Damascus fell to rebel forces on 8 December in a lightning fast offensive. The ousted president has left the country for an undisclosed location hours before the Islamist insurgents entered the Syrian capital. Celebrations erupted across the city with crowds gathering in mosques to pray and young men indulging in celebratory firing. People stormed the presidential palace, tearing apart portraits of Assad even as soldiers and police officers abandoned their posts and fled. The rebels freed the prisoners who had been detained in Syrian jails for years, including the most infamous one at Saydnaya. Described as a "human slaughterhouse," the Saydnaya prison has witnessed more than 30,000 executions during Assad's regime.

Bashar al-Assad, then an ophthalmologist in London, took the reins from his father Hafez Assad in 2000. Hafez, a career military officer, ruled Syria for nearly three decades, establishing a Soviet-style centralised economy and maintaining strict control over dissent. He promoted a secular ideology, aimed at suppressing sectarian divisions. Hafez forged an alliance with Iran's Shiite clerical leadership, solidified Syrian dominance over Lebanon, and created a network of Palestinian and Lebanese militant groups. Initially, Bashar appeared to be a stark contrast to his authoritarian father. However, when protests against his regime erupted in March 2011 at the peak of the Arab Spring revolution, Bashar, a member of the minority Alawite sect, resorted to brutal tactics to quell dissent. He claimed that his regime was more aligned with the needs of its people as he consistently denied the existence of a popular revolt, instead attributing the unrest to "foreign-backed terrorists" attempting to undermine his government. This narrative resonated with many in Syria's minority communities, including Alawites, Christians, Druze, and Shiites, as well as some Sunnis who feared the rise of Sunni extremists more than they opposed Assad's authoritarian rule.

For years, experts believed that Assad had "won" the Syrian civil war, which has so far killed hundreds of thousands and displaced half of the country's pre-war population of 23 million, but that assertion is far from accurate. He had only survived the conflict and that was also largely due to the support of Russian airpower and Iranian mercenaries. Assad's fall is yet another example of how dictatorships, no matter how secular they are, do not last forever. Employing brutal tactics to suppress people and their voices is always a bad idea as, ultimately, it's the people's will that reigns supreme. And this is bound to happen everywhere, whether it's an autocracy or a democracy.

At the heart of the recent events in Syria is Abu Mohammed al-Golani, the militant leader whose remarkable insurgency led to Assad's downfall. Over the years, he has worked diligently to reshape his public persona, distancing himself from his long-standing connections to terror group al-Qaida. It is pertinent to note here that Golani is a designated terrorist in the US. His insurgent force, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, is going to play a key role in Syria's next government formation. However, after the five-decade rule of the Assad family, keeping Syria intact could be a Herculean task for any new regime. It is a country of multiple ethnic and religious communities, often set against one another by years of conflict. Most importantly, many of these groups are apprehensive about the potential rise of Sunni Islamist extremists. The country is also divided among various armed factions, with foreign powers such as Russia, Iran, the US, Turkey, and Israel all having a role to play.

Now, with Iran, Russia and Israel preoccupied in other theatres of war and an isolationist Donald Trump returning as the US President, the Syrian people, it is afraid, have been left to fend for themselves.



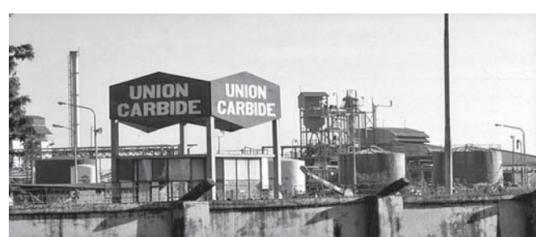
Lekha Rattanani

THE DEATHS AND SUFFERING THAT FOLLOWED THE DISASTER AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DANGERS THAT CONTINUE HAVE BEEN SWEEPED UNDER THE RUG

Bhopal was hit by a toxic gas leak from the Union Carbide pesticides production factory in the southern part of the city on the night of December 2-3, 1984. The methyl isocyanate gas spill, often called "India's Hiroshima," eventually killed 5,479 people, and left some 500,000 others injured from the poison they inhaled, leading to a spiral of suffering that continues to this day. Now, forty years down the line, it has taken the courts to note with anguish that the site has not yet been cleaned up.

Madhya Pradesh has been rapped for being still in a "state of inertia" that may cause "another tragedy." The observations of the MP High Court that this is a "really sorry state of affairs" are limited to the Union Carbide plant and lack of clean-up efforts, but the comment may well apply to the nation. If the disaster was the fault of the company, the plant and its systems, then the failure to take the right actions in good time and deliver relief to the people is the failure of India, its regulatory systems and remedial processes.

Today, there are videos of cows and goats grazing around the long-deserted plant and images of the site with toxic waste, and junked out pieces and parts still lying around. People in the surrounding settlements who depend on water drawn from the ground have complained that the tubewell water has an odd taste to it. Multiple studies have shown high levels of contamination in the water and soil around the plant. For instance, in 2012, nearly three decades post the disaster, the Indian Institute of Toxicology Research found that the groundwater around the plant was polluted with heavy metals like lead and the contamination had spread to 18 colonies in the area. Water samples tested outside the factory in 2018 found toxic chemicals like chlorobenzene, which can damage the



The wake-up call and stern warning from the High Court is not just about the state of affairs in Madhya Pradesh, the rest of India needs to heed that call

brain, liver, and kidneys. In 1997, Eveready Industries India Ltd, which bought Union Carbide Corporation's (UCC) share in Union Carbide India Ltd (UCIL) commissioned the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) to find out the extent of contamination at the Bhopal plant site. NEERI found high levels of toxins and identified hot spots at the plant site. NEERI's findings were corroborated by Greenpeace which reported a massive scale of contamination in and around the plant. Based on the reports by NEERI and Greenpeace, activists sought legal remedies in US courts against UCC for causing environmental harm.

This has been like a ticking time bomb for those living within the wide reach of the contamination. While those affected, the survivors of the leak, are living horrific lives. Many developed cancer, a large number of pregnant women had miscarriages, or delivered children with deformities and other long-term effects of toxic pollution which have also led to a large number of premature deaths.

The attraction of a vast market and cheap labour brought companies like UCC to India. UCIL built a plant in Bhopal for the manufacture of the commonly used pesticide Sevin. The pesticides plant was

part of the drive to increase agrarian self-reliance. It was designed to formulate pesticides from component chemicals but UCIL set on a competitive route and started manufacturing raw materials and intermediaries to make the final product, all within one facility. While this was clever it was also risky. The market downturn, a fall in the demand for pesticides prompted UCIL to consider opting out. As the company looked for a buyer or pondered over relocation of manufacturing to another country, production continued. But this was with less attention to safety procedures and equipment, a combination of the two, led to the disaster. When a faulty valve apparently allowed a ton of water to mix with 40 tons of MIC, key safety back-ups were missing. For instance, the vent-gas scrubber a safety device for neutralising toxic discharge had been turned off, the refrigeration unit that would have cooled the MIC storage tank had been drained off coolant.

Studies, surveys, recommendations, committees – have not resulted so far in any decisive action where the MIC disaster is concerned. Groups like the Bhopal Gas Peer Review Committee have recommended that future MNC projects should have more stringent environmental, health, and safety considerations. Haz-

ardous operations should be segregated from facilities and nearby domestic populations. Local communities should be relocated before any company is permitted to start mass production of dangerous substances. Standards of materials and equipment should be like those used in Western countries. But these recommendations have remained on paper.

Nothing much has changed from then and now. At that time, four days after the leak, UCC CEO Warren Anderson was arrested, released on bail, and flown back to the US. The deaths and suffering that followed the disaster and the environmental dangers that continue have been swept under the rug. The abandoned plant has continued to threaten lives. But this time the victims may get a reprieve. The court ruling on a petition filed in 2004, has issued a warning of contempt proceedings against the principal secretary of the concerned department if the toxic waste is not disposed within a month. The wake-up call and stern warning from the High Court is not just about the state of affairs in MP, the rest of India needs to heed that call.

While this plays out and the cleanup is hopefully done, the nation may ponder on opening up in ways that appear to bring benefits but actually can cause long term damage to the health and safety of its citizens. A strong India is not only about protecting the borders but equally about systems and processes that do not allow companies, particularly giants from foreign shores, to get away with anything less than standards that some of these companies are required to follow in their home countries. Even if the cleanup happens, at long last, the other lesson for holding companies to account is yet to be learned.

The writer is the Managing Editor of The Billion Press.
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WISDOM CORNER

The Real is ever-present, like the screen on which the cinematographic pictures move. While the picture appears on it, the screen remains invisible. Stop the picture, and the screen will become clear. All thoughts and events are merely pictures moving on the screen of Pure Consciousness, which alone is real.

RAMANA MAHARSHI

Keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children.

KAHILU GIBRAN

Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word happy would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness. It is far better take things as they come along with patience and equanimity.

CARL JUNG

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1824: Revolutionary forces under the leadership of Venezuelan Antonio José de Sucre defeated the Spanish royal army at the Battle of Ayacucho.
- 1958: The John Birch Society was founded in the United States by Robert H.W. Welch, Jr., to combat communism and promote various ultraconservative causes.
- 1961: Tanganyika gains independence. The Republic of Tanganyika was administered by the British from 1916 until 1961. Part of German East Africa, the territory was officially handed over to the British by League of Nations mandate in 1922. The Republic was short-lived. In April 1964, it joined the People's Republic of Zanzibar and Pemba to form the United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, which became the United Republic of Tanzania in 1965.
- 1965: A Charlie Brown Christmas made its debut on television. The popular animated musical special about Christmas was based on Charles M. Schulz's comic strip called Peanuts. The special was critically acclaimed as a telling commentary on the loss of the spirit of Christmas among Americans. It is now screened every year at Christmas time around the world.
- 1979: WHO declares the eradication of smallpox. The World Health Organization officially certified that after a number of concentrated vaccination campaigns around the world smallpox had been eradicated. Only two infectious diseases have been completely eradicated in history; the other is Rinderpest, which is an infectious disease of cattle that was eradicated in 2011.

SPECTRUM GENDER EQUITY

The second glass ceiling

In recent decades, the invisible barrier that prevents women from ascending to senior positions in politics, business firms, and other organisations has been cracked, if not shattered, in a growing number of countries. But another barrier – a "second glass ceiling" – to women's advancement remains. As a result, women across sectors and countries are increasingly leaving the workforce prematurely – and not by choice.

The problem is particularly pronounced in China, where the statutory retirement age is 50 or 55 for women (depending on their occupation), and 60 for men. For years, this gender-based retirement system, originally intended to "protect" female workers from long-term heavy labour, remained unchanged, despite rising life expectancies and gains in women's educational and employment outcomes. The Chinese government recently announced that, starting in 2025, it will gradually raise the mandatory retirement age to 63 for men and 55 or 58 for women. Such a change is long overdue, given the country's

rapidly-aging population and looming pension crisis. Unfortunately, the gender gap in retirement age persists.

Women's early exit from the workforce has far-reaching social and economic implications. For starters, there is the loss of human capital, particularly among the highly educated. Because women in China retire earlier than men on average, despite achieving similar levels of tertiary education, the economy is underutilising their skills.

Moreover, the second glass ceiling exacerbates the first one: women have fewer opportunities for promotion to leadership positions, resulting in fewer role models and mentors for younger workers. The lack of senior women in business and government also means that decision-making processes at both the organisational and national levels are dominated by men, to the detriment of society.

China, like many countries, is also facing a demographic crisis, which has spurred efforts to increase the birth rate. But motherhood often results in women – who already face shorter career spans – spending

more time out of the workforce and earning less income over their lifetime. This discourages women from having children, leading to a self-defeating cycle.

Lastly, shorter career spans can reduce women's pension benefits by preventing them from extending their working years to compensate for career interruptions from childbirth and caregiving responsibilities. Given that women live longer than men on average, this can jeopardise their long-term financial security.

Companies can and should take concrete steps to retain female workers. That could mean establishing mentorship programmes that offer role models and networking opportunities for women and counteract the "old boys' club" culture that perpetuates gender promotion and pay gaps. Parental leave policies for both men and women can help address the imbalance in caregiving responsibilities. Equally important is tackling age discrimination in hiring and retention, and offering support to women experiencing menopause and other health issues that often lead them to give up working.

But in China, the most consequential change that the government could make would be to end its gender-specific mandatory retirement policy. No longer forcing women to leave the workforce before men would be a step toward equality and could even increase demand for childcare and eldercare.

While helping women reach leadership roles remains crucial to advancing gender equality, political and business leaders must also focus on creating the conditions that allow female workers to remain productive in their fields for as long as they want. Many countries, including the US, Canada, and Japan, have moved away from mandatory retirement ages, and those that still use them tend to have different cutoffs for men and women (Russia is one of the few exceptions). A flexible retirement system would put a large crack in China's second glass ceiling by allowing women to realise their full professional potential.

The writer is Professor in the School of Economics at the Renmin University of China.
©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Xianghong Wang

WOMEN ACROSS SECTORS AND COUNTRIES ARE INCREASINGLY LEAVING THE WORKFORCE PREMATURELY – AND NOT BY CHOICE

Letters TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 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



Women-centric schemes

Sir, Direct cash transfer schemes to women in India have been gaining ground over the past decade and they have a positive impact on women's empowerment and development. These schemes have significant potential to transform women's lives and consequentially lead to societal progress. The growing popularity of direct cash transfer schemes for women reflects a broader trend in Indian politics where electoral considerations shape welfare policies. While direct benefit transfer schemes offer immediate benefits, they cannot substitute long-term structural reforms that address the root causes of poverty and inequality in society. The challenge for policymakers will be to find a balance between the immediate relief and the sustainable welfare reforms that can provide lasting benefits to women, especially those belonging to marginalised communities. Women are predominantly the recipients of welfare benefits as they are likely to be poorer than men, which is a fact euphemistically disguised as the "feminisation of poverty." According to the United Nations, "women are the world's poor," and the pandemic pushed women further into poverty. This partly explains why the schemes of unconditional cash transfers to women have emerged as the defining trend in the elections in the country.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Exorbitant taxes

Sir, This refers to the news report "Rahul claims govt to bring new GST slab," Orissa Post, December 8. This is the ground reality, which the BJP government at the Centre wants to suppress. The way the government is pampering billionaires, the common people will die fulfilling their basic needs. This is clearly evident when the income tax and the GST rates have been hiked abnormally allegedly to give adequate concession to a section of billionaires, having proximity to the government at the Centre. The people are watching the growing nexus between billionaires and the government as has been pointed out by Rahul Gandhi and they will certainly revolt and reject the present government.

Arun Gupta, KOLKATA

Student suicides hit Kota factory

The number of students in Kota has fallen to 85,000 to 1 lakh this year from the usual 2 to 2.5 lakh, reducing the annual revenue to ₹3,500 crore from ₹6,500 to ₹7,000 crore, according to industry stakeholders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kota, Dec 8: Business has slowed down for coaching centres and hostels in Kota following negative publicity over student suicides, new guidelines regulating coaching centres and the expansion of coaching brands to other cities, according to industry stakeholders.

The number of students in Kota has fallen to 85,000 to 1 lakh this year from the usual 2 to 2.5 lakh, reducing the annual revenue to ₹3,500 crore from ₹6,500 to ₹7,000 crore, they said.

Despite the setback, stakeholders remain optimistic about the credibility of the Kota coaching model and its environment, that is absent in other cities.

Kota's educational system and environment are unmatched and will attract students back next session, which will compensate for the decline, Govindram Mittal, Zonal Chairperson, United Council of Rajasthan Industries said.

He said that industrialists are also looking at alternative opportunities, with plans to establish Information Technology (IT) hubs in the city, modelled after Bangalore.

Earlier this year, the Karnataka government approved a Bill seeking to reserve 50 per cent of management positions



This is the first time in decades that the student hub here has seen a sharp drop of 30-40 per cent in the number of students coming in

and 75 per cent of non-management positions in private sector for locals, drawing criticism from across the industry.

Industrialists here have approached companies based in Bangalore to shift base to Kota and after a nod from these companies, land for IT sectors have been earmarked under the direction of Lok Sabha speaker and Kota-Bundi MP Om Birla, Mittal said.

President of Kota Hostel Association Naveen Mittal said that the coaching centre and hostel industry here is certainly in crisis. Some owners who have built several hostels on loans are finding it difficult to pay back installments.

He said that the crisis has hit hostel owners hard, with occupancy down to 40 to 50 per cent

in most of the city's 4,500 hostels.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Kota ranks behind 50 cities in terms of suicide rates, yet the city has been portrayed negatively, Naveen emphasised.

The room rents have dipped from ₹15,000 to ₹9,000 and many hostels remain vacant, Manik Sahani, a hostel manager in Coral Park said.

"The quality of teaching in Kota is far better than in other cities. The environment is excellent for studies," Priyadarshini Panna, a NEET aspirant from

Odisha said. "Kota gives the best facilities and environment for education and accommodation. This was the reason I chose to prepare for NEET in Kota," another student from Jalore district said.

Kota's annual average student strength was close to 1.5 lakh in 2023 and this year it's down to 85,000, the industry stakeholders claimed.

They said that the guidelines for registration and regulation of coaching centres, 2024, introduced earlier this year, prohibiting admission of students below 16 years of age, have impacted enrolments, they said.

A local auto driver, Ajay, who once ferried 60 students daily, now manages only 20, struggling to meet instalments on vehicles purchased on loans.

"I had a good number of shifts of students, making money for my family run very happily but this year I am struggling to meet ends for instalments as there are not enough coaching students in the city," he said.

ABSENCE OF BANGLADESHI TOURISTS

Worried WB traders think of wooing local customers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 8: The ongoing crisis in Bangladesh and subsequent non-arrival of travellers from there has led to a blow to the traders of a particular area in central Kolkata, which is popular among tourists from the neighbouring country for shopping and staying.

Protests were held in various parts of West Bengal Sunday over the alleged atrocities on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh.

A section of those perplexed traders are staring at a void, while others are either looking at new avenues or decided to woo back the Indian customers they have lost in the past.

An estimated 15,000 families are now affected by the situation.

According to a trader, in the past, local customers and tourists from other states in India used to visit these areas for various purposes. They were more or less ignored by the traders and their population gradually dwindled over the years.

"Now there is a big question mark. They don't know what to do... they don't know in which direction their business will go since they are dependent only on the Bangladeshis," the Na-



I am 55 years old and grew up in this area. I have seen local people - Hindus and Muslims - shopping before Durga Puja and Eid in the area in my childhood

HYDER ALI KHAN | SECRETARY, FREE SCHOOL STREET TRADERS ASSOCIATION

tional Committee Member of Travel Agents Federation of India (East India), Anil Punjabi, said.

He said the governments of both countries should hold a dialogue to resolve the situation as fast as possible.

With 80 to 85 per cent of Bangladeshis visiting Free School Street, Marquis Street, Sudder Street, Lindsay Street, Collin Lane and the adjoining areas for forex, airline tickets, hotels, restaurants and shopping, businessmen in this region became dependent on tourists

from the neighbouring country, Free School Street Traders Association secretary, Hyder Ali Khan, said.

"All of us are in trouble as a result of the crisis," Khan said, condemning the ongoing atrocities against Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh.

Gradually everything changed due to the constant wooing only of Bangladeshi customers and therefore Indian tourists and even locals, started avoiding this area as it is full of Bangladeshi tourists, he narrated.

Eklingji temple in Udaipur bans mobile, short dresses

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Dec 8: To maintain the sanctity of the religious place, the Eklingji temple in Udaipur has prohibited mobile phones and entry of people wearing short clothes.

Under the new guidelines, the temple prohibited entry for devotees wearing short clothes such as mini-skirts, bermudas and night suits.

The temple management has clarified that the dress code aims to preserve the temple's purity and respect its sacredness.

A banner was installed on the temple premises Friday mentioning new guidelines.

In addition to clothing restrictions, carrying mobile phones inside the temple premises was banned. Previously, visitors were allowed to bring phones in a switched-off mode, though photography within the temple had always been prohibited. The management has also reiterated that pets and weapons remain prohibited in the temple.

The temple committee has urged devotees to respect these new rules to maintain the sanctity of the shrine.



The temple's management said that many visitors had expressed discomfort over inappropriate attire within the temple, prompting these changes.

Located in Kailashpuri village, approximately 22 km from Udaipur, Eklingji Temple is a revered site dedicated to Lord Shiva, worshipped as the deity of Mewar. It was established by Bappa Rawal between 734-753 AD and renovated by Maharana Mokal (1421-1433 AD).

The present-day idol was installed by Maharana Raimal (1473-1509 AD).

Constructed from white marble, the temple complex includes 108 small shrines. The sanctum houses a four-faced black marble idol of Lord Eklingji and a silver idol of Nandi outside.

Other temples in Rajasthan have also implemented dress codes to promote discipline and cultural awareness.

In Jagdish Temple, Udaipur, T-shirts, Bermudas, and night suits were banned last year, though the decision sparked controversy, leading to the removal of banners.

In Jharkhand Mahadev Temple, Jaipur too, half-pants, bermudas, mini-skirts, night suits, and torn jeans were banned.

Kotri Charbhujanath Temple, Bhilwara had also enforced a dress code earlier.

Raj eyes investment to emerge as \$350bn economy in five yrs



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Dec 8: To realise the vision of making the state a \$350 billion economy in the next five years, the three-day 'Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit' will be organised from December 9.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the chief guest of the summit and deliver the inaugural address.

The event will see industrialists, investors and ambassadors from 32 countries, of which 17 will be "partner countries".

Several Union Cabinet and State Cabinet members, more than 5,000 investors, business and trade officials, and delegates will attend the summit.

MoUs for investment proposals worth ₹30 lakh crore have already been signed.

Eminent business dignitaries scheduled to grace the event include Gautam Adani, Kumar Mangalam Birla, Anil Agrawal, Anand Mahindra and Sanjeev Puri.

At least 4,000 policemen, including 11 IPS officers, have been deployed to maintain law and order.

Around 180 special guests including investors, businessmen and ambassadors will attend the summit and four five-star hotels have been booked for their stay.

Additional Commissioner (Law and Order) Rameshwar Singh said tight security arrangements have been made for the Prime Minister's visit to Jaipur and the summit.

"JECC campus has been converted into a security fortress. Tight security arrangements have been made in the entire city. During the event, two IPS and other police officers will see traffic management."

'RISING RAJASTHAN GLOBAL INVESTMENT SUMMIT'



BSF dare devils perform during their 60th Border Security Force (BSF) Raising Day, at STC BSF, in Jodhpur, Rajasthan

PTI PHOTO

Century of flight operations in City of Joy

Kolkata became a destination for passenger aircraft, and the airport took to its wings as major airlines started utilising it for facilitating trade between continents

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 8: The Airports Authority of India is all set to celebrate 100 years of flight operations at Kolkata airport, officials said Sunday.

Flight operations in Kolkata airport started in 1924.

"The Airports Authority of India proudly celebrates 100 Glorious Years of #KolkataAirport @aaiairport, a gateway that has seamlessly bridged the world with the soul of #WestBengal. Originally known as #DumDumAirport, this Iconic Airport stands as a testament to Timeless Brilliance, where History Whispers, Culture Thrives & the Skies Unite," AAI Kolkata Airport said in a post on X.

"A Century of Excellence,



welcoming the world to the City of Joy!" it said.

According to sources at the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International (NSCBI) Airport, the celebrations will begin from the third week of December and will continue till March end next year.

There is a possibility that Union Civil Aviation minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu will be present at the inauguration of 100 years celebrations of the airport, sources said, adding that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee may also be present on the occasion.

"We have lined up a number of events for the celebrations,"

Director of NSCBI airport Dr Pravat Ranjan Beuria told PTI over phone.

Historical exhibitions, cultural events, signature campaigns, and panel discussions will be some of the events to name a few.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport was founded in the early 1900s as the Calcutta Aerodrome.

The airport traditionally served as a strategic stopover on the air route from North America and Europe to Indochina and Australia. Dakota 3 was the first aircraft to land in the airport.

In 1924, KLM began scheduled stops at Calcutta, as part

of their Amsterdam to Batavia (Jakarta) route.

The same year, a Royal Air Force aircraft landed in Calcutta as part of the first round-the-world expedition by any air force.

Research findings show that May 2, 1924, Mr Doyce, a French Pilot, landed his flight at this airport. On May 5, 1924 another Paris to Tokyo flight en route from Agra landed at Dum Dum Airport, which drew a massive crowd. Similarly, May 16, 1924 at 11:30 AM another flight from Allahabad landed at this Airport.

Further findings show that November 14, 1924 during night hours a flight from Amsterdam landed at this airport for which arrangements were made by lighting large numbers of 'MASHAAL' (torch) with fuel like cloths, grass, oil, etc.

Most probably, this was the first night landing by an aircraft at the airport.

According to information available at the airport, it began as an open ground next to the Royal Artillery Armoury in Dum Dum. Sir Stanley Jackson, Governor of Bengal, opened the Bengal Flying Club at Dum Dum/Calcutta aerodrome in February 1929.

Commercial airlines started operations from Kolkata soon after World War II.

Bryan Adams kicks off 'So Happy It Hurts Tour'

This marked Bryan Adams' sixth visit to India, but his first performance in Kolkata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 8: Kolkata was alive with energy as rock legend Bryan Adams kicked-off his highly anticipated 'So Happy It Hurts Tour 2024' from the city Sunday.

The Canadian singer expressed his excitement to perform in the 'City of Joy', captivating fans with his timeless hits like 'Summer of 69', 'Please Forgive Me', and 'Everything I Do (I Do It for You)'. Performing at the Aquatica water park complex, Adams delivered an unforgettable experience, marking a historic moment in Kolkata's live music scene.

"I feel so excited to perform in your city for the first time. It is named 'So Happy It Hurts Tour', and obviously, I am happy," Adams told reporters before being escorted to his vehicle by security personnel at the Netaji Subhas Chandra International Airport.

Before taking the stage to



Music is a way to communicate various emotions

BRYAN ADAMS | ROCK LEGEND

perform in front of thousands, he said, "I am looking forward to a great experience, feeling the vibes. The crowd is so enthusiastic." During his performance, he said, "Music is a way to communicate various emotions."

This marked Bryan Adams' sixth visit to India, but his first performance in Kolkata. The concert is part of his nationwide tour, which will also see him perform in Shillong, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Gurugram, and Bangalore. He had previously visited India in 1993-94, 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2018.

One of the event organisers said the Kolkata leg of the tour was made possible through tennis star Mahesh Bhupathi's event management company.



Technology used in crime investigations under the new criminal laws is foolproof, provided protocols are strictly followed
SS YADAV | C'GARH DGP

MORE FISHERMEN HELD BY SL

Pattali Makkal Katchi chief Anbumani Ramadoss Sunday said eight Tamil Nadu fishermen, hailing from Rameswaram, have been arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy and urged the Centre to take immediate steps for their release and that of all other fishers, lodged in prisons in the island nation



of the day quote

I hope that one day, there will be a bridge over the Brahmaputra in every district it flows through
HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

I personally inspected five stations. The holding areas at these stations, where the devotees will be able to sit till their trains arrive, are very good. Colour coding has been used in the holding areas and tickets so that the devotees can reach the right platform
ASHWINI VAISHNAV | RAIL MINISTER

We have chosen the path of Viksit Bharat in 2047. Viksit Bharat is no longer a dream, but a target before us
JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | VICE PRESIDENT

Farmers suspend march after clash with cops

A group of 101 farmers resumed the foot march this afternoon, they were halted by a multilayered barricade set up by Haryana security personnel who surprised the protesters by offering them tea and biscuits and also showering them with flower petals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shambhu (Punjab), Dec 8: Agitating farmers suspended their foot march to Delhi Sunday after some of them sustained injuries in teargas shelling by Haryana security personnel who thwarted yet another attempt by the protesters to cross the Punjab-Haryana border.

Farmer leaders said they will decide the next course of action Monday. As a group of 101 farmers resumed the foot march this afternoon, they were halted by a multilayered barricade set up by Haryana security personnel who surprised the protesters by offering them tea and biscuits and also showering them with flower petals. But the protesters claimed it was all a "drama" as the police soon lobbed teargas shells and used water jets to disperse them when they insisted on crossing the Shambhu border.

Ambala police had earlier said the farmer outfits, which are agitating for a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price and other demands, can march to Delhi only after getting permission from the national capital administration.

The protesters, dubbed as 'marjeevras', (someone willing to die for a cause), were stopped only a few metres into the march and the standoff continued for over three hours. The farmers called off their march for the day following action of security forces.

Punjab farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher in the evening said six farmers were injured and one of them was rushed to the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) in Chandigarh.

He said farmers would decide their next course of action in a meeting of their forums

-- the Samyuka Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha Monday.

The protesting farmers have been pressing the Centre to initiate talks with them to address their issues. On Friday too, farmers had to suspend their march after some of them suffered injuries due to tear gas shells.

Farmer leader Baldev Singh Zira, who led the 'jatha' Sunday, said it was a "drama" by Haryana Police. As the protesters reached the barricades, a few police personnel climbed the roof of a tin shed where security personnel have been stationed, and threw flower petals on a group of farmers.

Zira said farmers were moving ahead in a peaceful manner and they were not carrying any weapon as he criticised the Haryana security personnel for using teargas against them.



Farmers run for cover after police used teargas to disperse them during their protest at the Shambhu border in Patiala district

FROM TEA SNACKS TO TEAR GAS



Farmers take an injured farmer for treatment and care

Pandher said the farmers who sustained injuries included Resham Singh, who was referred to the PGIMER, Dilbagh Singh, Major Singh and Harbhajan Singh. Pandher claimed that mediapersons were stopped by the Punjab Police from reaching the protest site. He said that Haryana

police had asked the Punjab Police to keep the media at least one km away from the protest site.

A Haryana security personnel was seen asking farmers to show permission to march to Delhi and questioned the identity of some of the protesters. As the confrontation escalat-

The farmers had earlier attempted to march towards Delhi February 13 and February 21 but were stopped by security forces deployed at the border points

ed, the security forces lobbed tear gas shells. The gas forced the farmers, many of whom had covered their faces and were wearing protective eye-wear, to recede a few metres. Some tried to cover the shells with wet jute bags. Pandher said their protest completed 300 days Sunday.

Farmers under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) and Kisan Maz-

door Morcha have been camping at Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since February 13 after their march to Delhi was stopped by security forces. Farmer leader Tejveer Singh asked why farmers were stopped from moving ahead when they were peacefully going on foot.

Haryana Police has written to its Punjab counterpart asking it to ensure media personnel are stopped at a "safe distance" from the protest site for the sake of their safety.

It had earlier asked the farmers not to proceed with the march and cited a prohibitory order clamped by the Ambala administration under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS) that bans unlawful assembly of five or more people in the district.

MVA leaders meet Fadnavis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 8: Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders Sunday met Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and sought the deputy speaker's post for one of the constituent parties in the Opposition alliance.

The leaders told Fadnavis the Opposition would allow the speaker of the Assembly to be elected unopposed but wanted the ruling side to follow protocol and give them the deputy speaker's post.

The delegation was led by Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Bhaskar Jadhav. Speaking to reporters at the Vidhan Bhavan complex, Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole reiterated that the post of deputy speaker should be given to the Opposition.

"Maharashtra's legislative tradition suggests that the speaker should be elected unopposed and the deputy speaker's post must be given to the Opposition. In the Delhi Assembly, despite the BJP having only three MLAs, the Aam Aadmi Party had granted it Leader of the Opposition post," he pointed out.

"A Maha Vikas Aghadi delegation met CM Fadnavis to discuss granting the Leader of Opposition post to the MVA. We hope the Mahayuti government will consider this proposal positively," Patole added.

The Maha Vikas Aghadi constitutes the Shiv Sena (UBT), the Congress and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP). None of the three parties could win 10 per cent seats in the November 20 polls to claim the LoP post.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) emerged victorious on 20 seats, the Congress on 16 and NCP (SP) on 10.

Later, the MVA leaders held a meeting to discuss the alliance's floor strategy in the legislature.

SHORT TAKES

UK tourist dies of cardiac arrest

Kohima: A tourist from the UK attending the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland died of cardiac arrest, police said Sunday. The 67-year-old man complained of severe chest pain Saturday evening and was rushed to a health camp located at the festival venue, Naga Heritage Village Kisama, they said.

Four of family die of food poisoning

Jammu: Four members of a family died of food poisoning Sunday in J&K's Rajouri district. Officials said that four members of a family, including three minors, died of suspected food poisoning in Badhal Gorla village of the Budhal area in Rajouri district. "The mother and her daughter have been hospitalised for treatment. The entire family fell ill after eating some food at their home," officials said.

Telangana CM claims record

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister A Revanthy Reddy said Sunday that during the first year in power, the Congress government in the state set a record in farm loan waiver, crop bonus, jobs creation and attracting investments. He said the government waived farm loans of 25 lakh farmers by crediting over ₹21,000 crore directly into their accounts.

Photo studio gutted in Pune

Pune: Seven persons were hospitalised after a fire destroyed a photo studio in Pune Sunday evening, an official said. The blaze erupted at the photo studio, located on the ground floor of a 5-storey building in the city's Bavdhan area, around 5.50 pm, he said. "We received a call at 5.52 pm about the incident. Five fire tenders were rushed to the spot to douse the blaze," the fire brigade official said.

Parts of Delhi-NCR witness rainfall

New Delhi: Parts of Delhi-NCR experienced rainfall Sunday evening, with the weather department predicting more rain in isolated areas of the city. Some areas of West Delhi, Outer North Delhi and Gurugram received rain. Meanwhile, Delhi recorded its second-lowest daytime temperature of the winter season so far Sunday at 23.7 degrees Celsius. The department has also forecast moderate to dense fog Monday morning.

ATTACKS ON HINDUS IN B'DESH

Protests across West Bengal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 8: Protests were held in various parts of West Bengal on Sunday over the alleged atrocities on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh.

Hundreds of people joined the protest rallies organised by Hindutva groups in Kolkata, Kanthi, Kakdwip, Sandeshkhali and Purulia, calling for the immediate release of Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das.

At the demonstration outside the Salt Lake International Bus Terminus near Kolkata, protesters torched Dhakai Jamdani sarees from Bangladesh. They called for a boycott of Bangladeshi goods, warning that Indians wouldn't remain silent if the disrespect toward the tricolour and attacks on Hindus continued. "We condemn the continuous targeting of Hindus in Bangladesh and the hate-driven narratives

against India. We will not sit idle and with burning the Jamdani sarees, we urge people to boycott Bangladeshi products," said a protestor.

"What kind of Bangladesh is this? The people who fought for liberation in 1971 now seem to be erasing their own history," said another protestor. Leading the protest rally in Kanthi, the state's Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari said 'sanatanis' were united against rising fundamentalist forces in Bangladesh.

"The martyrdom of 30,000 Indian soldiers in the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war has been forgotten by the Islamists in the neighbouring country. Today's rally is a wake-up call to the elements across the border to stop rabble-rousing rhetoric," he said.

When asked about anti-India statements by Bangladeshi groups, Adhikari said that following international protocol and UN guidelines, the Narendra Modi government will take appropriate steps at the right moment.



Snowfall at Peer ki Gali, in Shopian district of north Kashmir

SAFE ZONE PROJECT A SUCCESS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pathanamthitta (Kerala), Dec 8: As this year's Mandala-Makaravilakku pilgrimage season at the Sabarimala Lord Ayyappa temple reaches halfway, devotees are experiencing safe journeys along the pilgrimage route, thanks to the Safe Zone Project implemented by the Kerala Motor Vehicles Department (MVD).

According to the officials, road accidents have come down significantly compared to the previous year on the Sabarimala route. Over the past 21 days, a total of 38 accidents were reported within a 400-km radius of Elavunkal, Erume-

ly, and Kuttikkanam areas, which fall in Pathanamthitta, Kottayam and Idukki districts respectively, resulting in 20 minor injuries and no serious casualties, said an official release issued Sunday.

This marks a significant improvement compared to the same period last year, which saw 60 accidents, including two fatalities. In 2023, Erumely and Kuttikkanam alone accounted for 22 and 26 accidents, respectively, the release added.

Idukki Enforcement RTO K K Rajeev said that the decline in accidents is due to intensified patrolling, improved road conditions, and a favorable weather. The Safe Zone Project, a col-



laborative effort by the Motor Vehicles Department and the Kerala Road Safety Authority, has deployed 24 squads to en-

sure round-the-clock monitoring in Elavunkal, Kuttikkanam, and Erumely, the release added. Approximately 40 lakh vehi-

cles, both small and large, have passed along the pilgrimage route so far this season, the release said. Officials have also taken proactive measures, such as educating drivers about road characteristics and distributing black tea to prevent drowsiness,

It added. Emergency services are on high alert, with ambulance facilities from the Health Department and the Police ready to transport accident victims to hospitals, the release said.

In addition, a repair unit in Elavunkal provides free repair services for vehicles weighing up to 40 tons. A total of 90 mechanical teams representing 35 vehicle manufacturers are stationed along the route, the release said.

Pilgrims can contact emergency helplines for assistance in case of accidents or other emergencies at Elavunkal (09400044991), Erumely (09496367974) and Kuttikkanam (09446037100), it added.



Delhi Police is not in our control, otherwise, the situation in Delhi would not have been this bad. Just as I fixed schools, hospitals, and electricity, I would have fixed law and order too

DELHI'S AIR QUALITY DETERIORATES

Delhi's air quality took a downturn Sunday, plunging again into the 'very poor' category with an AQI reading of 302 after having improved to the 'moderate' level at the start of December.



of the day quote

The BJP never gave a stable government. From 2008 to 2013, there were three chief ministers. Again from 2019 to 2023, there were two chief ministers

Those who cry on the action against musclemen and rioters can never understand this DNA

Raj Thackeray thought power could not come without him. His dreams have been shattered. With me in the alliance, there is no place for Raj Thackeray.

Net shutdown, violence, curfew affecting students: Academics

Imphal, Dec 8: Prolonged violence in Manipur with frequent internet shutdowns, curfews and general strikes is affecting the academic and career pursuits of students pursuing higher education in the northeastern state.

Science and Engineering and also in charge of placement of National Institute of Technology (NIT) Manipur, K H Johnson Singh told PTI "We have witnessed a decline in recruitment drives after violence broke out in the state.



MANIPUR CRISIS

gunfights at peripheral areas seemed to have affected their psychology." Eighty per cent of our students stay in hostels within the campus and have access to broadband 24 hours a day, he added.

Curfews and general strikes have severely affected ongoing classes. Timely completion of assignments given to students are also affected as many students do not have broadband at their homes.

Curfews and general strikes have severely affected ongoing classes

Punjab: Elections to 5 MCs, 44 councils to be held Dec 21

Chandigarh, Dec 8: Election to five municipal corporations and 44 municipal councils and nagar panchayats in Punjab will be held December 21, the State Election Commission said Sunday.

ISI, its human courier network is targeting Indian jails: Officials



Officials said that more than 10 such cases have been reported since July this year in which Pakistani nationals have entered India from their country and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

New Delhi, Dec 8: Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI has reportedly resorted to infiltrating individuals under the influence of drugs or posing as mentally disturbed into India to utilise them to deliver critical messages to hardcore terrorists incarcerated in the country's prisons.

They explained that the use of mobile phones and the internet leaves behind electronic footprints that could expose the plans of both state and non-state actors operating across the border.



Monkeys at play during a cold winter morning in New Delhi

INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS

New Delhi, Dec 8: Criticising the government over its statement in Parliament on India-China ties, the Congress Sunday claimed that the Modi government has agreed to a "new normal" over the "old normal" prevailing before April 2020 which was unilaterally disturbed by China.

Cong demands discussion in Parliament

Ramesh said the Congress has studied the recent suo motu statement made by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in both Houses of Parliament titled "Recent Developments in India's Relations with China."

While "fully appreciating" the sensitive nature of many aspects of India-China border relations, he said the Congress has four pointed questions on the statement issued by the Modi government.

pointed out that it is an unfortunate reminder that the very first official communication to the nation on this crisis came on June 19, 2020, when the PM provided a clean chit publicly to China and falsely stated "Na koi hamari seema mein ghus aaya hai, na hi koi ghusa hua hai".

POST OF THE DAY

The real Deep Fake and Deep State is Gujarat. The Fake #GujaratModel has:

- Fake Hospital, Fake Toll booths, Fake Irrigation offices, Fake Currency (₹ & \$), Fake Custom Offices, Fake Police Officers, Fake NIA, Fake CBI, Fake IB, Fake DC, Fake Schools, Fake Teachers, Fake Court, Fake Judge, Fake PMO Officer, Fake Visas, Fake Police, Fake ED, Fake Encounters.

SHORT TAKES

College student gangraped, 2 held

Chennai: A college student with mental illness was gang-raped here and two persons were arrested in this connection, the police said Sunday.

PM to visit Raj, Haryana today

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Rajasthan Monday during which he will inaugurate the Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit 2024.

Student ends life

Bilaspur (HP): A class X student allegedly hanged herself in a washroom of a school here, police said Sunday.

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE POLICY

Centre urges states to submit action plans

The Union Health Ministry's letter to all states comes after the Supreme Court November 12 stated that the effective roll-out of the policy would require comprehensive action plans tailored to the specific needs and contexts of each state and UT

New Delhi, Dec 8: The Centre has urged states to submit action plans for effective implementation of the menstrual hygiene policy for school girls to ensure their access to low-cost hygiene products and gender-responsive sanitation facilities in public and government-aided schools.

about the 'Menstrual Hygiene Policy for School Going Girls,' which was approved by the Union Health Ministry November 2.



says that states/UTs should assess and estimate the actual requirement of menstrual hygiene products to enable efficient use of resources. To enable coverage, assessment through appropriate levels of survey mechanisms can be undertaken by states or UTs followed by gap filling, so that

girls in government and government aided schools have regular access to menstrual hygiene products. Additionally, the policy seeks to dissipate harmful social norms, promote safe menstrual hygiene practices, and enable environment friendly management of menstrual waste.

and awareness besides prioritising sensitisation and awareness activities to promote safe menstrual hygiene practices and foster behavioural change among adolescents, parents and educators.

international



We expect that we will be able to overcome this impasse. Establishing mutual communication and meeting each other is very important to overcome any such stalemate

NOTRE DAME HOSTS FIRST MASS SINCE 2019 FIRE Notre Dame Cathedral, its air thick with the smell of incense, Sunday hosted its first Mass since the catastrophic fire of 2019, a moment that transcends religious significance to become a powerful symbol of Paris' resilience



Years of bloodshed, division

Fall of Bashar Assad after 14 years of war in Syria brings to end decades-long dynasty

spread use of torture and extrajudicial executions in Syria's government-run detention centers.

— including Russia's war in Ukraine and the yearlong wars between Israel and the Iran-backed militant groups Hezbollah and Hamas — appeared reluctant to forcefully intervene.

Throughout, Assad relied largely on the same power base at home as his father: his Alawite sect, an offshoot of Shiite Islam comprising around 10% of the population.

WORLD REACTS Assad is gone. He has fled his country. His protector, Russia, led by Vladimir Putin, was not interested in protecting him any longer.

'THE FUTURE IS OURS'

Al-Golani, the man behind insurgency



Beirut: As the commander of al Qaeda's franchise in the Syrian civil war, Abu Mohammed al-Golani was a shadowy figure who kept out of the public eye, even when his group became the most powerful faction fighting President Bashar al-Assad.

Today, he is Syria's most recognisable insurgent, having gradually stepped into the limelight since severing ties to al Qaeda in 2016, rebranding his group and emerging as the de facto ruler of rebel-held northwestern Syria.

The transformation has been showcased since rebels led by Golani's Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), formerly known as the Nusra Front, captured Aleppo last week, with Golani featuring prominently and sending messages aimed at reassuring Syrian minorities who have long feared the jihadists.

The rebels now face the daunting task of healing bitter divides in a country ravaged by war and still split among different armed factions. They also dealt a major blow to the influence of Russia and Iran in Syria in the heart of the region - allies who had propped up Assad during critical periods in the conflict



Beirut, Dec 8: The fall of Syrian President Bashar Assad's government Sunday brought to a dramatic close his nearly 14-year struggle to hold onto power as his country fragmented amid a brutal civil war that became a proxy battlefield for regional and international powers.

His departure brings an end to the Assad family rule, spanning just under 54 years. With no clear successor, it throws the country into further uncertainty. While Damascus remained under crippling Western sanctions, neighboring countries had begun to re-sign themselves to Assad's continued hold on power.

Drawn in as well were members of the new middle class created by his reforms, including prominent Sunni merchant families.

The ministry said in a statement, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has left office and departed the country after giving orders there be a peaceful handover of power

Syria has reached a stage where the Syrian people will shape the future of their own country, today there is hope, Fidan said in a press conference in Doha

Assad has murdered, tortured and used poison gas against his own people. He must finally be held accountable for this



A man tries to take a lamp as people search for belongings in the ransacked private residence of Syrian President Bashar Assad in the Malkeh district of Damascus, Syria, Sunday

Syrians celebrate Bashar Assad's fall

Syrians cross over from Lebanon, facing an uncertain future but hopeful for change

ing a yearslong siege. The night before, Opposition forces had taken the central city of Homs, Syria's third largest, as government forces abandoned it.



against the backdrop of mosaiced walls, while others walked out with chairs and other items under their arms. On the massive parking lot out front, cars drove in circles honking ecstatically.

Damascus: Crowds gathered in Syria's Damascus Sunday to celebrate the fall of Bashar Assad's government with chants, prayers and the occasional gunfire after Opposition fighters entered the capital following a stunning advance.

The rapidly developing events have shaken the region. Lebanon said it was closing all its land border crossings with Syria except for one that links Beirut with Damascus.

Trump seeks 'immediate' cease-fire in Ukraine

Washington, Dec 8: Donald Trump Sunday called for an immediate cease-fire in Russia's war with Ukraine and the president-elect renewed warnings that he was open to pulling the United States out of NATO.

Trump made his cease-fire proposal after a weekend meeting in Paris with French and Ukrainian leaders, claiming in a social media post that Kyiv "would like to make a deal" to end the more than 1,000-day war.

The Kremlin responded that it was open to negotiations, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy cautioned that any deal would have to pave the way to a lasting peace.

In a post Sunday the Telegram messaging app, Zelenskyy cautioned that Ukraine needs a "just and robust peace, that Russians will not destroy within a few years."

That decree came after Putin proclaimed four occupied regions of Ukraine to be a part of Russia, in what Kyiv and the West was a clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, and despite Moscow lacking full military control over the areas.

Taiwan faces surge in Chinese military presence amid tensions

China deployed 14 warships, seven military aircraft, and four balloons near Taiwan over the weekend, escalating pressure on the island



REUTERS

Taipei, Dec 8: Taiwan's defence ministry said Sunday that China had nearly doubled the number of its warships operating around the island in the previous 24 hours, ahead of what security sources expect will be a new round of war games.

Weather will likely be a factor in China's decision on any war games, security sources say. Weather in the strait has been poor this weekend.

Taiwan's government is putting on a "false display of power" while the US government is "acting in cahoots with gangsters and jackals" in supporting Taiwan, it said.

SHORT TAKES

Ghana's ex Prez wins election

Accra: Ghana's former President John Dramani Mahama has staged a political comeback by winning the West African nation's presidential election after his rival Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia conceded defeat Sunday.

Case lodged against Chinmoy Krishna Das

Dhaka: A case was lodged Sunday over a clash between police and followers of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das on the court premises in Chittagong, according to a media report.



Business



India has been growing rapidly amidst a slowing global economy. Prudent fiscal management for macroeconomic stability has been pivotal to this growth
CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE | DIRECTOR GENERAL, CI,

UPI TRANSACTIONS ON RISE

After reaching a record high in October of 16.58 billion transactions and a value of ₹23.50 lakh crore, UPI transactions in November stood at 15.48 billion transactions (38 per cent year-on-year growth) with a value of ₹21.55 lakh crore (24 per cent YoY growth). The number of UPI transactions may touch 25 billion a month towards the end of 2025



of the day quote

Globally, geopolitical tensions, particularly the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, continue to pose challenges. However, recent declines in the dollar index and US bond yields have created a more favourable environment for emerging markets like India



We have seen a few cycles of vehicles price increase in India. It happens at the beginning of the calendar year and financial year, but few OEMs pick the timing based on their planned launches as well



The construction work of the ₹6,900 crore Khorlochu Hydropower Project in Bhutan has started, and the plant is likely to be commissioned by 2029



FDI inflows breach \$1tn feat

Foreign investment is important for India as it will require huge investments in the coming years for the infrastructure sector to boost growth. Healthy foreign inflows also help in maintaining the balance of payments and the value of the rupee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into India have crossed the \$ 1 trillion milestone in the April 2000-September 2024 period, firmly establishing the country's reputation as a safe and key investment destination globally.

According to data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the cumulative amount of FDI, including equity, reinvested earnings and other capital, stood at \$1,033.40 billion during the said period.

About 25 per cent of the FDI came through the Mauritius route. It was followed by Singapore (24 per cent), the US (10 per cent), the Netherlands (7 per cent), Japan (6 per cent), the UK (5 per cent), UAE (3 per cent) and Cayman Islands, Germany and Cyprus accounted for 2 per cent each.

India received \$177.18 billion from Mauritius, \$167.47 billion from Singapore and \$67.8 billion from the US during the period under review, as per

FDI inflows are likely to remain modest amidst expected policy changes in the US and the impact of policy stimulus on China's economy

RUMKI MAJUMDAR | ECONOMIST, DELOITTE INDIA

the data. According to the Commerce and Industry Ministry, since 2014, India has attracted a cumulative FDI inflow of \$667.4 billion (2014-24), registering an increase of 119 per cent over the preceding decade (2004-14).

"This investment inflow spans 31 states and 57 sectors, driving growth across diverse industries. Most sectors, except strategically important sectors, are open for 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route. FDI equity inflows into the manufacturing sector over the past decade (2014-24) reached \$165.1 billion, marking a 69 per cent increase over the previous decade (2004-14), which saw inflows of \$97.7 billion, an official has said.

To ensure that India remains an attractive and investor-friendly destination, the



government reviews FDI policy on an ongoing basis and makes changes from time to time after having extensive consultations with stakeholders.

The overseas inflows into India are likely to gather momentum in 2025, as healthy macroeconomic numbers, better industrial output and attractive PLI schemes will attract more overseas players amid geopolitical headwinds, experts said. They added that despite the global challenges, India is still the preferred investment destination.

Avimukt Dar, Founding Partner, INDUSLAW, said the inflows are likely to continue in a robust form. There is strong anticipation that private equity financing in the tech sector, which had slowed down in the

past, will pick up again since various funds have enjoyed good exits in the public markets and are ready to deploy again.

"The government can continue with structural reforms, particularly in the space of M&A, by nudging SEBI to make the public takeover regime more friendly for foreign players," Dar said.

Geopolitical situations may alter supply chains, and trade regulations would dampen investors' sentiments, keeping capital flows volatile, she said, adding that the government will have to prioritise infrastructure capex with timely project execution, boost workforce skilling via PPPs and incentives, invest in digital ecosystems for productivity gains, and foster R&D for digital solu-

tions that help inclusion and formalisation of the economy.

Commenting on the data, Manav Nagaraj, Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, said FDI in India is likely to continue to rise in all areas - early stage investments, growth capital and strategic investments.

"India as an investment destination has historically been and continues to be attractive for foreign investors across various countries, whether from the US, UK, continental Europe or Asian countries," he added. FDI is allowed through the automatic route in most of the sectors, while in areas like telecom, media, pharmaceuticals and insurance, government approval is required for foreign investors.

Under the government approval route, a foreign investor has to get a prior nod from the ministry or department concerned, whereas, under the automatic route, an overseas investor is only required to inform the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) after the investment is made.

At present, FDI is prohibited in some sectors. They are lottery, gambling and betting, chit funds, Nidhi company, real estate business, and manufacturing of cigars, cheroots, cigarillos and cigarettes using tobacco.

Mcap of 6 of top-10 most valued firms jumps ₹2 lakh crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: The combined market valuation of six of the top-10 most-valued firms jumped ₹2,03,116.81 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and HDFC Bank emerging the biggest gainers, in-line with an optimistic trend at the Dalal Street.

Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,906.33 points, or 2.38 per cent, and the NSE Nifty climbed 546.7 points, or 2.26 per cent.

While Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, and State Bank of India were the winners from the pack, Bharti Airtel, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), ITC, and Hindustan Unilever emerged the laggards.

The market valuation of TCS surged ₹62,574.82 crore to ₹16,08,782.61 crore.

HDFC Bank added ₹45,338.17 crore taking its market valuation to ₹14,19,270.28 crore. The valuation of Infosys jumped ₹26,885.8 crore to ₹7,98,560.13 crore and that of Reliance Industries soared ₹26,185.14 crore to ₹17,75,176.68 crore.

State Bank of India's market capitalisation (mcap) climbed ₹22,311.55 crore to ₹7,71,087.17 crore and that of ICICI Bank rallied ₹19,821.33 crore to ₹9,37,545.57 crore.

However, Bharti Airtel's valuation eroded ₹16,720.1 crore to ₹9,10,005.80 crore.

The mcap of ITC declined ₹7,256.27 crore to ₹5,89,572.01 crore. The market valuation of Hindustan Unilever went lower by ₹2,843.01 crore to ₹5,83,673.71 crore.

The mcap of LIC dipped ₹1,265 crore to ₹6,21,937.02 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most valuable firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, Infosys, State Bank of India, LIC, ITC, and Hindustan Unilever.

SHORT TAKES

RBI Gov to quit Dec 10

New Delhi: A day after presenting bi-monthly monetary policy, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das Saturday met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The meeting comes just ahead of the extended term of incumbent RBI Governor coming to an end. Das's three-year extended term comes to an end December 10. In 2021, the government had announced a three-year extension to Das's tenure, a month before his term came to an end. With the three-year extension granted to Das, he is already one of the longest serving RBI governors in its 90-year history.

IPO Frenzy this week

New Delhi: The IPO market is set to be bustling this week, with 11 companies like Vishal Mega Mart, TPG Capital-backed Sai Life Sciences and fintech firm One Mobikwik Systems gearing up to launch their initial share sales, collectively aiming to raise nearly ₹18,500 crore. Other mainboard IPOs to be launched during this period are Inventurus Knowledge Solutions Ltd and Blackstone-owned diamond grading firm International Gemmological Institute (India) Ltd. Alongside the five main-board IPOs, six SMEs are preparing to float their maiden public issues next week to garner over ₹150 crore collectively. Together, these 11 companies aim to raise approximately ₹18,500 crore through public offerings.

Aadhar Housing aims AUM of ₹25,000cr

New Delhi: Aadhar Housing Finance, which caters to the affordable segment, expects its asset under management (AUM) to cross ₹25,000 crore by the end of the current financial year. "We closed the first half with the AUM of ₹22,817 crore (from ₹18,885 crore as of September 30, 2023). Going by the growth rate of 23-24 per cent, AUM should increase to ₹25,000-26,000 crore by the end of March 2025," Aadhar Housing Finance, MD and CEO Rishi Anand told PTI. Focused on the low-income housing segment, he said, "Our average ticket size stands at ₹10 lakh with an average loan-to-value ratio at 59 per cent, catering to the salaried customer segment at 56 per cent of our portfolio."

PRE-BUDGET MEET

MSME stakeholders seek tech upgrade, PLI benefits, slash in GST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: Stakeholders from the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sought a reduction in GST, technology upgrade, and production-linked incentive scheme benefits for various segments in a pre-Budget meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday.

The meeting aimed to seek inputs and suggestions for the Budget for 2025-26, expected to be presented February 1.

Members from the Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka (AWAKE); Karnataka SC and ST Entrepreneurs' Association; Plant-Based Food Industry Association (PBFIA); Ambala Scientific Instruments Manufacturers' Association (ASIMA); Rajasthan Footwear Manufacturers' Association were among the participants at the meeting.

The All-India Plastics Manufacturers' Association; All India Manufacturers' Association; Gujarat Chamber of Small Industries Association; Federation of Associations of Cottage and Small Industries (based in West Bengal); Federation of Andhra Pradesh Small and Medium Industries and Laghu Udyog Bharati were also present during the interaction.

Addressing the media after the meeting, Om Prakash Gupta,



All India General Secretary of Laghu Udyog Bharati said it raised the issue of gaps in technology space and skill development.

"We suggested that if the GeM portal is linked to Udyam registration. It will elicit a good response. It (GeM) has crossed annual turnover of ₹4 lakh crore, therefore it is time now to give it a global perspective," Gupta said.

"We are hopeful that our suggestions will be considered from the deliberations held today (Saturday)," he added.

EPPC Rao, President of the Federation of Andhra Pradesh Small and Medium Industries Association, said MSMEs are the backbone of India and strengthening them is most important. "We have sought technology upgrade and GST exemption for Industry 4.0 items. The time has come to revive the issues of MSMED Act. Bankers should follow the guidelines of the RBI for revival of sick units," Rao told reporters.

FPIs make a comeback

Foreign investors return to Indian equities with ₹24,454 cr inflow in Dec first week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: After heavy selling in the past two months, foreign investors have staged a strong comeback to Indian equities with a net investment of ₹24,454 crore in the first week of December amid stabilising global conditions and expectations of potential US Federal Reserve rate cuts.

This revival follows significant outflows in the preceding months, with foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pulling out a net ₹21,612 crore in November and a massive ₹94,017 crore in October - the worst

monthly outflow on record. Interestingly, September had marked

a nine-month high for FPI inflows, with a net investment of ₹57,724 crore, highlighting the volatility in foreign investment trends.

Looking ahead, the flow of foreign investments into Indian equity markets will hinge on several key factors. These include the policies implemented under Donald Trump's presidency, the prevailing inflation and interest rate environment, and the evolving geopolitical landscape, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar In-

vestment Research India, said. Additionally, the third-quarter earnings performance of Indian companies and the country's progress on the economic growth front will play a crucial role in shaping investor sentiment and influencing foreign inflows, he added.

According to the data with the depositories, FPIs have made a net investment of ₹24,454 crore this month (till December 6).

Trivesh D. COO, Tradejini, a stock trading platform, attributed the latest inflow to improving global conditions and the possibility of US Fed rate cuts.

Also, the recent correction in the market could have prompted FPIs to build some exposure, Srivastava said.

Additionally, uncertainty over Chinese equities on the back of proposed tariffs by US President-elect Donald Trump on China and other several nations could have prompted FPIs

With the latest inflow, FPI investments have reached ₹9,435 crore in 2024 so far



TOPSY-TURVY FLOW

FPIs pulled out ₹21,612cr in Nov
Oct sees record outflow of ₹94,017cr
Sept marked nine-month high for inflows

to look back at Indian equities, which offer much clearer long-term growth prospects, despite relatively high valuations, he added.

VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said the shift in FPI strategy is evident in stock price movements, especially in large-cap banking stocks, where FPIs have been selling.

This segment still has upside potential as it remains fairly valued and continues to grow at a steady pace, with more domestic institutional and retail investments expected to flow in, he added.

Additionally, the IT sector is poised to perform well and attract increased FII interest.

DESPITE CRACKDOWN, BRIBERY FLOURISHES SMOOTHLY

66% businesses surveyed paid a bribe in last 12 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 8: Around 66 per cent of business firms surveyed across 159 districts admitted that they paid bribes in the last 12 months, a report by online platform LocalCircles said Sunday.

The survey, which received 18,000 responses, found that 54 per cent were forced to pay bribes while 46 per cent paid voluntarily to expedite the process.

"As many businesses would vouch anonymously, bribes remain a way of life when wanting to get government departments to speed up the permit or compliance process, even

getting duplicate copy of the authority license or anything to do with property matters. 66 per cent of businesses surveyed paid a bribe in the last 12 months," the report said.

Only 16 per cent of businesses surveyed claimed that they always managed to get work done without paying a bribe and 19 per cent said they "did not have a need" to do so.

"Of businesses that paid bribes in the last 12 months, 54 per cent were forced to do so, while 46 per cent paid it for timely processing. This kind of bribery amounts to extortion where permits, supplier qualification, files, orders, payments are routinely held up



when dealing with Government agencies," the report said.

Businesses admitted to paying a bribe in the last 12 months to different types of entities for qualifying as a supplier, secure quotations and orders and col-

lect payments.

"Though initiatives like the Government eProcurement marketplace are good steps to reduce corruption, there are still openings to engage in corruption for supplier qualifica-

According to the report, bribery paid by businesses continues to take place despite computerisation in several places, and behind closed doors away from CCTVs

tion, bid manipulation, completion certificate and payments," the report said.

Business firms that participated in the survey conducted between May 22 and November 30, 2024, said that 75 per cent of the bribes were paid to

officials of departments such as legal, metrology, food, drug, health, etc.

"Many also reported paying bribes to GST officials, pollution department, municipal corporation and power department," the report said.

Business entities in the survey shared that the number of bribery transactions and aggregate value of bribes paid by businesses surveyed reduced in the last 12 months.

Commenting on the issue of anti-corruption, Deloitte India, Partner, Aakash Sharma said that many organisations tend to believe that maintaining the bare minimum in terms of policies and procedures could result in no regulatory scrutiny and penal actions.

India lose by 10 wickets as technical faults of senior India batters exposed by Aussie pacers

Australia level series



FAST AND FURIOUS: Australian skipper Pat Cummins celebrates with teammates after dismissing Harshit Rana, Sunday

AP PHOTO

AGENCIES

Adelaide, Dec 8: Australia ruled the pink ball Test here Sunday as they trounced India by 10 wickets to level the five-match series 1-1. However, more than Australia's win, it was the way Indian batters, including skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, failed against some quality swing bowling that caught the eye. This defeat will certainly affect the morale of the Indian batters in the remaining three Tests. In the first innings Indian batters lasted for a little more than 44 overs and in the second just 36.5; enough to indicate the technical flaws that exist among the batters.

Australia maintained their tremendous record in day/night Tests. They have now won 12 of the 13 day/night games they have played, losing only one pink ball Test in their history – against the West Indies.

Starting the day at 128 for five, Nitish Kumar Reddy's (42) cavalier approach prevented a second successive innings defeat under lights at Adelaide as

India were bowled out for 175. Australia needed to score just 19 runs and they completed the formalities in just 3.2 overs.

India's second innings lasted only 36.5 overs, with skipper Pat Cummins (5/57) bagging a fiver. Scott Boland (3/51) inflicted early damage, while Mitchell Starc (2/60) chipped in with crucial wickets. Such was the dominance of the three premier Australian quicks that Cummins didn't even need Mitchell Marsh and Nathan Lyon to roll their arms in the second innings.

After a facile 295-run win in Perth, the Indian batting unit won't be too amused to learn that they survived a total of 81 overs across both innings, which isn't even a whole day of Test match batting.

It was a tale of two shoddy batting efforts with the two senior-most players Rohit and Kohli looking well past their best. Jasprit Bumrah gave it all but lacked a potent bowling partner at the other end.

For Rohit, things are getting increasingly difficult as he now has lost the last four Tests that he has captained. In his last six

India stare at early exit

New Delhi: Following a comprehensive 10-wicket win over India in the second Test at the Adelaide Oval, Australia have moved back to the top of the 2023-2025 ICC World Test Championship standings. The Pat Cummins-led side have 60.71 percentage points, enough to top the table. India, on the other hand, have slipped to third position with 57.29 percentage points. It means that India will have to win the remaining three Tests in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney to have a chance to qualify for the WTC final, next year.

Test matches, he has batted in 12 innings with just one half century in Bangalore. If one looks at the pattern of 37-year-old Rohit's dismissals, it is very similar to Krishnamachari Srikkanth and Virender Sehwag's way of getting out at the end of their careers.

For Kohli, the hundred at Perth now seems like 'buffet

runs' which came easily after KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal added 201 runs and by the time, he came in, India were ahead by 300 runs and the contest was as good as dead. To his credit, he hung in there for a 100 but it was a tired attack that he belted to signal end of a prolonged lean patch.

If India had to pull off a coup, it needed Rishabh Pant's (28) excellence but Starc, the undisputed 'magician' of 'pink ball' Tests with 74 victims, bowled a delivery on length which the Indian batter jabbed at without pressing forward fully. The regulation catch was duly accepted by Steve Smith stationed at second slip.

Reddy, who is time and again showing that positive attitude and big heart at times trumps technique, continued to defy the Australians. In the first two Tests, Reddy's commitment and ability to fight it out has been exemplary.

Brief scores: India 180 and 175 (Nitish Kumar Reddy 42, Pat Cummins 5/57, Scott Boland 3/51) lost to Australia 337 and 19 for no loss by 10 wickets.

HEAD, SIRAJ PLAY DOWN CONTROVERSY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Adelaide, Dec 8: Travis Head and Mohammed Siraj have cleared the air after a heated on-pitch interaction that took place when the latter gave a fiery send-off to the left-hander after dismissing him on day two of the second Test match here Saturday.

Siraj castled Head with a terrific in-swinging yorker, and gave him a fiery send-off and aggressively gestured to walk back towards the direction of stands. To this, Head replied back to the pacer, before walking off to a standing ovation from his home crowd. After that, the Adelaide crowd constantly booed whenever Siraj was fielding in the deep or came on to bowl. But, the duo was seen having a friendly chat when Siraj came to bat during the second innings of the game Sunday, seemingly clearing the issue.

He's lying... he did not say well bowled. Instead he swore at me after getting dismissed
MOHAMMED SIRAJ

"Sweet with it. He came out and just said (it was) a little bit of misunderstanding... I think we'll move on. We've had a great week, so let's not let it ruin it. It was fine. He said, 'Why'd you swear?' I sort of said, 'Look, I didn't at first... (but) I definitely swore at you the second time round'," Head who was nominated man of the match, revealed in the post-match presentation as quoted by ABC News.

"I probably could have laughed it off and walked off and enjoyed myself. He just said it was a misunderstanding as well and there was no issues for me. We move on. It is what it is," Head added.

Meanwhile Aussie skipper was lavish in his praise of Head. "He was the single guy who turned the match in our favour and helped us take a sizeable lead," Cummins said after the game.

Bumrah can't bowl from 2 ends: Rohit



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Adelaide, Dec 8: Jasprit Bumrah is only human and cannot always shoulder the responsibility of bowling the opposition out all by himself skipper Rohit Sharma said Sunday. He urged others to share the load with the premier fast bowler.

"We are not just playing with one bowler. There are other bowlers also who will have to take responsibility and get the job done for the team, be it (Mohammed) Siraj, Harshit Rana, Nitish Reddy, Akash Deep or Prasad (Krishna)," Rohit said after India's 10-wicket loss.

The captain however, stated that he understands that there is a bit of inexperience in the line-up and they will grow in confidence with time.

"These bowlers have just arrived in Test cricket, it's important to give them confidence. We keep planning and discussing. But you can't expect Bumrah to bowl from both the ends and from morning to evening," Rohit pointed out. "It's very important to manage (all) bowlers. We discuss all this with each other. We talk to the bowler and then we make the decisions," the skipper added.

Rohit said that he takes workload management of bowlers, especially Bumrah, very seriously. "I speak with him (Bumrah) whenever he finishes a spell. I enquire about how his body is feeling, is he (feeling) fresh or not? It's a five-match series, we want Bumrah to play all the matches and remain fresh," Rohit stated.

Not even being able to score

200 across both innings is certainly disappointing, and the skipper made no bones about it. "When you come to Australia, I feel the best chance of winning a Test match is by putting runs on the board. We knew that there would be challenges with that ball," Rohit pointed out.

"But in the past, we've done that many times where the conditions have been a little challenging, and we've batted really well to put runs on the board, and then try and put pressure on the opposition. It is disappointing that we did not manage to do that in both the innings here," Rohit added.

Skipper doesn't want unfit Shami

Adelaide: Mohammed Shami's much-anticipated return to Test arena could be delayed further after India captain Rohit Sharma informed Sunday that the senior speedster had once again developed 'some swelling' in his knees after playing seven Mushtaq Ali Trophy games. "The door is very much open for Shami to return. But we are just monitoring him because while playing Syed Mushtaq Ali T20, he again got some swelling in his knee, which obviously hampers his preparation to come and play a Test match. We want to be very, very careful," the India skipper said. He asserted that he doesn't want a half-fit Shami for the Test series. "We don't want to bring him here in a situation and he plays and then he pulls up sore or something happens. We want to be more than 100 per cent sure with him," informed Rohit.

SHORT TAKES

Juniors lose in Asia Cup final

Dubai: The batters could not capitalise on the good job done by the bowlers as India suffered a massive 59-run defeat to Bangladesh in the low-scoring U19 Asia Cup title clash, here Sunday. The Indian bowlers restricted Bangladesh to 198 in 49.1 overs. However, the batters failed to deliver as India were bowled out for a paltry 139 in 35.2 overs. The rot started when star batter Vaibhav Suryavanshi was dismissed for nine. Iqbal Hossain Emon and Azizul Hakim were the pick of the Bangladeshi bowlers with three wickets each.

Women's Junior Asia Cup: Eves thrash B'desh

Muscat: Mumtaz Khan slammed four goals while Kanika Siwach and Deepika slotted home a hat-trick as defending champions India routed Bangladesh 13-1 to start their Women's Junior Asia Cup hockey tournament campaign on a rousing note here Sunday. Mumtaz (27th, 32nd, 53rd, 58th), Kanika (12th, 51st, 52nd), Deepika (7th, 20th, 55th), Manisha (10th), Beauty Dung Dung (33rd) and vice-captain Sakshi Rana (43rd) were on target for the winners, while Bangladesh's Orpita Pal (12th) was the only goal-scorer for Bangladesh in the Pool A game. India took control of the match very early and converted their dominance into a goal in the seventh minute through Deepika who deftly converted a penalty corner with a neat flick to give her team the lead.

Top cyclist hurt

London: Olympic and World Champion cyclist Katy Marchant is recovering after sustaining broken bones in her right arm and dislocated fingers in a crash involving another competitor and some spectators at the Track Champions League here. British Cycling gave the update Sunday on Marchant. It said 'she is in good spirits and is receiving excellent care from her medical team'.

Huge win for Odisha eves

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 8: Madhuri Mehta (88, 97b, 11x4) shone with the bat as Odisha trounced minnows Arunachal Pradesh by a huge margin of 194 runs in a match of the BCCI Senior Women's ODI Trophy-2024 played Sunday at the ADSA Railway Cricket Ground in Ahmedabad. After being put in Odisha scored 246 for the loss of nine wickets in 50 overs and then dismissed the opposition for a paltry score of 52 in just 21.1 overs.

Madhuri held the Odisha innings together as most of the other batters failed to get going. She played shots around the wicket and was unlucky to miss out on a century as she tried to force the pace. Only Taranna Pradhan (37, 44b, 4x4) offered her some support and it was their efforts that took Odisha close to the 250-run mark. Techie Yanam (3/29) bowled well



Madhuri Mehta

for Arunachal Pradesh.

Arunachal Pradesh was never in the chase as they lost wickets in a heap right from the start of their innings. Taranna (4/10) bowled a brilliant opening spell and she was well-supported by off-spinner Sushree Dibyadarshini (2/14). They combined effectively to end the Arunachal Pradesh innings in a jiffy.

GUKESH TAKES VITAL LEAD

Indian GM just 3 draws away from becoming youngest-ever World Chess Champion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, Dec 8: Grandmaster (GM) D Gukesh made a huge strike forward towards becoming the youngest-ever world champion defeating Ding Liren of China in the 11th game of the World Chess Championship here Sunday.

With just three games to come, Gukesh took the lead for the first time in the match, with scoreline now reading 6-5 in favour of the 18-year-old Indian. History is now on Gukesh's side as no challenger in modern chess has ever scored a win after being tied 5-5 after the 10th game.

For Liren, the only comfort-



D Gukesh makes a move during his match against Ding Liren, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

ing thing could be the fact that he had won the 12th game in the last World Championship match against Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia.

The Indian started off with the knight move on his first turn and was surprised as Liren went for a reverse Benoni opening. The move was shock-

ing as it looked like it was an over-the-board decision rather than a planned one.

After only five moves, Gukesh had a lead of over an hour on the clock, which is never too easy for the opponent to recover in crunch games. However, if everyone thought that the opening had gone seriously wrong for Li-

ren, the Chinese had different ideas as he capitalised on an erroneous plan by Gukesh in the early middle game.

Things turned upside down when Liren went for completing his development and missed out on a simple manoeuvre that would have probably given the defending champion slightly better prospects.

Gukesh himself spent a lot of time in the middle game but the nature of the position remained double-edged. As the clouds began to clear, Gukesh came up with a spectacular pawn sacrifice on the queen side to give moving space for his rooks. Just as he doubled them on the file to exert pressure, Liren simply crashed and made the blunder in a blink.

The Chinese player was left dejected as he immediately realised the mistake. Gukesh played the winning move in quick time.

Man City held by Palace

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Dec 8: Manchester City's Premier League title defence took another blow after drawing their game 2-2 with Crystal Palace played Saturday. Four-time defending champions City had ended a seven-game winless run Wednesday by beating Nottingham Forest, but dropped more points with the draw at Selhurst Park.

Pep Guardiola's team are fourth in the standings and eight points behind leaders Liverpool, who have a game in hand after their derby with Everton was postponed because of 'Storm Darragh'.

Nottingham Forest were fifth after stunning Manchester United 3-2 at Old Trafford for the first time in 30 years. Brentford won against Newcastle 4-2 in another game played on the day.

A win would have lifted City to second and cut the gap to



GOAL MACHINE: Erling Haaland celebrates with teammates after his goal against Crystal Palace

Liverpool to six points, but they were behind after four minutes when Daniel Munoz scored for Palace. Erling Haaland levelled by half time with a header, but Maxence Lacroix restored Palace's lead in the 56th. Rico Lewis equalised again for City in the 68th and was sent off in the 84th for a second yellow card. "I like everything about my

situation we're in," Guardiola said. "We have a lot of problems with in the squad. We fought incredibly, we gave everything, we take the point. The season started difficult. We have to survive this season in every game, try to take points to win games and move forward," added Guardiola.

Ruben Amorim is getting an idea of just how big a job he has on his hands at Manchester United after a second straight loss. Goalkeeper Andre Onana's second half blunder against Forest proved costly. At 1-1, two minutes after the break, Onana misjudged Morgan Gibbs-White's tame shot from outside the box. He dived the wrong way and watched the ball roll in.

"This is a long journey... and we are improving in some aspects," said Amorim, who tasted his first defeat as United manager Wednesday, a 0-2 loss to Arsenal.

Women lose ODI series against Oz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brisbane, Dec 8: Opener Georgia Voll (101, 87b, 12x4) and Ellyse Perry (105, 75b, 7x4, 6x6) smashed commanding centuries as Australia secured a series-clinching 122-run win over India in the second women's ODI here Sunday.

After electing to bat, Australia displayed ruthless intent, posting a mammoth 371 for eight, the highest score against India in an ODI match. The hosts then bowled out India for 249 in 44.5 overs, wrapping up the match with ease. Minnu Manni (46, 45b, 4x4) and Jemimah Rodriguez (43, 39b, 5x4) offered some resistance to the Australian bowlers, but it was not enough.

"We got some partnership in between, we had a positive mindset, but we were short by few runs," Indian skipper Harmanpreet Kaur said after the match.

Titles for Sathish, Ponnappa, Castro

Indian shuttlers shine in Guwahati tournament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Dec 8: Sathish Karunakaran clinched the men's singles title, while the top-seeded women's doubles pair Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa defended their crown at the Guwahati Masters Super 100 badminton tournament here Sunday.

Sathish, the 2023 Odisha Open Super 100 champion, defeated Zhu Xuan Chen of China 21-17, 21-14 in 44 minutes to give India a second title. Tanisha and Ashwini also secured a straight-game victory earlier when they defeated China's Li Hua Zhou and Wang Zi Meng 21-18, 21-12 in 43 minutes. Rising Indian shuttler Anmol



Kharb also came agonisingly close to a maiden Super 100 title before finishing runner-up after losing 21-14, 13-21, 19-21 to China's Cai Yan Yan in the women's singles final.

In the 78-minute long women's singles final Cai held her nerves at crucial junctures to emerge victorious. At 19-all in the third game she played a drop shot to take the lead and then closed out the match with a smash.