



## Much-awaited launch

Miss Universe 2021 Harnaaz Sandhu will make her Hindi film debut with Tiger Shroff-starrer 'Baaghi 4'

LEISURE | P2



## 'Person of the Year'

Time Magazine names Donald Trump its 'Person of the Year' for the second time for his significant political impact

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Inflation drops

Retail inflation declines in Nov to 5.48% and comes within the RBI's comfort zone mainly due to easing food prices

BUSINESS | P11



## Couple of changes

India may ring in a couple of changes to the playing XI for the 3rd Test against Australia starting Saturday

SPORTS | P12

## BOON FOR SHUTTLERS



Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma, also the president of the Badminton Association of India, inaugurate Badminton High Performance Centre at Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Thursday. Sports and Youth Services Minister Suryabanshi Suraj, India's chief national coach Pullela Gopichand and Dalmia Bharat Group's MD and CEO Puneet Yadu Dalmia are among the dignitaries seen. The ₹75 crore facility has been developed jointly by Odisha government, Pullela Gopichand Badminton Foundation and Dalmia Bharat Group

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

## GUKESH youngest world chess champion

AGENCIES

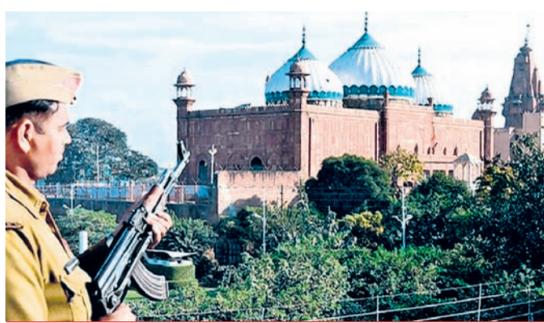
Singapore, Dec 12: Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh Thursday became the youngest world chess champion at 18 years after beating title-holder Ding Liren in the last game of a nerve-wracking showdown to herald a new era of dominance for the country's chess players. Taking forward the incredible legacy of the great Viswanathan Anand, Gukesh became the second Indian to clinch the coveted prize after the iconic player, who owned the crown five times in his career. After settling into 'semi-retirement', the Anand, 55, incidentally, played a pivotal role in shaping Gukesh at his chess academy in Chennai. Gukesh secured the requisite



7.5 points as against 6.5 of his Chinese rival after winning the 14th and last classical time control game of the match that seemed headed for a draw for most part. As winner, he will walk away with a whopping USD 1.3 million (approx Rs 11.03 crore) from the 2.5 million prize purse. "I was dreaming this moment for the last 10 years. I am happy that I realised the dream (and made it) into reality," the soft-spoken Chennai-lad told reporters after the historic triumph here. P12

## PLACES OF WORSHIP No fresh suits, orders: SC

The Supreme Court has directed courts across the country not to entertain fresh lawsuits or pass any orders, including surveys, in pending cases seeking to 'reclaim' religious places. Hearing a clutch of pleas, and cross pleas, relating to the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, a three-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, also directed the Centre to file its counter affidavit in the matter within four weeks. The Act preserves the character and identity of religious places, except the one in Ayodhya that was then under litigation, as they existed at the time of India's independence in 1947. It will be no exaggeration to say that raining of petitions in courts challenging the character of both ancient and medieval religious structures, that became a trend in the aftermath of the Ayodhya verdict, have posed a serious challenge to the secular fabric of the country. The SC move is likely to bring about a curb on the tendency by vested interests in digging up graves and letting the ghosts loose



in pending ones seeking to reclaim religious places, especially mosques and dargahs.

"As the matter is sub-judice in this court, we deem it appropriate that no fresh suit would be registered and proceedings are undertaken till further orders of this court," the three-judge bench, led by CJI Sanjiv Khanna, said.

The direction of the bench also comprising Justices Sanjay Kumar and KV Viswanathan stalls proceedings in about 18 lawsuits filed by various Hindu parties seeking survey to ascertain original religious character of 10 mosques including Gyanvapi at Varanasi, Shahi Idgah Masjid at Mathura and Shahi Jama Masjid at Sambhal where four persons' lives were snuffed out in clashes.

The bench was hearing about six petitions, including the lead one filed by lawyer Ashwini Up-

adhyay, challenging various provisions of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. The 1991 law prohibits conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed August 15, 1947. However, the dispute relating to Ram Jannabhoomi-Babri Masjid at Ayodhya was kept out of its purview.

There are several cross petitions which seek strict implementation of the 1991 law to maintain communal harmony and to preserve the present status of mosques, sought to be reclaimed by Hindus on the ground that they were temples before invaders razed them.

The SC made it clear that it would be examining the 'vires (legality), contours and ambit' of the 1991 law and it was imperative to ask other courts

to 'stay off their hands' till it passed any further orders.

"In pending suits, the courts will not pass any effective interim or final order, including order of survey, till further orders," the SC said. Senior advocate J Sai Deepak, appearing for a Hindu party, opposed the order restraining all other courts and said the parties should have been heard before such a direction.

The CJI said it was quite natural to ask courts to not to pass any order as the SC was hearing the larger issue. The bench said if parties insisted then, the matter could be sent to a high court.

Observing that the SC couldn't decide the matter without the Centre's response, it asked the government to file its reply to the pleas and cross ones in four weeks. It also granted a further of four weeks to other parties to file their rejoinder after the Centre filed its reply. Notably, the SC had issued notices to parties, including the Centre, on the lead petition in September 2022. It also appointed nodal counsel for assisting it in the hearing on the pleas which would be listed after eight weeks.

During the hearing, the SC asked about the number of suits pending now. One of the advocates said a total of 18 suits pertaining to 10 mosques were pending in several courts across the country.

## Cabinet paves way for simultaneous elections

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: The ruling BJP Thursday took a major step to implement its key plank of 'one nation, one election' as the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the constitutional amendment Bill to roll out the concept of simultaneous Lok Sabha and state Assembly polls, sources said.

Two draft legislations, including one simple Bill to amend provisions in laws dealing with three Union Territories with legislative Assemblies to align them with the Constitution amendment Bill, were given the nod by the Cabinet.

The proposed constitutional amendment Bill would deal with making provisions for holding Lok Sabha and state legislative Assembly elections together.

While a high-level committee led by former president Ram Nath Kovind on simultaneous polls had also proposed holding the municipality and panchayat elections along with the national and state elections in a phased manner, the Cabinet has decided to stay away, 'as of now', from the manner in which local body elections are conducted, the sources said.

A source said the PM put a strong emphasis on the need for simultaneous polls for further boosting development initia-

tives and overall growth, points he has often made since he first made an energetic pitch for the concept in December 2016.

The proposed Bill will require a simple majority for passage in both the Houses. The government is keen on holding wider consultations on the Bill and may send them to a parliamentary committee.

The BJP's manifesto for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls had included its commitment to the idea. Though BJP's allies such as the TDP, Janata Dal (United), and LJP (Ram Vilas), all of whom are represented in the Union Cabinet, are supporting the concept, the National Democratic Alliance will need backing from some of the members of the opposition INDIA alliance besides fence-sitters to ensure the passage of the constitutional amendment Bill requiring support from two-thirds of the members in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

The NDA's current strength in Lok Sabha, which currently has 542 members and one vacancy, is around 293 against the two-third mark of 361. The INDIA bloc enjoys support of nearly 235 MPs.

In Rajya Sabha, the ruling alliance has nearly 122 members, a tally which is set to rise after the ongoing process to fill vacancies is over. The Upper House' sanctioned strength is 243.

## Sundargarh woman shot dead by robbers

Bhubaneswar: A pregnant woman was shot dead by two alleged robbers at Jhirdapali in Sundargarh district, police said. The deceased was identified as Samyamayee Behera, 31, wife of Deben Behera of Jhirdapali under Tikayatpali police limits in the district. She was seven-month pregnant, they added. The deceased was a cousin of Chhendipada MLA Agasti Behera. Police said two unidentified persons knocked on Samyamayee's door late Wednesday night. When she opened the door, they snatched her gold ornaments and shot her when she raised an alarm. She was rushed to Bonai hospital, where doctors declared her dead. Tikayatpali police registered a case and launched an investigation.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Voters want the country to run on the majority's beliefs. Lucky for us, the majority's as illiterate as we are

## SHORT TAKES

### Seven Maoists killed

Narayanpur: Seven Maoists, including two women, were killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district Thursday, a senior police official said. The gunfight broke out around 3am in the forest of south Abujhmad along the border of Narayanpur and Dantewada districts, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraaj P said. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai hailed the security forces for the operation and said the fight against Naxalism will continue till it is completely eliminated. Personnel of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) from Narayanpur, Dantewada, Bastar and Kondagaon districts, Special Task Force (STF) of the state police, and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were involved in the operation that was launched December 10 based on inputs about the presence of Maoists belonging to the Maad division in the area, said IG Sundarraaj.

### 8 stripped, paraded

Rourkela: Eight Bengali-speaking migrant workers were Thursday stripped and paraded on a road with their hands tied for allegedly attempting to outrage the modesty of a local woman in Sundargarh town, police said. They said local residents thrashed and paraded the workers in a semi-nude condition on Mission Road between 8.30 am and 9 am. The victims hail from West Bengal's Murshidabad district and were working as masons in the town. Informed by local residents, Sundargarh town police arrived at the spot and rescued the eight persons and took them to the police station. "We have registered two cases - one against 10 persons for stripping, thrashing, and parading the eight workers, and another based on the woman's complaint against one of the workers," DIG Rourkela Brijesh Rai said. He said police have launched a manhunt to arrest the accused.

## SwagBot, AI-powered robot cattle herder

AGENCIES

Canberra, Dec 12: Farmers in Australia are hard-pressed to find workers to look after some 30 million livestock. Robotics developers believe they have the answer: SwagBot, a robot cattle herder.

First launched in 2016 as a simple herding robot capable of traversing rugged terrain, SwagBot has been updated with sensors, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning systems.

The battery-powered robot can now determine the health, type and density of pasture and monitor the health of livestock.

It then uses this information to autonomously herd cattle to the best pastures and move them before land is overgrazed and soil becomes degraded. It can also feed data back to farm-

ers. "Once the cattle are used to the robot, they will follow the robot around," said University of Sydney professor of robotics

- The robot can determine the health, type and density of pasture and monitor the health of livestock
- It then uses this information to autonomously herd cattle to the best pastures and move them before land is overgrazed and soil becomes degraded. It can also feed data back to farmers

and intelligent systems, Salah Sukkarieh, whose team made SwagBot. "You want to move the animals to the right part of the pasture where there is good protein, good carbs," he said. "You want to be able to do that in a very fluid manner without fences."

Australia is one of the



world's biggest beef exporters, with around 30 million cattle spread across a vast landscape that is often dry and whose pastures can be poor.

Farmers constantly assess

how many animals their land can support but many have little control over where the animals graze within large enclosed areas. Overgrazing can lead to poorer soils that support

less plant and animal life.

"It (SwagBot) allows us to assess our paddocks in real time in a much more detailed way," said Erin O'Neill, a part-time farmer who attended a recent demonstration of the robot in a field north of Sydney.

"That allows us to know what bits of pasture are most nutritious, particularly if you've got cattle like we do that are pregnant and therefore need a higher quality pasture to aid them through that pregnancy," she said.

SwagBot, which is still in development, is part of a growing trend in agriculture towards robotics that can make production more efficient and reduce reliance on workers in places such as Australia where hiring people in remote locations can be difficult.

# leisure



## BUTLER TO REPRIS BALE'S ICONIC ROLE IN AMERICAN PSYCHO

Hollywood actor Austin Butler is set to reprise the role of Patrick Bateman in Luca Guadagnino's new interpretation of the book *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis. The character was earlier played by the master of body transformations, Christian Bale.

## GOMEZ GETS ENGAGED TO PARTNER BLANCO

Actress-singer Selena Gomez is now engaged to her partner, music producer Benny Blanco. She shared the news via an Instagram carousel including an up-close snap of her engagement ring and a pic of her and Blanco celebrating their engagement with laughs and a hug.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
The boredom of your monotonous life will now begin to tell on you. A change of trappings is what you probably have on mind. Money matters are not a big deal, and a little quick change may result in an evening get-together. Ganesha says you will like to flaunt your pretty and peaceful ambience.

**TAURUS**  
There are chances that you may put in hard work and yet the returns may not be as you expected, predicts Ganesha. You are likely to be unenthusiastic about travelling in the afternoon. An evening of relaxation and intimate discussions may be on the cards today, says Ganesha.

**GEMINI**  
It's celebration time in your family. However, you will be busy handling a business deal while your family makes merry. You may even have to go on a business trip later in the day. You will devote time to achieve professional success rather than celebrating a personal achievement, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
You have two options to over-come the unwanted sad events. One is to run away and the other is to face boldly. Ganesha suggests you choose the second option. The evening promises a joyful mood. You will entertain guests at home.

**LEO**  
It is a race against time, and you cannot afford to lose today. Ganesha foresees you working extra hard in order to meet deadlines on this busy day. Expect a few tasks in the afternoon that may involve you moving against your will. But once again, your work shall provide you with the variety that you seek on this monotonous day.

**VIRGO**  
You are a master craftsman when it boils down to inter-personal relationships. In the afternoon, you may feel very secretive about some things. An insipid evening may make you miss the enjoyment you might otherwise have had. Nevertheless, Ganesha says it will be a happy and bright day.

**LIBRA**  
It's not an easy ride for you today. Expect to undergo a range of emotions that might even make you feel distressed and emotional. However, your academic intelligence will bear some fruit over the course of the day. Also, your charisma will finally bedazzle that special someone in your life.

**SCORPIO**  
In all likeliness, you shall be unreasonably tentative and curious. Professionally, seek out tougher challenges. You shall shower love and affection on your loved ones today. Those awaiting for wedding bells to toll might hear some good news, predicts Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You are on an emotional leash, as you will be on the defensive line when it comes to the feelings of those you love. Chances are high that you will be footloose again - for business or pleasure. So pack your bags, advises Ganesha. In the evening, you may share some quiet time with those who share your opinions.

**CAPRICORN**  
Quite unlike you, but you will not be impulsive in making decisions today. Reason? Shaking off clouds of imagination, you will be more realistic in your approach to everyday dealings, says Ganesha. Your moves will be guided by common sense and practicality, and you will be optimistic about your future. Love will demand your time as evening sets in, and it will be for this one time that you will get back to your impulsive self.

**AQUARIUS**  
It's absolutely alright to attend a social do where you don't know anyone. Just be your charming self and everything will fall in place. Minor problems may nag. Know how to play a musical instrument? It's perfect for relaxation, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
Today you will find yourself caught in two minds. As a result of which, you will find yourself unable to take a firm decision. Put off important decisions until you find yourself in a better frame of mind, says Ganesha. Post afternoon should see you bonding with old friends and you will begin to see old relationships in a new light.

## Harnaaz steps into showbiz

**Mumbai:** Harnaaz Sandhu, who is the winner of the Miss Universe 2021 beauty pageant, is all set to make her debut in Hindi cinema with the Tiger Shroff-starrer *Baaghi 4*.

An announcement was made on X by the official handle of Nadiadwala Grandson, which read: "From #MissUniverse to the #BaaghiUniverse! Presenting our new #NGETalent, the lady Rebel in #Baaghi4 - @HarnaazKaur #SajidNadiadwala's #Baaghi4 Directed by @NimmaA-Harsha Releasing in cinemas 5th Sept 2025."

Harnaaz is the third entrant from India to win Miss Universe. She was previously feted with the crown for Femina Miss India Punjab in 2019, and was a semifinalist at Femina Miss India 2019 pageant. Born in Gurdaspur district, Punjab, Harnaaz in 2006, moved to England, before returning to India two years later and settling in Chandigarh. Prior to becoming Miss Universe, Sandhu was pursuing a master's degree in public administration.

It was November 18, Tiger announced the fourth installment of his "Baaghi" franchise, which will be directed by A. Harsha, and that the actioner will hit the screens September 5, 2025.



## Sai pallavi dispels rumours about turning vegetarian

**Mumbai:** Tagging the claims as "fabricated lies", actress Sai Pallavi has debunked rumours about turning vegetarian for *Ramayana*, where she will be seen playing the role of Sita alongside Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor's Lord Rama.

The actress took to X, formerly called Twitter, where she warned of legal action against any "cooked up crappy story". According to media reports, the actress has always followed a vegetarian diet.

Sai Pallavi penned a note after a Tamil publication claimed that she has given up non-vegetarian food, as she is playing the role of Sita.

The actress wrote: "Most of the times, Almost every-time, I choose to stay silent whenever I see baseless rumours/

cated lies/ incorrect statements being spread with or without motives(God knows) but it's high-time that I react as it keeps happening consistently and doesn't seem to cease; especially around the time of my films' releases/ announcements/ cherish-able moments of my career!"

She added: "Next time I see any "reputed" page or media/ individual carrying a cooked up crappy story in the name of news or gossip then you will hear from me legally! Period!"

Talking about the film, directed by Nitesh Tiwari, actor Ranbir Kapoor described it as "India's greatest story".



**Mumbai:** Bollywood actress Sharvari, who is gearing up for her next *Alpha*, said that the youngest spy is beyond a dream come true for her.

She expresses, "Honestly, I didn't even realise this fact until recently when I was doing success interviews for *Munjya's* 100 crore feat and it was pointed out to me! Being the youngest spy of YRF Spy Universe is beyond a dream come true.

She said that it is a responsibility and an extraordinary opportunity rolled into one. "I have been a fan of these huge blockbuster films and the incredible superstars who have graced the screen as spies in this universe. To be a part of this legacy truly feels special. The YRF Spy Universe has a 100 percent hit rate and I hope *Alpha* extends this brilliant feat by giving people a visual experience that they can never forget!"

Sharvari said that she is incredibly grateful to Aditya Chopra for placing his trust in her.

She added: "I'm thankful to my director Shiv Rawail for feeling that I can deliver on his vision."

*Alpha*, directed by Shiv Rawail of *The Railway Men* fame, is set to hit theatres December 25, 2025. The film also stars Alia Bhatt.

**Sharvari lives her dream**



## KEERTHY GETS HITCHED

**Mumbai:** Actress Keerthy Suresh, who predominantly works across south Indian film industries, is now married to the Dubai-based businessman, Antony Thattil.

The actress, who took the vows in a beautiful and intimate ceremony held in Goa, has also shared pictures from her big day on social media.

The photos show the couple putting garlands on each other as their relatives and loved ones cheered for them. A priest performed the rituals and they later posed for pictures with a special appearance from their dog.



The actress wrote in the caption, "#ForTheLoveOfNyke". Antony and Keerthy reportedly began dating around 2008-09 when the actor was in school and Antony was about

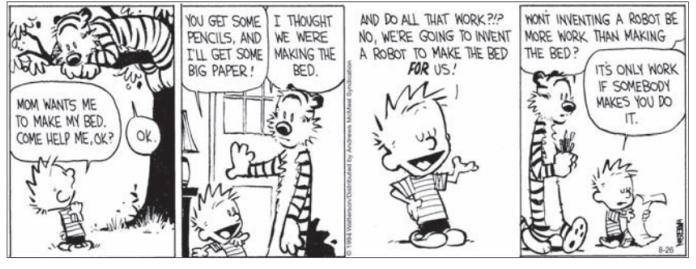
to start undergraduate college. Keerthy, who is the daughter of film producer G. Suresh Kumar and actress Menaka, began her career as a child actress in the early 2000s and returned to films after studying fashion design. She had her first lead role in the 2013 Malayalam film *Geethaanjali*, for which she won SIIMA Award for Best Female Debut in Malayalam.

She rose to prominence with the 2018 film *Mahanati*, helmed by Nag Ashwin film. The film earned her the National Film Award for Best Actress. She was recently seen in *Kalki 2898 AD*, and is set to make her Hindi film debut with *Baby John*.

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

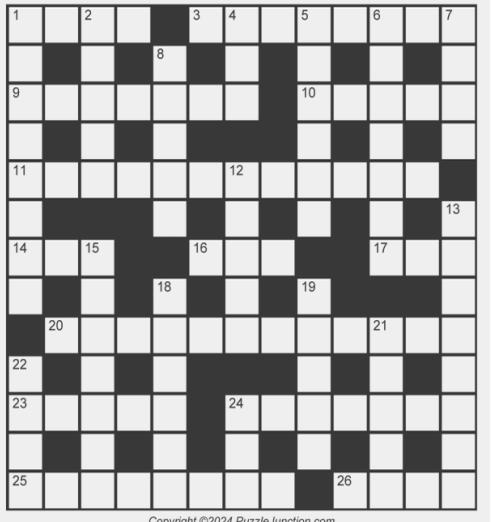


### BREVITY



### FUN POST

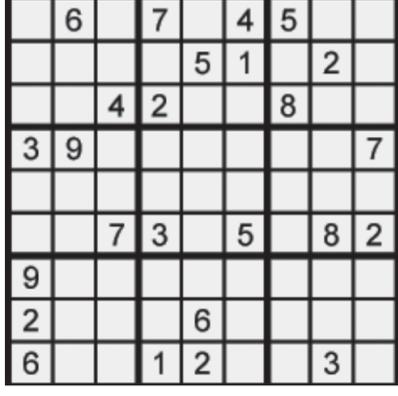
### CROSSWORD



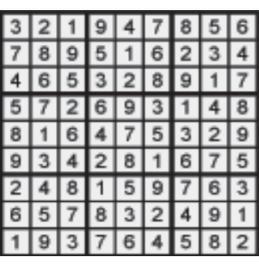
- Across**
- 1 Storage cylinder
  - 3 Circus vehicle
  - 9 Crown
  - 10 Speak out
  - 11 Raincoats
  - 14 Minister (Abbr.)
  - 16 Utmost degree
  - 17 Cobbler's tool
  - 20 Shrink's phrase (8,4)
  - 23 Animal toxin
  - 24 Sculptor Giovanni Lorenzo
  - 25 Verbal attack
  - 26 Hawaiian fire goddess
  - 7 Water carrier
  - 8 Slowpoke
  - 12 -frutti
  - 13 Heads or tails, maybe? (4,4)
  - 15 Lanai
  - 18 Type of camp or school
  - 19 Lifeless
  - 21 River through Tours
  - 22 Zealous
  - 24 Chest protector
- Down**
- 1 Buttonwood
  - 2 Type of poem
  - 4 Surfing site
  - 5 Difficult to please
  - 6 Idle fancy

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# Govt to fill 10K vacant Home dept posts

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday said that the state government will fill 10,000 vacant posts in the Home department, while 5,000 new home guard posts will be created, out of which 2,416 posts will be filled soon.

Majhi said this while flagging off 30 Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) vehicles for faster and immediate response during emergencies.



The CM said the ERSS vehicles will operate in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and

Cuttack, and that they will reach the needy before the arrival of personnel from police stations, ambulances, or fire services.

"These vehicles will remain in motion across the cities and immediately respond to calls," he said.

Majhi, who launched the service at the headquarters of the Commissionerate Police, Bhubaneswar-Cuttack, said, "In case of any accident,

## CM flags off ERSS vehicles

| Operational jurisdiction | Purposes           |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| ■ Cuttack                | ■ Accident         |
| ■ Bhubaneswar            | ■ Crime            |
|                          | ■ Fire             |
|                          | ■ Other exigencies |

## Dial 112 to avail ERSS

crime, or other emergency, these vehicles will reach the scene immediately." The Chief Minister said while 22 ERSS vehicles will

operate in Bhubaneswar, eight such vans, fitted with emergency equipment, will cover Cuttack urban areas. He said people can avail of the service by dialing 112.

Meanwhile, DCP Bhubaneswar Pinak Mishra said the services in the ERSS vehicles will be offered by policemen while volunteers, will man the call centre which will coordinate with the vehicles' staff.

# State BJP to have new chief in Jan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** The ruling BJP in the state will get its new president in January next year, a party leader said Thursday.

Elections in the organisation of the BJP have already started in Odisha and around 40,000 booth committees have been formed, the party's state in-charge Vijaypal Singh Tomar said. "The election to the post of the state BJP chief will be held after polls at the district levels... The party's 'Mandal' (local) elections are underway. It will be followed by polls at district

levels. The election for the party president will be held in the first week of January," he said.

The BJP is a democratic party, and the state president will be elected through a democratic process, Tomar said. "An ordinary worker can also become president," he added.

Incumbent president Manmohan Samal took charge of the post from Samir Mohanty in 2023 and he has been credited for the party's phenomenal performance in the twin elections in 2024, leading to the formation of the party's maiden government in the state.

# NRC-like document needed to identify infiltrators: Himanta

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** There is a need to prepare an NRC (National Register of Citizens) like document to differentiate Indians and infiltrators, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Thursday.

Speaking to media persons after visiting Jagannath temple at Puri, Sarma said the Assam government Wednesday decided that one should have his/her name registered in the NRC for obtaining an Aadhaar card.

If the applicant's name is not there in the NRC, he/she will not get an Aadhaar card, he said.

"I desire that NRC-type documents should be prepared so that we can easily differentiate who are Indians and who are infiltrators," Sarma said.

It is difficult to make fencing on the Bangladesh boundary in Assam and West Bengal because many such areas have rivers. However, the boundary can be secured using technology, he stated.

"The government of India has introduced technological interventions in Assam and Tripura. But, the West Bengal government is not fully cooperating. If Bengal cooperates, we can stop infiltration," Sarma said.

On the alleged attack on Hindu community in Bangladesh, he said, "It is very unfortunate and a matter of concern. But, I am hopeful that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will definitely take some steps at a diplomatic level for the protection of the Hindu people in Bangladesh."

He said the Prime Minister had recently sent Foreign Secretary to Bangladesh and hoped that peace would be restored in the country with the efforts made by the PM in a diplomatic way.

Slamming the Congress over the issue, the Assam CM said, "Neither Rahul Gandhi nor the Congress party ever stood with the Hindu community. They will not stand with them in future too. Even many times, communal harmony was disturbed in the country for them."

Speaking in favour of the 'one nation, one election' system, he said, "In Assam, the Assembly and Parliament elections are being held at different times. During elections, the developmental works usually hamper almost the entire year."

To implement it, there is a need to bring amendments to the Constitution with a 2/3rd majority in both houses of Parliament. And, the Prime Minister will surely do it, he claimed.

When journalists asked him about the fate of Naveen Patnaik-led BJD, he said, "BJD's era has ended now and the BJP government will remain in Odisha for at least 50 years."

**BJD's era has ended now and the BJP government will remain in Odisha for at least 50 years**  
ASSAM CM

# Online gambling den busted; 4 detained

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Cyber sleuths Thursday busted an online gambling den operating out of a rented flat in Sundarpada area, and detained four of its alleged conduits who are suspected to be members of a pan-India syndicate.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Anjana Tudu said while two of the detained suspects hailed from Delhi, the remaining two were natives of Hyderabad and Gujarat, respectively. The foursome is being questioned at present, Tudu added. Two PCs, 1 laptop, 20 smartphones, 3 passports, Wi-fi router, CCTV equipment, and Rs 18,700 cash has been seized from the four men during searches.

Tudu said the sleuths made a snoop on the flat located on the sixth floor of Prestige Apartments in Sundarpada area, under Airfield police station limits, early Thursday following a tip-off. She said the foursome was taken by surprise with the unexpected police action. "They failed to give satisfactory answers to our queries over the purpose of the gadget setup in the flat," Tudu said adding they were detained afterwards and taken for questioning at the Cyber police station.

During preliminary investigations, the Cyber cops have allegedly learnt that the suspects had created a duplicate version of WINBUZZ365, a Chinese betting application, and lured hundreds of unsuspecting people into investing large sums of money by promising high returns.

Explaining their modus operandi, Tudu said the group would ask potential investors to join WhatsApp and Telegram groups created by them to know more about the betting application. Over a period of time they will entice the group members into investing by putting fake screenshots of individuals receiving huge interests on investments offered by them. "They create a trap. After coughing up large investments, the fraudsters would block the investors' numbers, and later remove them from the WhatsApp/Telegram groups," a senior police officer, in the know of the probe, said.

## Mahakumbh Prayagraj 2025

# Unveiling New Horizons of Development

**Divine-Grand-Digital Mahakumbh 2025**

### Inauguration of 167 Development Projects worth ₹5,500 Crore

- Upgradation and development of 9 railway stations with ₹1,610 crore to enhance passenger amenities
- Widening, strengthening, and beautification of 61 roads with ₹1,376 crore
  - Construction of 10 ROB flyovers with ₹1,170 crore
  - Interception, diversion, and treatment of four drains with ₹100 crore
- Development and construction of 7 permanent ghats and 8 riverfront roads with ₹304 crore
  - 13 projects of sewerage network upgradation and development of drinking water infrastructure with ₹215 crore
  - Installation of 4 new transformers, establishment of 2 substations, and upgradation of power infrastructure with ₹203 crore

**Date : 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2024 | Time : 12:40 PM**  
**Venue : Sangam Area, Mahakumbh Nagar (Prayagraj)**

By **Narendra Modi** Prime Minister

In the august presence of

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Anandiben Patel</b><br>Governor, Uttar Pradesh   | <b>Yogi Adityanath</b><br>Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh  |
| <b>Keshav Prasad Maurya</b><br>Deputy Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh   | <b>Brajesh Pathak</b><br>Deputy Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh  |
| <b>Swatantra Dev Singh</b><br>Minister, Jal Shakti and Flood Control, Uttar Pradesh   | <b>Jayveer Singh</b><br>Minister, Tourism and Culture, Uttar Pradesh   |
| <b>Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi'</b><br>Minister, Industrial Development, Export Promotion, NRI and Investment Promotion, Uttar Pradesh  | <b>Rakesh Sachan</b><br>Minister, Micro Small and Medium Enterprises, Khadi and Villages Industries, Sericulture Industries, Handloom and Textile, Uttar Pradesh |
| <b>A.K. Sharma</b><br>Minister, Urban Development, Overall Urban Development, Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation, Energy, Additional Sources of Energy, Uttar Pradesh | <b>Dr. Sanjay Kumar Nishad</b><br>Minister, Fisheries Uttar Pradesh  |
| <b>Dayashankar Singh</b><br>Minister of State (Independent Charge) Transport, Uttar Pradesh   | <b>Praveen Patel</b><br>MP, Phulpur  |
| <b>Dr. V.K. Singh</b><br>Chairman, District Panchayat, Prayagraj  | <b>Dr. Vinod Kumar Bind</b><br>MP, Bhadohi   |
| <b>Dr. Sidharth Nath Singh</b><br>MLA, Prayagraj West   | <b>Umesh Chandra Ganesh Kesarwani</b><br>Mayor, Prayagraj  |
| <b>Rajmani Kol</b><br>MLA, Koraoan  | <b>Guru Prasad Maurya</b><br>MLA, Phaphamau  |
| <b>Piyush Ranjan Nishad</b><br>MLA, Karachhana  | <b>Deepak Patel</b><br>MLA, Phulpur  |
| <b>Harshvardhan Bajpai</b><br>MLA, Prayagraj North  | <b>Vachaspati</b><br>MLA, Bara   |
| <b>Dr. K.P. Srivastava</b><br>MLC   | <b>Dr. Babulal Tiwari</b><br>MLC   |
| <b>Surendra Chaudhary</b><br>MLC  |  |

**And Other Dignitaries**

Live Telecast DD NEWS & Youtube.com/DDNEWS and UPGovtOfficial CMOUttarpradesh CMOfficeUP  
Information & Public Relations Department, Uttar Pradesh

# City gets ₹75 crore badminton academy



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** A Badminton High Performance Centre (HPC) was inaugurated at the iconic Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar Thursday.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Assam CM Himant Biswa Sarma, also the president of the Badminton Association of India, inaugurated the facility in the presence of India's chief national coach Pullela Gopichand.

The HPC, a collaboration among the Odisha government, Pullela Gopichand Badminton Foundation (PGBF) and Dalmia Bharat Group, has been built at ₹75 crore.

While the state government has provided 3 acre of land at the Kalinga Stadium, Dalmia Bharat Group built the infrastructure and PGBF will provide technical expertise.

The HPC, named Dalmia Bharat Pullela Gopichand Badminton Academy, has an indoor area of 77,000 sq ft. It has eight badminton courts

and a spectator capacity of 400. It has residential facilities for 50 players, a gymnasium and an amphitheatre for outdoor activities.

Majhi said the centre will offer world-class training and coaching facilities under the direct supervision of Gopichand.

"I hope that the facility will host national and international badminton tournaments and act as a source of inspiration for budding players in the state," he said.

Sarma said the centre will provide an opportunity for players to equip themselves with the skills required to dominate the global badminton arena.

"My vision is to have centres of excellence in every state to ensure our budding shuttlers get the best possible training," he said.

Gopichand said the facility with its unique design and state-of-the-art amenities will play a crucial role in shaping the future of Indian

badminton. Dalmia Bharat MD Puneet Dalmia expressed his gratitude to the chief ministers of Odisha and Assam.

"Himantaji, as the president of the Badminton Association of India, has been a catalyst in our global badminton success and we look forward to reaching even greater heights in the future," he said.

"Dalmia Bharat has always been an integral part of Odisha's illustrious journey and we are delighted to present the people of the state with another iconic facility that will nurture the future champions. We hope the venue will become a major part of the competitive circuit and draw international and national professionals," he added.

Meanwhile, Gopichand also met Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik at his residence. Patnaik, the former CM, laid the foundation stone of the HPC in 2018.

In a post on X, Patnaik said, "Glad to meet legendary badminton player #Pullela-Gopichand. Thank him for his appreciation for the robust sports ecosystem in #Odisha and partnership to set up Dalmia Bharat Gopichand Badminton Academy. I am sure, the Badminton HPC will help groom future champions from the soil and bring laurels for the state. #OdishaForSports."

The academy has a shuttlecock-inspired design, incorporating rainwater harvesting for groundwater recharge, and energy-efficient LED lighting.



**DIVINE OFFERINGS:** On the occasion of Bhanjara Dwadashi, as many as 851 types of divine delicacies were prepared at Goura Vihar Ashram, also known as Mata Mutt, in Puri Thursday

# 'Population rise at root of man-jumbo conflict'

Save Elephant Foundation Trust marks 12th foundation day with workshop on elephant conservation

RESHMI YADAV, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Forest, Environment and Climate Change Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia Thursday said Human-elephant conflict is escalating due to the growing population and diminishing habitats. He said this while addressing a workshop titled 'Challenges of Elephant Conservation in Changing Circumstances' organised by Save Elephant Foundation Trust at Soochana Bhawan here on the occasion of the outfit's 12th foundation day.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Prem Kumar Jha and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief of Forest Force Debidutta Biswal attended the event as guests of honour. Also present on the occasion were forest rangers, local people and other dignitaries.

Singh Khuntia, who attended the event as the chief guest, praised the foundation's on-



going efforts, saying, "Save Elephant Foundation has been instrumental in supporting the Forest department for protection and conservation of elephants. Their work is vital in these changing times."

"Human-elephant conflict is escalating due to the growing population and diminishing habitats. Elephants are invading public spaces, and the consequent violence is devastating for both humans and elephants," he stated.

Over the past 12 years, more than 1,000 elephants have died in Odisha, while over 1,500 human lives have been lost due to elephant attacks. The situation has raised significant concern about the sustainability of ele-

phant conservation.

During the event, Save Elephant Foundation honoured several individuals, including Chief Conservator of Forests Manoj V Nair and Bonai DFO Lalit Kumar Patra, with Save Elephant Foundation Trust Award 2024 for their efforts towards reducing human-elephant conflicts. An award was also presented to range officer of Narla in Kalahandi, Late Prashant Pal, who sacrificed his life protecting people from elephant attacks.

Biswal stressed the need for local community involvement, stating, "The success of conservation efforts depends on active participation of local people."

# Prevent middlemen exploitation in paddy procurement: CM

**Bhubaneswar:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday directed officials to ensure that the middlemen do not take benefit of the ongoing paddy procurement process in the state. Majhi was reviewing the progress of the paddy procurement that started November 20. "The Chief Minister has directed officials to keep a close watch on the middlemen so that they do not take advantage for farmers under any circumstances," a statement issued by his office said. At present, the paddy procurement process is underway in nine districts -- Bargarh, Nuapada, Sambalpur, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Jharsuguda, Nabarangpur, Subarnapur and Koraput. So far, 37,079 farmers sold 1,81,196 ton of paddy and were paid ₹323.73 crore as minimum support price and ₹112.61 crore as input assistance. Majhi said paddy procurement at ₹2,300 per quintal along with input assistance of ₹800 per quintal, besides PM-Kisan and CM-Kisan schemes, were ensuring the empowerment of farmers. He said more than 17 lakh farmers would benefit from the initiatives.

# Wonderla offers spl Christmas discounts

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Wonderla Holidays Limited, India's largest amusement park chain, is gearing up to spread holiday cheer at its Bhubaneswar Park with exclusive Christmas discounts and vibrant festive events.

The park is offering a special Christmas ticket priced at ₹679 and a Christmas Combo Offer for ₹870, which includes park entry, a food combo, and locker facilities. These limited-time deals are valid for online bookings until January 5, making Wonderla Bhubaneswar a perfect destination for holiday celebrations.

Adding to the festivities, the park has curated an array of events and performances, including live music, parades, dance shows, DJ performances, and more. The season's highlight is Wonderla Con, Odisha's first outdoor pop-culture event featuring a Christmas Cosplay competition with prizes worth ₹25,000, kicking off December 25.



The celebration continues with thrilling activities, including DJ sets and special performances, scheduled daily from December 21 to January 5. Visitors can look forward to exciting activities on New Year's Eve and beyond, ensuring a lively atmosphere throughout the festive season.

Speaking about the initiative, Arun K. Chittilappilly, managing director of Wonderla Amusement Parks & Resort, said, "We are delighted to offer these festive discounts to our guests at Wonderla Bhubaneswar. It's a wonderful opportunity for families and friends to enjoy thrilling rides and create unforgettable memories. We look forward to welcoming everyone and ensuring they have an extraordinary experience this holiday season."

# Justice Dipak Misra Sahitya Samman from next yr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cuttack, Dec 12:** Utkal Sahitya Samaj, the oldest literary organisation of the state, has decided to confer Justice Dipak Misra Sahitya Samman to an eminent Odia writer from next year.

The Samaj established in 1903 will award a literary person with Justice Dipak Misra Sahitya Samman for his or her overall contributions to Odia literature every year.

Speaking to media persons

Wednesday, former Chief Justice of India Justice Dipak Misra said his family has decided to set up a corpus fund for encouraging literary persons of the state and every year, it will give a cash award of ₹1 lakh to an eminent writer of the state.

The corpus fund will also meet the annual expenditure of the Utkal Sahitya Samaj award function.

For this purpose, Justice Misra handed over a cheque of ₹4.2 lakh to the president of the Utkal Sahitya Samaj in the

presence of other office bearers of the outfit. The present amount is given to meet the requirements of the Utkal Sahitya Samaj for next three years, he said.

Misra said his family is also contemplating to establish either a trust or fund to encourage more and more literary persons by associating with other literary institutions.

Misra has written four books in Odia based on Mahabharat, the latest being 'Mu Ashwatthama Kahuchi'.

# Crab farmers' meet to strengthen sustainable aquaculture

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** The State Project Management Unit of the Enhancing Climate Resilience of India's Coastal Communities (ECRICC) initiative organised a crab farmers' and exporters' meet at the State Institute for Rural Development (SIRD) campus, Thursday.

The event aimed to bring together crab farmers, exporters, government officials, and technical experts to foster sustainable aquaculture practices and strengthen market linkages for Odisha's mud crab sector.

Inaugurating the event, Forest, Environment, and Climate Change department's Environment-cum-Special Secretary director and ECRICC state

project director, Prem Kumar Jha highlighted the importance of mud crab aquaculture in bolstering Odisha's fisheries sector.

He noted that the initiative offers a sustainable source of income for coastal communities and detailed the project's progress, challenges, and opportunities in crab export.

Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) deputy director Archiman Lahiri underscored the rising global demand for high-quality mud crabs and Odisha's potential to become a leading exporter. Lahiri emphasised that the state could capitalise on international markets by adopting quality-oriented practices.

The ECRICC project, sup-



ported by the Green Climate Fund, aims to enhance the livelihoods of vulnerable coastal populations across three states—Odisha, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh. It focuses on climate-adaptive livelihoods and strengthening communi-

ty resilience to climate change impacts.

In Odisha, the project is being implemented in seven landscapes across four districts—Puri, Ganjam, Kendrapara, and Balasore—by the Forest, Environment, and

Climate Change department under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as the Green Climate Fund's official agency, ensures quality assurance for the initiative.

Discussions at the event included plans for scaling crab aquaculture practices, establishing a crab hatchery in Odisha by 2025, and identifying additional farmers for capacity-building programmes. Officials stressed improving access to international markets through quality checks and streamlined export documentation.

Representatives from MPE-

DA, Fisheries and Animal Resource Development (F&ARD) department, and exporters from West Bengal and Tamil Nadu attended the workshop, sharing insights and best practices. ECRICC state project manager Spandita Kar and her team coordinated the event's proceedings.

The meet marked a significant step in forging partnerships between government bodies, NGOs, and exporters, with a shared vision of driving transformative changes in Odisha's coastal communities. By addressing key challenges and leveraging opportunities, the initiative aims to create a sustainable and thriving aquaculture ecosystem in the state.

# NGT orders fresh inquiry into stone quarrying in Rahadpur

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Odisha Space Applications Centre (ORSAC) and the deputy director of mines, Jajpur, to conduct a fresh inquiry into the stone quarrying activities at the Rahadpur cluster in Jajpur district.

The directive came during a hearing by the Eastern Zone Bench of the tribunal in response to a plea filed by Babuli Jena, represented by advocates Sankar Prasad Pani and Asutosh Padhy.



The NGT has tasked director of mines, Jajpur with examining multiple aspects of the quarrying operations with ORSAC's assistance, including the quantum of minor minerals excavated, mining activities beyond the lease area, instances of excess mining, and the proximity of quarry sites to minor irrigation projects in the region.

The petitioner raised concerns about violations of environmental norms and regulations governing quarrying activities in the Rahadpur cluster. It was alleged that the operations breached the Odisha State Pollution Control Board's (OSPCB) siting criteria and the conditions outlined in environmental clearance.

One of the primary grievances highlighted by the petitioner pertains to the Ranibanda and Paikarapur minor irrigation projects, which reportedly lie adjacent to the quarrying area.

## WEATHER

|          | BBSR  | CTC   |
|----------|-------|-------|
| Max Temp | 27.8° | 25.6° |
| Min Temp | 15.0° | 13.6° |
| Humidity | 65%   | 77%   |
| Rainfall | Nil   | Nil   |

## FORECAST

Fog/mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later

## MARKET WATCH

| INDEX  | VARIATION         |
|--------|-------------------|
| SENSEX | 81289.96 ↓ 236.18 |
| NIFTY  | 24548.70 ↓ 93.10  |
| DOLLAR | 84.96 ↑ 0.01      |
| EURO   | 89.28 ↑ 0.12      |
| GOLD   | ₹77,896 ↓ ₹1,106  |
| SILVER | ₹92,750 ↓ ₹3,052  |

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

# 8 Bengal workers stripped, paraded

### Irate locals roughed up the eight masons after one of them allegedly attempted to outrage a woman's modesty while she was returning home after taking bath Wednesday



PNN & AGENCIES

**Rourkela, Dec 12:** Eight Bengali-speaking migrant workers were stripped semi-naked and paraded on a road with their hands tied Thursday for allegedly attempting to outrage the modesty of a local woman in Sundargarh town, police said. Police said local residents thrashed and paraded the workers in a semi-nude condition on Mission Road between 8.30am and 9am. The victims hail from West Bengal's Murshidabad district and were working as masons in the town. Informed by local residents,

Sundargarh Town police arrived at the spot and rescued the eight persons and took them to the police station. "We have registered two cases - one against 10 persons for stripping, thrashing, and parading the eight workers, and another based on the woman's complaint against one of the workers," DIG Rourkela Brijesh Rai informed. Rai said police have launched a manhunt to arrest the people who took the law into their own hands and humiliated the workers. Police are investigating both cases, and no arrests have been made so far, Rai said and

added that they have identified 10 people involved in assaulting the workers. In her police complaint, the woman claimed that one of the workers attempted to outrage her modesty while she was returning home after taking bath Wednesday. When news of the incident spread, local residents attacked the house where the workers were staying, stripped them, and tied their hands. They were then paraded in public in a semi-nude condition, police said. When police attempted to rescue the workers, they faced strong protests from the local

people. Eyewitnesses said a journalist covering the incident was also allegedly threatened by the local residents. "The incident flared up to such an extent due to public anger over the atrocities being committed against the Hindus in Bangladesh," one of the locals said. It is pertinent to mention here that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had August 11 called up Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and requested him to look into alleged incidents of assault on labourers from the neighbouring state. In the wake of political unrest and violent attacks on religious minorities, especially Hindus, in Bangladesh, such incidents had been reported from Jajpur, Kendrapada, Jagat Singhpur, and Sambalpur districts in Odisha, where locals confronted Bengali-speaking workers, demanding proof of their Indian citizenship. The alleged attacks stemmed from fears that Bangladeshi refugees had illegally entered Odisha amidst the upheaval in the neighbouring nation.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Toll rises to 6 in Mohana accident; probe ordered

PNN & AGENCIES

**Berhampur, Dec 12:** The toll in the road accident near Mohana in Gajapati district rose to six Thursday with two more women succumbing to their injuries, police said. A pickup van with 36 people onboard overturned at Chiding Ghat near Mohana Wednesday. Four people had died on the spot, they said. The two deceased women were identified as Sita Bhuyan (55) and Sanju Bhuyan (54). While Sita died at MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur, Sanju died at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar. All the victims were residents of Kikisingh village, and were heading to Chandragiri on the pickup van to attend a funeral, police said. Twenty-four people were still undergoing treatment, and the condition of five of them was stated to be critical, police said.

Most of the victims sustained fractures and head injuries and were undergoing treatment in the surgery ward of the MKCG Medical College and Hospital. The driver of the vehicle has been missing since the accident, police said. Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhushan Jena visited the patients at the hospital. He asked the hospital authorities to take proper care of them and ordered an inquiry into the accident.

# Youth arrested for rape of sis-in-law

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Buguda, Dec 12:** Police here in Ganjam district have arrested a youth on charge of raping his sister-in-law on the pretext of marriage and making the video of the intimate moments viral on social media platforms. The accused was identified

as Seemanchal Goud, a native of Tambiri village under Buguda police limits and a migrant worker engaged in Kerala. Police registered a case and produced Seemanchal in the court, Thursday, Buguda police inspector in-charge (IIC) Sitanshu Sekhar Mandhata said. According to the complaint,

Seemanchal lured the woman, his sister-in-law in relation, and coerced her for physical relationship on the pretext of marriage. Subsequently, he raped the woman at various points of time in the last one year threatening to make the video of their intimate moments viral. Later, he promised the wom-

an to take her to Kerala with him and marry there. However, he abandoned her at Bhubaneswar and absconded. The woman waited for long hours but Seemanchal never returned to take her back. The woman returned to the village and lodged a complaint at Buguda police station leading to his arrest.

# Wrong injection for skin ailment claims boy's life

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Patana, Dec 12:** A 15-year-old boy died after being administered with a wrong injection for a skin ailment at a medicine store in Keonjhar district, Thursday. The deceased was identified as Sukadev Munda, son of Bijay Kumar Munda from Dharapada village under Pandapada police limits in Keonjhar district. A Class-X student at Saraswati Sishu Vidya Mandir in Saharpada, Sukadev was staying in the school hostel. Sources said Sukadev was

suffering from severe itching problem for which his family members took him to Sarbeswar Medicine Store at Saharpada for a check-up and medicines. The medicine store proprietor said it was an infectious disease and advised them that administering an injection will cure him fast. However, the boy was rendered critical two minutes after the injection was administered. Family members rushed him to the Karanjia Sub-Divisional Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. Shocked over his son's death, the boy's father Bijay

Munda has lodged a complaint at Saharpada police outpost holding the medicine store owner responsible. The medicine store owner has fled the area after reports surfaced. Outpost officer Bhawani Shankar Badi sent the body for post-mortem and launched an investigation. Residents alleged that illegal medicine stores and quacks have mushroomed in the area. They demanded that these stores be

raided and sought a verification of these businesses in Saharpada as well as other areas in the district.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
**E-AUCTION OF PARKING STAND**  
Auction Catalogue No.: SDCM-KUR-PRKING  
Station & Location : NARANPUR-2  
Wheeler (Near station building).  
Auction Start Date & Time : 27.12.2024 at 11:00 hrs.  
Auction End Date & Time : 27.12.2024 at 11:30 hrs.  
Note: Prospective bidders are advised to visit the [www.lreps.gov.in](http://www.lreps.gov.in) and check the upcoming e-auctions leasing tab to get all required information regarding this e-auction.  
Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/ PR-797/P/24-25 Khurda Road

**GOVT. OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER**  
**RURAL WORKS DIVISION, NUAPADA**  
Email- rd\_nuapada@rediffmail.com  
**BID IDENTIFICATION NO. RWNPD - 05 (Online) of 2024-25**  
**"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
Bid documents consisting of Form, Estimate Cost, Cost of tender Paper, EMD / BID security, Time of Completion, Class of Contractor and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. website i.e [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)  
1. Name of the Work : Road works in the District of Nuapada as mentioned in DTCN. 2. Total No of Works : 02 Nos.  
3. Estimated Cost : Rs. 18.91 to 44.12 lakhs. 4. Period of Completion : 01 (one) Calendar Month. 5. Other Details :  
Procurement officer Bid Identification No. Availability of Tender online for bidding From To Last date & time of Seeking tender clarification Date & Time of Opening of Tender  
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Nuapada PD-05/2024-25 (Online) 17.12.2024 at 10.00 A.M. 31.12.2024 up to 5.00 P.M. 30.12.2024 upto 05.00 P.M. 01.01.2025 at 11.00 A.M.  
Further details can be seen from the website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)  
OIPR-25050/11/0005/2425 Sd/- Executive Engineer Rural Works Division, Nuapada

**बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र**  
**Bank of Maharashtra**  
**BANK OF MAHARASHTRA**  
**ZONAL OFFICE : BHUBANESWAR**  
First Floor, Door Sanchar Bhavan, Unit-IX, Near Rupali Square, Bhubaneswar -751022, Email Id: dzmbbsr@mahabank.co.in  
**POSSESSION NOTICE**  
(For Immovable Property) [Rule-8 (1)]  
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of Maharashtra under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of the powers conferred under sub-section (12) of section 13 read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices calling upon the Borrowers/Guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice plus interest and expenses thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.  
The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/ Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrowers/Guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the Bank of Maharashtra for an amount stated below with interest & expenses thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.  
SI. No. BRANCH/ Name & Address of the Borrowers/Guarantors Description of the Security Interest taken over possession Liabilities due on the specified date as per Notice Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession  
1 Jagatsinghpur Branch Borrower / Co-applicants/ Guarantors: (1) Mr. Rakesh Biswal, S/o-Mr. Basant Kumar Biswal, (2) Mrs. Sakhi Biswal, (3) Mr. Bijay Kumar Biswal, (4) Mr. Shridhar Biswal, (5) Mr. Basanta Kumar Biswal, All are at Panisalia, Jagatsinghpur, Odisha-754103. All those pieces and parcels of Land situated being and lying at Mouza-Panisalia, SRO/Tehsil/Dist-Jagatsinghpur, Sub-Dist: Jagatsinghpur, admeasuring area 3136 Sq.ft and bearing CTS/Survey Nos. Khata No. 437/394, Plot No. 792, A 0.07 dec., 2 Kadi (Gharabari) together with the building and structures / residential block constructed to / to be constructed thereon admeasuring 2200 sq.ft (build up) and all the fixture annexed thereto and bounded as follows: East-Mr. Amulya Biswal, West-Road, North-Rabindra Bhoi, South-Ramesh Biswal. ₹ 20,03,612.61/- as on 02.09.2024 + interest and other charges there on 02.09.2024 / 07.12.2024  
2 Jagatsinghpur Branch Borrower / Co-applicants/ Guarantors: (1) Mr. Sukadev Jena, (2) Mr. Jagannath Jena, Both are S/o-Late Dhuleshwar Jena. Both are at Markandapur, PO-Punanga, Jagatsinghpur, Dist-Jagatsinghpur, Odisha-754103. 7840.80 Sq.ft and bearing CTS / Survey Nos. Khata No. 827/822, Plot No. 2074/3479 (Ac. 0.18 dec.) (Gharabari), Property owned by Sukadev Jena & Jagannath Jena together with the buildings and structures / residential block constructed thereon and bounded as follows:- East-Road, West-Sarada Prasad Jena, North-Sarada Prasad Jena, South-Road. ₹ 8,59,448.47/- as on 03.08.2024 + interest and other charges there on 03.08.2024 / 07.12.2024  
3 Jagatsinghpur Branch Borrower / Co-applicants/ Guarantors: (1) Mr. Sanjib Kumar Nayak, S/o-Mr. Duryodhan Nayak, (2) Mr. Duryodhan Nayak, (2) Mr. Raj Kishore Nayak. All are at Shankarpur, Dhaia Saha, Cuttack Sadar, A.D Market, Cuttack, Odisha-753012. All those pieces and parcels of Land situates being and lying at Mouza-Unit 33, Bhisnabar, Tehsil-Cuttack Sadar, in the registration Dist. Cuttack, Sub-Dist. Cuttack, Plot No-1269/3320, Khata No-1205/196, Gharabari, A.C 0.035 dec corresponding to Khata No 1197, Plot No-1269, together with the building and structures/residential block constructed to / to be constructed thereon and all the fixture annexed thereto, and bounded as follows:- East: Bishnu Charan Parida, West: Road, North: Susama Sahoo, South: Sarbeswar Satpathy. ₹ 33,19,568.00/- as on 16.09.2024 + interest and other charges there on 16.09.2024 / 07.12.2024  
4 Berhampur Branch Borrower: M/s. Gouvar Traders, through its Prop-Mrs. Namita Kumari Behera, Address:- Jayamangala Nagar, Gate Bazar, Berhampur, Dist. Ganjam, Odisha-760001. Guarantor: Mr. Umesh Chandra Madhi, Address-1: At Mouza-Ambagada, Dwarika Nagar, Near Canal, 900 mts from main Road, 900 mts from Rajarani Dream Home Apartment, Plot No. 676/2495, Khata No. 220/1515, Berhampur, Dist.-Ganjam, Odisha-760001. Address-2: C/O Satyabajee Madhi, Jaya Mangala Nagar, Gate Bazar, Berhampur, District Ganjam, Pin-760002. All those pieces and parcels of Land situated being and lying at Mouza-Ambagada, village Dwarika Nagar, in the registration Dist. Ganjam, Sub Dist. Berhampur, admeasuring area 871 Sq.ft. and bearing CTS/Survey Nos. Plot No. 676/2495, Khata No. 220/1515 owned by Mrs. Namita Kumari Behera and bounded as follows: East: Site of Bijayalaxmi Behera, West-Site of Subash Sethy /Vendors, North: Road, South: Site of Subash Sethy/Vendors. ₹ 20,49,689.07 as on 23.09.2024 + interest and other charges there on 23.09.2024 / 10.12.2024  
5 Berhampur Branch Borrower: Mrs. Kamini Sethi, D/o-Mr. Balaram Sethi, at Nilanchal Nagar, 1st Lane, Bhabanipur, Berhampur, Ganjam, Odisha-761001. Guarantors: (1) Mr. Prakash Chandra Sethi, S/o- Mr. Choudhury Sethi, at/A/159, Sector-7, Rourkela-3, Sundargarh, Odisha-769003, (2) Mr. Manguli Sethi, S/o-Gopi Sethi, At/Po-Ranjhali, Via-Purushottampur, Ganjam, Odisha-761018. All those pieces and parcels of Land situated being and lying at Mouza-Bhabanipur, SRO-Berhampur, Tahasil-Kanisani in the registration Dist-Ganjam, Sub Dist-Berhampur, measuring area 1176 sq.ft and bearing CTC/Survey Nos. Khatian SI No. 1530/3756, Survey/Plot No. 4953/10817 & 4953/10816 and bounded as follows:- East-Site of Anjali Sahu, West-Site of Sri Sri Sankhaleswar Mahadev, North-Site of Plot No. 4986, South-Road. ₹ 22,38,392.00/- as on 02.09.2024 + interest and other charges there on 02.09.2024 / 10.12.2024  
Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 13.12.2024 Sd/-Authorised Officer, Bank of Maharashtra

**पावरग्रिड POWERGRID**  
**NOTICE**  
1. Approval under Regulation-86 of CERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations'1999 and CERC (Terms and Conditions of Tariff) Regulations'2019 i) Truing up of Transmission tariff for 2019-24 tariff block and ii) Determination of Transmission tariff for 2024-29 tariff block for **Petition-1:** Eastern-Northern Inter-regional HVDC Transmission System, **Petition-2:** Dehri-Karamnasa Transmission System, **Petition-3:** 400 kV Jamshedpur-Rourkela S/C (Ckt-II) Transmission Line, **Petition-4:** 400 kV Jeyapore-Talcher Transmission System, **Petition-5:** 400 kV Talcher Transmission System and **Petition-6:** 400 kV Kahalgaon Transmission System.  
2. The beneficiaries of the above mentioned Transmission system are: (i) Bihar State Power (Holding) Company Ltd, (ii) West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd., (iii) Grid Corporation Of Orissa Ltd., (iv) Damodar Valley Corporation, (v) Power Department, Govt Of Sikkim, Gangtok, (vi) Jharkhand Bijli Vitran Nigam Ltd.  
3. Tariff details:  
a) 2019-24 Block ₹ in lakhs  
Petition No. Asset detail DCO/ECOD/Notional Completion Cost as on 31.03.2024 2019-20 2020-21 2021-22 2022-23 2023-24  
-1 Asset-1 01.07.2001 16557.13 1366.27 1320.09 1307.49 1346.38 1352.62  
Asset-2 01.12.2002 27541.56 2029.19 1930.02 1906.08 2010.77 2034.26  
-2 Combined Asset 01.06.1999 1039.31 142.15 143.80 145.69 147.72 150.43  
-3 Combined Asset 01.01.2003 5495.38 511.90 510.35 508.95 508.58 510.07  
-4 Combined Asset 01.12.1990 12468.90 2334.79 2362.37 2391.74 1664.95 1732.45  
-5 Combined Asset 01.06.1995 11730.00 1694.31 1706.45 1721.94 1742.73 1766.06  
-6 Combined Asset 01.04.1997 21108.30 3883.99 3934.35 4013.12 4148.18 4279.63  
b) 2024-29 Block ₹ in lakhs  
Petition No. Asset detail Completion Cost as on 31.03.2025 Tariff 2024-25 2025-26 2026-27 2027-28 2028-29  
Petition-1 Asset-1 16973.25 1285.00 1291.31 1306.88 1352.42 1400.81  
Asset-2 27541.56 2096.18 2135.65 2180.24 2224.82 2274.71  
Asset-3 7619.17 669.32 690.41 721.55 892.86 1246.92  
Petition-2 Combined Asset 1071.90 140.95 143.85 154.92 166.44 168.92  
Petition-3 Combined Asset 5747.97 482.17 484.56 487.35 521.63 560.65  
Petition-4 Combined Asset 18416.38 1993.63 2529.25 2715.59 3000.27 3098.32  
Petition-5 Combined Asset 12313.32 1697.07 1713.57 1789.58 1898.43 1272.38  
Petition-6 Combined Asset 29406.00 3911.40 4163.78 3673.96 4415.73 4909.50  
4. A copy of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of the applicant at [www.powergridindia.com](http://www.powergridindia.com).  
5. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Chandralok Building, Janpath, New Delhi-110 001 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office within 30 days of publication of this notice.  
Place: Gurugram Date: 12.12.2024 Sd/- General Manager (Commercial)  
**POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED**  
(A Government of India Enterprise)  
Corp. Office: "Saudamini", Plot No. 2, Sector-29, Gurugram-122001, (Haryana)  
Regd. Office: B-9, Outab Institutional Area, Katwaria Sarai, New Delhi-110 016, www.powergrid.in, CIN: L40101DL1989G01038121  
**A MAHARATNA PSU**

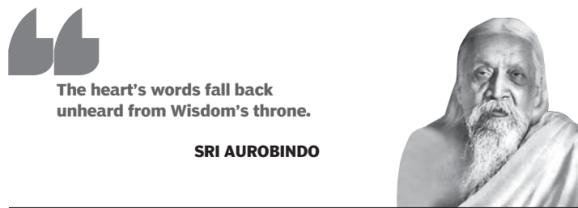
# Kalinga Nagar industry body urges CM to settle transportation dispute



FILE PHOTO

**Jajpur, Dec 12:** An industry body of Kalinga Nagar has written to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, urging him to direct the Jajpur district administration to conduct an inquiry into alleged monopoly of local truckers in the price fixation for transportation of goods. Kalinga Nagar Industries Association president PL Kandoi alleged that truckers' associations in the industrial complex dictate terms in the fixation of prices for transportation of goods. Kandoi, in the letter Wednesday urged the Chief Minister to direct the district authorities and police to take "appropriate measures" after conducting a "comprehensive inquiry into the practice of high-handedness and monopoly by the local truckers' associations in the Kalinga Nagar industrial complex". He also accused the local

truckers of insisting that commercial vehicles should only be engaged through them and not through any other third party for the transportation of goods from the Kalinga Nagar industrial complex. "They also insist on charging an extra 50 per cent of the market rate for freight for the trucks engaged by them in the industries," the letter said, adding that they are "not allowing regular transporters who have been working at fair market rates". "We would welcome trucks to be engaged locally for the transportation of goods in industries, but that is only possible at prevailing market rates, not at inflated prices," Kandoi said in his letter. The industry body sought urgent intervention from the Chief Minister to provide necessary support to the industries in Kalinga Nagar and take appropriate action against such illegal associations for the greater interest of the industries. Chhatrapur panchayat wins nat'l award; Ganjam dist claims 3 Chhatrapur: Chhatrapur block panchayat was awarded the first prize under the Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar as the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj presented the National Panchayat Awards-2024 at a ceremony in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, Wednesday. President Droupadi Murmu honoured 45 panchayats from across the country for their exemplary contributions to grassroots governance. The award was received by Chhatrapur block Chairman Kiran Kumari Dash and District Collector Dibya Jyoti Parida. In addition to the recognition, Chhatrapur will receive a cash prize of Rs 2 crore. Ganjam district earned three out of seven national awards won by the state. Kelaupalli gram panchayat of Rangellunda block secured the second prize for Healthy Panchayat, while Sahapur gram panchayat of Hinjicut block won the second prize for Self-sufficient Infrastructure under the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Vikas Satat Puraskar 2024. Both panchayats will receive Rs 75 lakh each.



## Rebuilding Syria

The rapid fall of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad reflects the dramatic changes that have swept the strategic landscape of the Middle East in the past year. After civil war erupted in Syria in 2011, Assad clung to power for over a decade, despite facing a coalition of forces backed by the United States and Turkey. But only 11 days after the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) launched its offensive, Assad fled to Russia, ending his family's 50-year rule.

That outcome was the result of years of ineffective rule and economic and social hardship, with even the Alawi community that was Assad's base of support defecting without a fight. The end came when his main external backers, Russia and Iran, also abandoned him, reflecting both countries' profound weakening. Russia's war against Ukraine continues to drain its resources and preoccupy the Kremlin, while Israel's post-October 7 campaign against Hamas, Hezbollah (which provided significant support to the Assad regime), and Iran itself has crippled the Iranian-led "axis of resistance."

Syrians will not miss Assad, a brutal ruler who failed his people. Many are celebrating in the streets, and refugees who have been sheltering abroad or in opposition-held pockets of Syria are starting to return to their homes.

The fall of Assad could also bring broader regional benefits. Assad's regime facilitated the flow of arms from Iran to Hezbollah; new leadership in Damascus could further reduce Iranian influence and play a constructive role in shaping a more stable regional order.

But hope must be tempered by caution. Across the Middle East, the removal of strongmen has generally produced violent chaos, not stable and inclusive governance. During the Assad era, the Alawi minority ruled over a Sunni majority; revenge could be in the offing. More generally, Syria's diverse population could easily fall prey to the politics of ethnic and sectarian division.

In fact, since well before Assad's flight, Syria has been a state in name only. Its civil war divided the country into numerous fiefdoms that have been under the effective control of often hostile rival groups. One of those groups — Syria's Kurds — is aligned with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a terrorist entity, prompting Turkey to take control of a broad swath of Syria's north.

Amid these existing fractures, extremist groups could capitalise on the fall of Assad and the resulting turbulence to strengthen their territorial footprint and power. That is what happened in 2014, when the Islamic State was able to seize control of a significant piece of Iraq and Syria as a result of the political mayhem in both countries. Extremist groups could now run the same play, which is why Israel has spent the last few days building a "security zone" beyond its border with Syria and destroying weapons stocks in the country to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands.

A case in point is HTS itself, which began life as an affiliate of al-Qaeda, and, like the PKK, is still designated by the United States and other countries as a terrorist group. While HTS' leaders have pledged moderation and inclusiveness as they seek to fashion a national government, the group has a track record of repression. More broadly, Syria's contending factions might seek to settle scores, not work together. Iran's influence in Syria has plunged, but the Islamic Republic will try to retain its leverage as its former proxies — particularly the disenfranchised Alawis, a Shia sect — jockey with rivals for position.

In short, there is a great deal that could go wrong. Looking ahead, Syria's trajectory will depend first and foremost on its myriad players' ability to achieve an inclusive political transition. Rebuilding a functioning state will require the restoration of Syria's territorial integrity, which in turn will depend on the willingness of multiple territorial stakeholders to share power and sacrifice their autonomy in the interest of national unity. The other key challenge will be forging a new social contract that provides Syrians adequate levels of security and economic opportunity.

Syrians themselves must do most of the hard work, but the international community has an important role to play. For starters, drawing on the harsh lessons learned in Iraq, where the wholesale dismantling of the Ba'ath regime produced violent chaos, outside powers should press the newly empowered opposition groups to refrain from forcibly sidelining the Alawis, who formed the backbone of the Assad regime. The prospects of a lasting settlement would significantly improve if the Alawi elite were adequately integrated into a diverse governing coalition. Moreover, Turkey and the US should press their Syrian proxies, the Syrian National Army and the Syrian Democratic Forces, respectively, to be constructive players and work with, not against, the transitional government.

Outside powers can also help prevent the further collapse of the Syrian state and its economy. Achieving a post-conflict settlement will become all the more difficult if the quality of life continues to deteriorate, and basic services like healthcare and education are unavailable. It was under precisely such conditions that regime change in Iraq produced radicalisation and state failure.

The international community should therefore launch a multilateral aid programme that combines humanitarian and financial assistance with capacity-building measures. As hosts to a large number of Syrian refugees, Turkey and the European Union have a keen interest in the early implementation of a multilateral strategy to foster the right social and economic conditions for the safe, voluntary return of the displaced population.

Assad's fall has created an opportunity for the political and economic reconstruction of a key Arab state and the reshaping of its regional role. But the next few months are critical. The record of efforts to stabilise post-conflict societies in the region is littered with failure. Syria for the past 13 years is a case in point, as are Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. It is time to get one right.

Charles A. Kupchan is Professor of International Affairs at Georgetown University. Sinan Ülgen, a former Turkish diplomat, is Director of EDAM, an Istanbul-based think tank.

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### WISDOM CORNER

Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Failures, repeated failures, are finger posts on the road to achievement. One fails forward toward success.

C S LEWIS

No one has ever loved anyone the way everyone wants to be loved.

MIGNON MCLAUGHLIN

# REACHING THE UNREACHED

## FOCUS EDUCATION

The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) is a statistical tool that measures the percentage of a country's population enrolled in higher education, indicating a country's level of participation in education. The GER is calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled in higher education by the total population of the relevant age group, typically 18-23 years old. Developed countries have high GERs, such as the US (88%), Germany (70%), Canada (69%), and the UK (60%).

India's GER in higher education for the 18-23 age group has shown significant growth, from 23.7% in 2014-15 to 27.3% in 2020-21 and 28.4% in 2021-22. The top-performing states in terms of GER are Puducherry (61%), Chandigarh (56.8%), Delhi (48.3%), Tamil Nadu (46.8%), and Uttarakhand (40.1%). In contrast, Odisha lags behind the national average with a GER of 23.5%. The National Education Policy (NEP) aims to increase the GER to 50% by 2035, which appears to be an ambitious target. To achieve this goal, the country may need to rely on Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in addition to regular enrollment, as the latter may not be sufficient to meet the desired objectives. The beginning of ODL in India dates back to 1962, when the UGC recognised the need for distance education to increase access to higher education. The Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, initially known as Andhra Pradesh Open University, was established on 26 August, 1982, through an Act of the AP State Legislature. This marked the beginning of open and distance learning in India.

India's ODL landscape has undergone significant developments since the establishment of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in



By establishing more open universities, India can increase the GER among disadvantaged groups, address the shortage of skilled workers, and promote lifelong learning and upskilling

1982. The 2000s saw the UGC establish the Distance Education Council to ensure quality assurance in distance education. The NEP 2020 has also emphasised the importance of ODL and online education in expanding access to quality education. Open universities play a significant role in the country's higher education landscape. As of 2021-22, there are 18 open universities in India, comprising 1 Central university, 16 state universities, and 1 state private university.

The enrollment figures for open universities are substantial, with the Central open university accounting for 12,60,841 students, state open universities having 18,00,003 students, and the state private open university having 3,233 students. Remarkably, open universities account for 31.8% of the total university enrollment in India, highlighting the importance of ODL.

ODL has the potential to significantly contribute to increasing GER in India by providing opportunities for students who cannot attend traditional institutions. ODL increases accessibility to higher education, particularly for marginalised and disadvantaged groups, and

offers flexible learning pathways for working professionals, homemakers, and others. Additionally, ODL is scalable, allowing institutions to cater to thousands of students at a time, and cost-effective, reducing expenses associated with traditional institutions, making education more affordable for students from economically weaker backgrounds.

However, to improve GER, several challenges need to be addressed. These challenges include improving digital infrastructure, such as internet connectivity and device availability, ensuring quality assurance of ODL programmes and institutions, providing adequate student support services like counselling and academic guidance, and securing recognition and accreditation of ODL programmes by employers and academic institutions to enhance their credibility.

One of the most pressing, yet invisible, challenges facing ODL systems is the alarming rate of student dropout. Despite impressive enrollment numbers, a significant percentage of students fail to appear for examinations. Several factors contribute to this

issue. Lax attendance policies in contact classes lead to procrastination, causing students to fall behind in assignment submissions. As assignments are a prerequisite for exam eligibility, delays in submission result in postponed exam appearances. Furthermore, many ODL students are working professionals, homemakers, or individuals who have already completed degrees. As a result, they may not prioritise exam preparation, adopting a more relaxed approach. These challenges underscore the need for ODL institutions to implement strategies that foster student engagement, motivation, and timely completion of coursework.

By increasing accessibility, flexibility, scalability, and cost-effectiveness, ODL can help achieve the goal of 50% GER by 2035. However, addressing the challenges of infrastructure, quality assurance, student support, and recognition and accreditation is crucial for the success of ODL in India.

By establishing more open universities, India can increase the GER among disadvantaged groups, address the shortage of skilled workers, and promote lifelong learning and upskilling. To achieve this, the government, policymakers, and educators must collaborate to develop a comprehensive plan, ensure adequate funding and resources, promote awareness about open universities, and foster collaborations between open universities, industries, and communities. By taking these steps, India can harness the potential of open universities to boost GER, promote inclusive education, and drive economic growth.

The writer, a retired principal, is founder of Supporting Shoulders — an organisation striving for the mental health of students.



Bhaskar Nath Biswal

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY AIMS TO INCREASE THE GER TO 50% BY 2035, WHICH APPEARS TO BE AN AMBITIOUS TARGET



Charles A. Kupchan & Sinan Ülgen

ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST, THE REMOVAL OF STRONGMEN HAS GENERALLY PRODUCED VIOLENT CHAOS, NOT STABLE AND INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

## SPECTRUM ELECTIONS

# Bring urban voters back to polling booths

The results of the Maharashtra and Jharkhand Legislative Assembly elections are now out, and new governments have been formed in both states. In the Maharashtra Assembly elections, over 65% voter turnout was recorded, the highest in 30 years. This is significant for two reasons: first, it shows an almost 4% increase compared to the Lok Sabha elections, and second, it is close to the average national voter turnout of around 65-66%.

But the question arises—can this voter turnout percentage be considered sufficient for a strong democracy? Certainly not! Then, what can be done? This is a serious issue that all responsible citizens of the country need to think about—how can voter turnout be increased in elections?

Maharashtra's data is noteworthy because the state has the largest urban population in the country. Historically, it has lagged behind the national average due to low voter turnout in cities and towns. However, a closer look at Maharashtra's data reveals that voter apathy in urban areas hasn't entirely disappeared. For example, Western Maharashtra's Kolhapur district recorded a high voter turnout of 76.25%, followed by Gadchiroli—a region often in news for Maoist activities—at

73.68%. In contrast, Mumbai City district recorded a low voter turnout of 52.07%. Similar figures were observed in other urban districts like Pune, Thane, and Mumbai Suburban.

On the positive side, voter turnout has improved overall across the state. The credit for this change, though slow and gradual, goes primarily to the Election Commission of India (ECI). This time, the ECI was quite proactive in increasing voter turnout. Its campaign involved social media and local celebrities, from cricketers to film stars. Measures like setting up polling stations in high-rise buildings and residential societies and introducing a token system to reduce waiting time were also implemented. High-voltage campaigns by political parties also helped increase voter participation.

Having said that, urban areas across the country generally see lower voter turnout. From Shimla to Surat, urban voter apathy remains consistent. This trend is not new. During the first three decades of elections, urban voter participation was much better. However, since the 1980s, the gap between urban and rural voter turnout has widened. Urban apathy needs to be understood. Urban India contributes 60% to GDP and a significant share to taxes. However, the condition of

cities continues to deteriorate.

Take Delhi, for instance. The city's pollution levels have become so severe that life has become difficult for residents. Delhi is now the most polluted capital in the world. In recent years, major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bangalore have been paralysed by floods during rainy season. Waterlogging on roads caused traffic jams, disrupted rail services, flooded homes, and forced schools and colleges to shut down. These recurring issues highlight the poor state of urban planning and infrastructure.

It's important to understand that urban India is the backbone of the country's economy. Almost the entire service sector is concentrated in cities. According to census data, 31% of population lives in cities, although non-governmental estimates suggest urban population is much higher. Cities provide employment opportunities, and they are where the dreams of the country's youth are realized.

This neglect leads voters to become disillusioned with their representatives. They feel that when their leaders are ineffective, there's no point in voting.

Hence, elected representatives must understand that if voters are to be drawn to polling stations on a large scale again, the responsibility doesn't rest solely

on the ECI. Representatives must also maintain direct contact with the public and show sensitivity toward their issues. You might recall that during the last Lok Sabha elections, the scorching heat gripped almost the entire country. Despite this, voters stepped out of their homes to cast their votes. On election day, temperatures in many places exceeded 42 degrees Celsius. It wasn't easy to campaign or stand in long queues at polling stations in such harsh weather. Yet millions of voters braved the heat and exercised their democratic right. This is encouraging and a positive sign for our democracy.

However, the ECI must make polling stations more accessible and attractive to draw even more voters. Improvements such as sufficient parking, comfortable waiting areas, and voting facilities for differently-abled individuals can make a significant difference. Currently, differently-abled individuals face considerable challenges at polling stations. This needs serious attention.

Increasing voter turnout in panchayat, municipal, Assembly, and Parliamentary elections is not solely the ECI's responsibility. This requires coordinated efforts at multiple levels.

The writer is a senior editor, columnist, and a former MP.

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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

### Misri's misery

Sir, The recent visit to Bangladesh of India's Foreign Secretary, Vikram Misri, has its own inbuilt limitations. As viewed from Bangladesh, a pro India (read, pro Hindu) dispensation under Sheikh Hasina has been ousted. And it's "payback time" for her opponents who now call the shots. The prevailing situation in India, vis-a-vis its minorities, does give Bangladesh a handle to tutor us that those in glass houses should not throw stones. So, India is caught in a bind, and cannot pressurise Bangladesh beyond a point. Truth be told, India too needs to look itself honestly in the mirror and have the courage to take corrective measures, before preempting the moral high ground..

Avinash Godbole, DEWAS (MP)

### Landmark judgement

Sir, The Supreme Court's recent directives represent a landmark judgement in the ongoing quest to safeguard women's rights in Indian workplaces. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, or POSH Act, has been in force for over a decade, yet its implementation remains sluggish due to institutional apathy. This legislative vacuum has led to widespread neglect, allowing perpetrators to act with impunity and leaving victims vulnerable. By setting deadlines for compliance, the Court aims to bridge the gap between legislation and implementation. Institutional apathy and lack of accountability have hindered the POSH Act's effectiveness. Many organisations, including accredited sports bodies, have failed to establish Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs), a critical mechanism for addressing sexual harassment complaints. The Court's directive to form ICCs and Local Complaints Committees (LCCs) by January 2025 and ensure complete compliance by March 2025 marks a significant turning point. Regular audits and assessments will monitor compliance, preventing organisations from merely paying lip service to the legislation. Moreover, district-level nodal officers will oversee implementation, promptly addressing complaints.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

# Drone mist-spraying project stalls

Officials have deemed the project costly and ineffective, stating it has failed to deliver significant, measurable improvements

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: A pilot project using drones to spray mist at the pollution hotspots in Delhi may come to a halt due to its high costs and lack of measurable results, an official said.

The technology was proposed as part of Delhi's 21-point Winter Action Plan to combat worsening air quality. However, officials have deemed the project costly and ineffective, stating that it has failed to deliver significant, measurable improvements.

"The technology is extremely expensive and does not provide noticeable advancements compared to the existing methods, which are already yielding better results at a fraction of the cost," an official involved in the evaluation told PTI.



A demonstration of the project was conducted at Anand Vihar, one of Delhi's most polluted areas November 8. During the demonstration, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai highlighted the challenges posed by the pollution hotspots such as narrow roads or congested areas where

traditional modes of transport, including trucks, cannot reach. "Pollution levels in these hotspots are higher than the average AQI in the capital. This is where drones can be particularly effective," Rai said. Stating that the effort aims to reduce particulate matter, Rai said, "Each drone can carry 15

litres of water. After sprinkling water, it will return to refill and then continue sprinkling at the inaccessible sites." He also said the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has floated a tender for three drones to be deployed at different hotspots. "If we get promising results

from today's testing, we will move forward with formal tenders to acquire additional drones," he said. Officials, however, remain sceptical about the practicality of the technology. "The technology we are currently using is already delivering similar results. The drones, while innovative, only rise a few metres to spray water, which hasn't shown any noticeable impact so far.

In this situation, we are not confident about the technology," an official said. "Hence, opting for drones doesn't make much sense. The existing methods are already providing actionable results and can be deployed extensively across the city without incurring the high costs associated with drones," the official added.

**The technology was proposed as part of Delhi's 21-point Winter Action Plan to combat worsening air quality**

# Ladakh, J&K to host Khelo India Winter Games



**Union Sports Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya emphasized the importance of the Winter Games in preparing India's athletes for international competitions**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Leh/Jammu, Dec 12: The Union Territory of Ladakh is set to host the Khelo India Winter Games featuring ice sports like ice hockey and ice skating from January 23 next year.

"The Union Territory of Ladakh will host ice sports, including ice hockey and ice skating events from January 23 to 27, 2025," a spokesperson said.

This marks the second consecutive year that Ladakh will host a segment of the Khelo India Winter Games.

Jammu & Kashmir will host the snow events, such as Alpine Skiing, Nordic Skiing, Ski Mountaineering, and Snowboarding, from February 22 to 25, 2025 in Gulmarg.

Earlier in February, Ladakh successfully organized ice skating and ice hockey events for the first time, breaking the tradition of Jammu and Kashmir hosting all events in previous editions.

"The Khelo India Winter Games began in 2020 with nearly 1,000 athletes, including 306 women, participating in the inaugural edition," he said.

The Winter Games have since grown in popularity with over 1,350 athletes competing in 2021 and more than 1,500 in 2022.

In 2024, the Winter Games saw over 1,200 participants, including more than 700 athletes, supported by 141 staff members, 113 technical officials

**The Winter Games are crucial for identifying athletes, who can represent India at the 2026 Winter Olympics. We are committed to promoting winter sports and encouraging more athletes to take up skiing and skating**

DR MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION SPORTS MINISTER

and over 250 volunteers, he said adding that a total of 136 medals were awarded during the event.

"For the first time, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, in collaboration with the Sports Authority of India, managed the technical aspects of the Games alongside the National Sports Federations and the Indian Olympic Association," he said.

Union Sports Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya emphasized the importance of the Winter Games in preparing India's athletes for international competitions.

"The Winter Games are crucial for identifying athletes who can represent India at the 2026 Winter Olympics. We are committed to promoting winter sports and encouraging more athletes to take up skiing and skating," he said.

Mandaviya also highlighted the growing participation of athletes from remote Himalayan villages, calling it a positive step for development of the winter sports in the region.

# Kashmir plains receive season's first snowfall

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Dec 12: Srinagar, Dec 12: Many areas in the plains of Kashmir received the season's first snowfall Thursday breaking a long dry spell, even as the minimum temperature improved at most places in the valley, officials said.

However, snowfall in the higher reaches, which began in Wednesday, continued at several places. The plains of Shopian, Pulwama, and Baramulla, as well as the upper areas of Anantnag, Budgam, and Bandipora received light snowfall. However, there was no snowfall in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir.

The higher reaches of the valley, including the tourist resorts of Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Tangmarg, Gurez and the Zojila Pass, saw light to moderate snowfall.

Due to accumulation of snow along the Zojila Pass, the Srinagar-Leh highway was closed for traffic, while the Bandipora-Gurez road and Mughal Road were also shut, officials said.



Authorities have deployed men and machinery to clear the snow and restore road traffic, they added.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast an improvement in weather conditions from Thursday afternoon. Mainly dry conditions expected to prevail until December 20.

Meanwhile, night temperatures rose across the valley, including Srinagar, due to cloud cover.

Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 0.5 degrees Celsius, up from minus 3 degrees Celsius the previous night. Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 5.2 degrees Celsius, while Pahalgam, which serves as the base camp for the annual Amarnath Yatra, saw a minimum of minus 4.6 degrees Celsius.

Qazigund, the gateway town to Kashmir, recorded a low of 0.2 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara in northern Kashmir registered a minimum of 0.5 degrees Celsius, and Kokernag in southern Kashmir recorded minus 1 degree Celsius.

# LEGAL DRINKING NORM Delhi clubs, bars to check hard copy age proof

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: The Delhi government has directed operators of the city's hotels, clubs and restaurants serving liquor to verify the age of their clients through hard copies of government-issued identity proofs after violations of the legal drinking age norm were detected.

In Delhi, liquor is served only to persons aged 25 years and above. The Excise department of the Delhi government, during routine inspections by its teams in recent days, found customers younger than 25 years having alcohol at bars, clubs and restaurants.

The inspections also revealed that some customers were consuming liquor pretending to have completed 25 years. Complaints were also received by the department that some excise licensees were serving liquor to underage persons,



officials said.

Under the Delhi Excise Act, 2009, no person or licensed vendor or his employee or agent will sell or deliver liquor to any person apparently under the age of 25 years for personal or others' consumption.

The violations of the age restriction norms were reviewed by the department.

"All the licence holders of hotels, clubs, restaurants (HCR) are hereby directed to be more careful and to not serve liquor to any person under the age of

25 years without verifying the age through government-issued IDs," stated a circular issued by the department.

Further, the department has advised the HCR licensees to verify customers' age only with physical IDs instead of virtual ones saved by people on their mobile phones (excluding those in Digilocker portal) to minimise the use of fake or edited digital IDs. The violation of the legal drinking age norm invites action under the Delhi Excise Act, 2009.

# Peanut chaat, ragi ladoos for Delhi's anganwadi kids

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Children at Delhi's anganwadis are in for healthy and tasty treats this winter with their plates filled with additions like ragi ladoos and crunchy peanut 'chaat' as the Women and Child Development Department rolls out a new food menu with six new items including those made from millets.

"Under the Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 scheme, the department revised the food menu in September 2024 to enhance the nutritional value of meals provided to beneficiaries during the colder months by including millets like bajra, jowar and soy flour in their meals," said a WCD official.

He explained that the department has incorporated new food items like ragi besan ladoo, peanut chaat, lobhya chaat, peanut poha and flattened rice snacks. Archana, a nutritionist at the WCD, said that winter-friendly edibles such as spinach have been added to increase the nutritional content of meals. Similarly, sweet bajra has replaced sweet daliya in the

menu, she added.

"Millets, which are considered traditional superfoods, are now a cornerstone ingredient for all categories of beneficiaries. Rich in fiber, protein, and essential micronutrients like iron and calcium, millets improve the overall quality of the meals served at anganwadis," Archana explained.

This ensures that children receive not only sufficient calories, but also nutrients essential for their growth and development, she said.

For pregnant and lactating mothers, millets have also been added to the Take Home Ration scheme, the official said.

Another official said this shift aligns with modern dietary recommendations that prioritise sustainable and nutrient-rich food.

Previously, the Take Home Ration menu included items like whole wheat flour, moong dal, jaggery, skimmed milk powder, edible oil, groundnuts, and vitamin and mineral premixes. To further enhance its nutritional value, soy flour has now been added to the list, he added.



# Delhi records coldest Dec day in 3 years



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: The city recorded its coldest December day in the last three years Thursday as the minimum temperature dropped to 4.5 degrees Celsius.

The forecast predicts cold wave conditions to persist at isolated places until the weekend.

The city recorded a low of 4.5 degrees Celsius Thursday, 0.4 degrees below normal, compared to 4.9 degrees Celsius Wednesday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

The temperature had dropped sharply from 5 degrees Celsius Wednesday.

According to data, the minimum temperature did not drop below 4.9 degrees Celsius in December 2023 and 2022. The lowest minimum tem-

perature recorded in December last year was 4.9 degrees Celsius

on the 15th, while the lowest in 2022 was 5 degrees Celsius on the 26th.

Cold wave conditions were observed at isolated places in Delhi, including Ayanagar and Pusa, where the temperatures dropped to 3.8 and 3.2 degrees Celsius respectively.

According to the India Meteorological Department, cold wave conditions occur when actual temperatures fall below 4.1 degrees Celsius or when the departure from normal is 4.4 degrees Celsius or more below

**The Weather department has forecast cold wave conditions at isolated places until December 15**

According to data, the minimum temperature did not drop below 4.9 degrees Celsius in December 2023 and 2022

The lowest minimum temperature recorded in December last year was 4.9 degrees Celsius on the 15th, while the lowest in 2022 was 5 degrees Celsius on the 26th

average.

Meanwhile, the maximum temperature during the day was recorded at 22.2 degrees Celsius, 0.8 degrees below normal, the IMD said.

The humidity fluctuated between 88 per cent and 52 per cent during the day.

The Weather department has forecast cold wave conditions

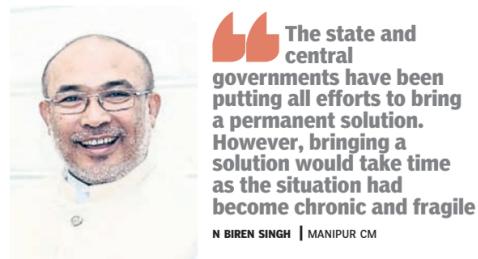
at isolated places until December 15.

Smog and mist are likely Friday morning, with a mainly clear sky during the day. Smog and mist are expected again in the evening and night.

Delhi's air quality remained in the "poor" category, with a 24-hour average AQI of 288.

Out of 38 monitoring stations, 20 recorded AQI in the "very poor" category, while the remaining stations reported air quality in the "poor" category, according to data from the Sameer app.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) classifies AQI between 0 and 50 as "good", between 51 and 100 as "satisfactory", between 101 and 200 as "moderate", between 201 and 300 as "poor", between 301 and 400 as "very poor", and above 400 as "severe".



The state and central governments have been putting all efforts to bring a permanent solution. However, bringing a solution would take time as the situation had become chronic and fragile

N BIREN SINGH | MANIPUR CM

RAJYA SABHA ADJOURNED

Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day on Thursday afternoon amid disruptions as the members of the treasury and Opposition benches traded charges over a no-trust motion brought against Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and the BJP's allegations of the Congress leadership's "links" with billionaire investor George Soros



of the day quote

I desire that NRC-type documents should be prepared so that we can easily differentiate who are Indians and who are infiltrators



HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CHIEF MINISTER

I had taken 10-12 meetings to discuss about this road. Due to various reasons it was delayed. Work is now going on in full swing. The Jorhat-Jhanji portion will be completed by February 2025



NITIN GADKARI | UNION ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS MINISTER

On the 100th birth anniversary of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who dreamt of inter-connecting the country's rivers to augment water resources, PM Modi will lay the foundation stone of the ambitious Ken-Betwa National River Linking Project on December 25 in MP's Chhatrapur district



MOHAN YADAV | MP CM

SHORT TAKES

IMD issues red alert in 3 Kerala districts

Thiruvananthapuram: Several parts of Kerala experienced heavy rainfall Thursday morning, prompting the India Meteorological Department (IMD) to issue a red alert for three districts. The red alert has been issued for the Pathanamthitta, Ernakulam, and Idukki districts for the day. Additionally, the IMD issued an orange alert for five other districts—Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Kottayam, and Thrissur.

Senior YSRCP leader quits

Amaravati: Senior YSRCP leader and former Andhra Pradesh minister M Srinivasa Rao (Avanti) Thursday resigned from the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led party, citing 'personal reasons', even as he alleged there was no respect for functionaries and cadres in the organisation. Besides resigning from the party, the former Tourism minister also withdrew from his responsibilities of overseeing YSRCP's affairs in Bheemili Assembly constituency.

32-yr-old man shot at; 2 held

New Delhi: A 32-year-old man was shot at by a group of attackers, allegedly due to a long-standing enmity between their families, police said Thursday. The incident occurred on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday when the victim, Ravi Yadav, was warming his hands by a bonfire near his home in the Trilokpuri area, police said.

5-yr-old boy stuck in borewell rescued

Jaipur: A five-year-old boy who fell into a 150-feet-deep borewell in Rajasthan's Dausa was rescued after an over 55-hour-long operation, an official said. He was taken to a hospital in an ambulance in an unconscious state.

Soldier shoots himself dead

Jammu: In an apparent case of suicide, an Army personnel allegedly shot himself dead using his service rifle in the Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. Havaladar Indesh Kumar was on sentry duty inside his camp at the Anjanwali village in the Manjakote area when he fatally shot himself late Tuesday, the officials said.

Not allowing mother to meet child is cruelty: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Dec 12: The Bombay High Court has held that not letting a child meet her mother amounts to 'cruelty' under the Indian Penal Code, and refused to quash a First Information Report registered against the in-laws of a Jalna-based woman.

A bench of Justices Vibha Kankanwadi and Rohit Joshi at Aurangabad noted in its order of December 11 that the woman's daughter, only four years old, is being kept away from her despite a lower court's order. "Keeping a young child of four years away from her mother also amounts to mental harassment, amounting to cruelty in as much as it would

certainly cause grave injury to the mental health of the mother," the HC said.

Such behaviour by in-laws amounts to 'cruelty' as defined under section 498-A of the IPC, the court added. "The mental harassment is continuing from day to day till date. It is a continuing wrong," the bench observed. It would not quash the FIR as this was not a fit case for the court to interfere, it added. The woman's father-in-law, mother-in-law and sister-in-law had sought quashing of the 2022 FIR registered against them in Jalna district of Maharashtra for alleged cruelty, harassment and criminal intimidation.

As per the complainant, she got married in 2019 and had a



daughter in 2020. But the husband and his family members started demanding money from her parents and abused her physically and verbally, she claimed. In May 2022, the

woman was allegedly thrown out of the matrimonial house and not allowed to take her daughter with her.

She then filed an application before a magistrate's

court seeking her daughter's custody. In 2023, the court ordered the husband to hand over custody of the child to the mother, but the order was not complied with and the child continues to remain with the husband, the woman stated in the high court.

The bench noted that although the child was with the husband, the applicants (in-laws) were assisting him by keeping his whereabouts secret.

Those who do not have respect for judicial orders are not entitled to relief, the high court remarked. The trio in their petition denied the allegations of cruelty and harassment, and claimed to have been implicated in a false case.

Rahul meets Hathras rape victim's family; draws BJP's criticism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hathras (UP), Dec 12: Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi met the family of a Dalit woman here who died allegedly after being gangraped in September 2020, and alleged that the family is being treated like "criminals".

The Congress MP reached Bool Garhi village around 11.15 am, even as police stepped up deployment in and around the hamlet in the Chandpa area of the district in light of his visit.

The family had reached out to Rahul earlier this year, seeking his support in getting "justice", according to the Congress which shared a letter addressed to the LoP by the woman's father.

Rahul spent around 35 minutes with the family at their home and interacted with them. He left without speaking to a waiting group of reporters who had gathered in the village for his visit.

Later, in a post in Hindi on X, Rahul attacked the BJP government alleging that it did not fulfil promises made to the family, which is living "in fear" and being treated like "criminals".

"Today I went to Hathras and met the victim's family of the shameful and unfortunate incident that happened four years ago. The things they told me during the meeting shook me. "The entire family is still living in fear. They are being treated like criminals. They cannot move freely. They are kept under the surveillance of cameras and guns all the time," Gandhi said.

The Congress leader also alleged that the promises made to them by the BJP government have not been fulfilled till date. "Neither have they been given a government job nor has the promise of shifting them to another place been fulfilled," he added.

Rahul said instead of giving justice to the victim's family, the government is "torturing" them in various ways while the accused are roaming freely. Later, the Congress on X shared a letter that, the party said, was written to Gandhi by the victim family earlier this year, seeking his support in getting justice.

SIMULTANEOUS POLLS

Oppn raises concerns

Union Cabinet approved Bills to implement 'One Nation, One Election', and sources said the draft legislations are likely to be introduced in Parliament in the ongoing Winter session

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Opposition parties raised concerns Thursday over Bills cleared by the government for holding simultaneous elections and said larger consultations are required while ruling NDA leaders asserted the burden on the exchequer will be lessened.

The Union Cabinet approved Bills to implement 'One Nation, One Election', and sources said the draft legislations are likely to be introduced in Parliament in the ongoing Winter session. Opposition MPs questioned if the country is logistically ready to hold simultaneous elections, pointing out that recent polls in Maharashtra and Jharkhand could not be held together with that in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir. Minister of State for Agriculture Bhagirath Chaudhary welcomed the move and said, "One nation, one election will be good for the nation. It will help in saving people's money."

He also dismissed the reservations expressed by the Opposition, and said, "They are in a habit to oppose everything." Union Minister Chirag Paswan, the leader of BJP's ally Lok Janshakti Party (RV), came out strongly in support of simultaneous polls, saying it is in national interest. "It will boost development," he told reporters.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jai Ram Ramesh shared a letter that was written by party president Mallikarjun Kharge earlier this year to Niten Chandra, the secretary of the High-Level Committee on 'One Nation One Election' headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind. "The Union Cabinet has cleared the bill on 'One Nation



Opposition MPs questioned if the country is logistically ready to hold simultaneous elections, pointing out that recent polls in Maharashtra and Jharkhand could not be held together with that in Haryana and J&K

One Election'. The views of the Indian National Congress on this subject were forcefully articulated by its President Mallikarjun Kharge Ji January 17, 2024. Nothing has happened since then to modify them," he said in a statement.

Ramesh shared Kharge's letter where he strongly opposed the idea of holding simultaneous elections in the country and said it goes against the guarantees of federalism and the basic structure of the Constitution.

The Congress chief had also demanded that the idea be abandoned and the high-powered committee formed in this regard be dissolved. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Anil Desai questioned if the plan can be implemented in reality.

"Congress Lok Sabha member K Suresh said his party has already made its stand clear that it is opposed to simultaneous polls. "The entire Opposition is against it," he said. DMK leader Tiruchi Siva also said his party opposes the bill. Siva questioned what would happen if a government came into minority. "Suppose if Lok Sabha gets dissolved earlier, would they dissolve all state assemblies and hold elections?" he questioned.

BJD Rajya Sabha member Sasmit Patra said greater consultations need to be held. Hitting out the Union government,

Punjab Chief Minister and AAP leader Bhagwant Mann asked, "Why don't they hold 'one nation, one education' and provide health to all in the nation? They just want to go ahead with 'one nation, one election', but the issues of smaller and regional parties will remain buried," he told reporters in the Parliament complex.

Citing the recent assembly elections and bypolls, he said, "Why did they not hold elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand in one go? Why did they hold Jharkhand elections in two phases when there are only 80 seats?" The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), which had supported the concept of simultaneous polls in 2017, said the proposed legislation needs more clarity.

Asserting that discussions about the delimitation of constituencies and the implementation of women's reservation might influence 'one nation, one election', he said the BRS would also like to hold internal consultations before forming an opinion on the issue.

Moving ahead with its 'one nation, one election' plan, the government in September accepted the recommendations of the high-level committee for holding simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies in a phased manner.

Women to get ₹2,100 per month: Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: With Assembly polls drawing closer, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal Thursday announced the roll out of the Delhi government's Mukhya Mantri Mahila Samman Yojana, and promised to raise the monthly aid from ₹1,000 to ₹2,100 post-elections.

He, however, clarified the money could be credited into beneficiaries' accounts only after elections as the dates are likely to be announced soon. Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, meanwhile, said if the Model Code of Conduct comes into force after January 13, the first installment will be transferred into the bank accounts of eligible women before elections.

Kejriwal announced the roll out of the scheme while speaking at an event organised at the AAP headquarters, and attended by a large number of the party's women workers and supporters.

The registration for the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Samman Yojana, which was announced in the Budget 2024-25 by then Finance Minister and now Chief Minister Atishi, will



The AAP government allocated ₹2,000 crore for the scheme under the Budget

DELHI POLLS

The eligibility criteria of the potential beneficiaries laid down that the woman should not be employed with the government or receiving pension, and they should not be paying GST or income tax

The scheme is likely to benefit around 45 lakh eligible women

begin from Friday, he said.

The scheme originally proposed to provide ₹1,000 per month to all eligible women in Delhi aged above 18 years. "The registration for the scheme will start tomorrow. It will be for ₹2,100," Kejriwal said amid cheers of the gathering. The AAP leader also expressed confidence his party will perform magnificently in the polls, and urged women to actively support them.



Indian Coast Guard personnel during Regional-Level Pollution Response Exercise RPRES-24 in Goa

Harassment not sufficient to declare abetment to suicide: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Mere harassment is not sufficient to hold someone guilty of the offence of abetting suicide, and there must be clear evidence of direct or indirect incitement, the Supreme Court has said.

The observations came from a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and P B Varale while delivering a verdict on an appeal challenging a Gujarat High Court order refusing to discharge a woman's husband and her in-laws for allegedly harassing her and driving her to suicide.

The top court's observations may come to the aide of Nisha and her family members. Dealing with the plea challenging the high court order, the apex

court noted a case was registered in 2021 for the alleged offences including under Sections 498-A (subjecting a married woman to cruelty) and 306 of the IPC which deals with the offence of abetment of suicide and prescribes a maximum jail term of 10 years and fine.

"For a conviction under Section 306 of the IPC, it is a well-established legal principle that the intention to abet the act - is essential. Mere harassment, by itself,

is not sufficient to find an accused guilty of abetting suicide," the bench said in its December 10 judgement. It said the prosecution must demonstrate an active or direct action by the accused that led the deceased to take his or her

ATUL SUBHASH ROW

The observations in the judgement gain significance in the wake of the recent suicidal death case of 34-year-old techie Atul Subhash

A case of abetment of suicide was registered against his wife Nikita Singhania, her mother Nisha, father Anurag and uncle Sushil

He alleged harassment at the hands of his estranged wife and her family



own life. The bench said the element of mens rea cannot simply be presumed or inferred and it must be evident and explicitly discernible.

"Without this, the foundational requirement for establishing abetment under the law is not satisfied, underscoring the necessity of a deliberate and conspicuous intent to pro-

Mother-in-law flee home

Jaunpur (UP): The mother-in-law and the brother-in-law of techie Atul Subhash, who committed suicide in Bengaluru, fled their home in Jaunpur Thursday, even as Uttar Pradesh Police said it was yet to receive any official communication from Karnataka. Around 1 am, Nisha Singhania and her son Anurag alias Piyush Singhania left their home in the Khowa Mandi area here on a motorcycle and have since not returned, a police official told PTI. Purported video clips on social media also showed them leaving the home around midnight.

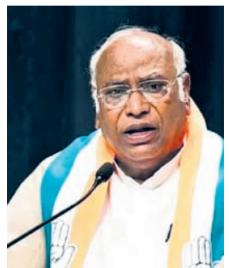
voke or contribute to the act of suicide," it said. The bench discharged the three men from the charge under Section 306, even though it upheld the charge against the appellants under Section 498-A of the IPC. It noted that an FIR was reg-

istered by the woman's father against her husband and two in-laws for the alleged offences including under Sections 306 and 498-A of the IPC.

The bench noted the woman got married in 2009 and for the first five years of the wedlock, no child was born to the couple due to which she was allegedly subjected to physical and mental harassment.

It further noted that in April, 2021, the woman's father received information that she had died by suicide.

The high court had upheld the sessions court's order to frame charges under Sections 306 and 498-A of the IPC against them. The apex court said Section 306 of the IPC penalises those who abet the act of suicide by another.



We will not bow down. We will stand tall in protection of Democratic rights of every fellow citizen and our sacred Constitution

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | LOP IN THE HOUSE

TEEN KILLED IN CELEBRATORY FIRING

A 13-year-old girl was killed after suffering bullet injuries during celebratory firing at a wedding function in Haryana's Charkhi Dadri, police said Thursday



MAHAKUMBH-2025

UP Ministers Maurya, Singh lead roadshow

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dehradun, December 12: The Uttar Pradesh (UP) government, led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, is dedicated to making Mahakumbh 2025 a global symbol of India's cultural unity.



INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION AND STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITIES.

Maurya, the Minister of Women's Welfare, Child Development and Nutrition in the Yogi Cabinet, highlighted that the Mahakumbh as a unique celebration of unity within India's diversity, and extended an invitation to the Governor of Uttarakhand, Lt Gen Gurmit Singh, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, and the people of Uttarakhand to participate in the Prayagraj Mahakumbh-2025.

During a press meet later, Maurya stated that the Mahakumbh embodies the spirit of India's cultural and spiritual consciousness and is a divine and vibrant representation of 'Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat-Samveshi Bharat (One India, Great India, Inclusive India).'

Prayagraj Mahakumbh-2025, to be held between January 13 and February 26, is expected to be visited by over 450 million pilgrims, saints, ascetics, and tourists. In preparation of the world's largest religious congregation, the Uttar Pradesh government has made meticu-

ulous and timely arrangements.

State Minister of Public Works Department (PWD) Brijesh Singh stated that the Kumbh is not merely a fair of a ritualistic dip in the holy waters but an eternal and unified proclamation of India's unity in diversity. "The Mahakumbh is a grand festival that immerses all differences, disputes, and divisions in the sacred flow of the river, serving as a unique example of social harmony. This festival holds special significance not only for the entirety of India but also for followers of Indian culture worldwide," Singh said.

Singh said that under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh's double-engine government is uniquely showcasing the cultural, spiritual, traditional, and mythological essence of the rare and highly distinguished religious event of Mahakumbh on the global stage.

Uneasy calm in Parbhani; about 50 held for violence

A bandh was called Wednesday after the glass-enclosed replica of the Constitution near Dr B R Ambedkar's statue outside the Parbhani railway station was found damaged the previous evening. But the shut-down took a violent turn when a mob indulged in arson and vandalised shops, vehicles and even the district collector's office



Police were investigating if there was any political motive behind the violence, he added. A bandh was called on Wednesday after the glass-enclosed replica of the Constitution near Dr B R Ambedkar's statue outside the Parbhani railway station was found damaged the previous evening. But the shut-down took a violent turn when a mob indulged in arson and vandalised shops, vehicles and even the district collector's office.

are in power, it is leading to such incidents," the Congress leader said, asking the government to stop "atrocities" against Ambedkar's followers. Shiv Sena (UBT) spokesperson Sushma Andhare also accused the government of targeting Ambedkar's followers in the name of combing operations for arresting those who took part in the violent protests. Maharashtra does not have a home minister (as cabinet expansion is awaited) and questions have arisen about the law and order situation, she said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Dec 12: An uneasy calm prevailed in Parbhani Thursday with police detaining around 50 persons for the violent protests that rocked the central Maharashtra city over vandalising of a replica of the Constitution.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said the mentally unstable man who allegedly damaged the replica was arrested immediately, yet violence took place which was unacceptable.

Opposition leaders, including Bahujan Samaj Party supreme Mayawati and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, condemned the 'insult' to the Constitution, while Congress in Maharashtra asked the government not to commit "atrocities" on Dr B R Ambedkar's followers in the aftermath of the violence.

Some 20 vehicles were damaged during Wednesday's protests, police said. The situation was under control, Parbhani collector Raghunath Gawade told PTI Videos. "Around 50 people have been detained for vandalism, while a man named Pawar has been arrested for allegedly vandalising the replica of the Constitution. He has mental issues. We have got hold of medical documents confirming his mental condition," the official said.

"We are going through the footage from CCTV cameras and action will be taken against all those responsible. The intention of the agitators will also be probed," said Inspector General of Police Shahji Umam.

Prohibitory orders banning gathering of more than five persons continue in the city. Speaking to reporters in Delhi, chief minister Fadnis said the "mentally unstable man" involved in the vandalising of the replica was arrested promptly. "Still, despite action being taken, there was violence. This is not acceptable. Protests can be held by abiding by the Constitution," he said. State Congress president Nana Patole demanded suspension of the Parbhani Superintendent of Police and stringent punishment for those behind the "desecration" of the Constitution replica.

"While Parbhani was burning, the CM and two deputy CMs were busy distributing ministries....People who do not respect the Constitution

of the day quote

The disrespect shown to the statue of Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Constitution in Parbhani, Maharashtra, is highly condemnable and shameful. The party is deeply saddened and concerned by this incident

While Parbhani was burning, the chief minister and two deputy CMs were busy distributing ministries.... People who do not respect the Constitution are in power, it is leading to such incidents

MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

Now, after one year, I am happy to tell that we have restored the trust by fulfilling all big promises made in the 'Modi ki Guarantee' (BJP's poll manifesto)

VISHNU DEO SAI | C'GARH CM

POST OF THE DAY

Jagdeep Dhankar 60 Members of Rajya Sabha submit a Notice for his removal Unprecedented Sad day for the Mother of Democracy! History will never forgive those who do not allow a level playing field in the functioning of the House!

@KapilSibal

SHORT TAKES

Kerala: 4 girl students killed in road accident

Palakkad, (Kerala): Four school students died and several others were injured after being mowed down by a truck at Kalladikode in this district Thursday evening, police said. According to the police, the victims were girl students of a Higher Secondary school located near the accident spot. The accident occurred at Panayampadam near Kalladikode on Palakkad-Kozhikode National Highway, when a truck transporting cement lost control, ran over the students returning home after school.

Case registered against NCP leader

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar: A Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader from Maharashtra's Beed district and two murder accused were named in an FIR for allegedly demanding Rs 2 crore from a wind energy firm, police said Thursday. A case under various sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was registered against Valmik Karad, Vishnu Chate and Sudarshan Ghule at Kej police station for allegedly demanding a huge amount of money from a private firm, the police said.

Over 30 students affected by fumes

Mumbai: More than 30 school students were affected after exposure to fumes from a storage tank at JSW Energy's thermal power plant in Maharashtra's coastal Ratnagiri district Thursday, police said. However, in a statement Thursday evening, JSW Energy said its thermal plant at Ratnagiri does not have any gas storage facility and is not involved in the incident as reported in the media. The students are from the Jaigad Vidya Mandir school, which is near the plant, a police official told PTI.

NIA raids 19 locations

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency conducted searches at 19 locations across the country Thursday as part of its probe into a case of terror conspiracy by Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad. The searches were carried out in Assam, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir, the federal probe agency said. According to a statement by the NIA, the searches were conducted at the premises of suspects/close aides of Sheikh Sultan Salah Uddin Ayubi, a Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) operative who was arrested on account of his incriminatory role in the case. Ayubi was taken into custody in October this year for disseminating propaganda material associated with JeM, and radicalising and recruiting youth into the Jamaat outfit inspired by JeM, the statement said.

SC flags absence of Centre's lawyers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Displeased over the repeated absence of the Centre's advocates in several cases, the Supreme Court Thursday said it did not take pleasure in summoning government officers before it.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan December 11 sought the presence of the director general of the Centre's Directorate General of Health Services while flagging the "casual approach" in a matter concerning admission of a medical aspirant belonging to persons with disability category. "The court does not take pleasure in summoning the officers to the court. However, when in spite of being duly

served, the respondents do not put in appearance, we were compelled to do so," it said.

On Thursday, both the officer and Centre's counsel additional solicitor general Vikramjit Banerjee appeared before the bench. "What is this? Notices are served and you don't even bother to appear," Justice Gavai said, "this is not happening for the first time. On many occasions, for the Union of India, nobody is present here".

The bench said it had passed the order directing the officer to remain present as despite being duly served, no lawyer had appeared for the authority during the hearing December 11. The court said it waited till 4 pm for the counsel's appearance but when nobody appeared for

AIR POLLUTION

Relaxed curbs to continue: SC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: The Supreme Court Thursday said the direction to relax the stringent GRAP-4 curbs, meant to deal with severe air pollution levels to stage 2, would continue till further orders.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih asked the Centre to consider identifying top experts in the field of environment, agriculture and other related fields for appointment in the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), may be in the advisory capacity.

The Delhi government further informed the bench it had imposed the ban on firecrackers till January but was mulling to implement a round-the-year ban which would soon be notified.

The top court then directed the NCR states to place on record their decisions for enforcing the round-the-year firecrackers ban saying it was required not only to curb air pollution but also noise pollution. The bench clarified the ban on firecrackers would include sale, manufacture, storage and use of firecrackers.

The top court has been hearing pleas seeking directions for the implementation of curbs to check air pollution



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

in the Delhi-NCR region. The bench allowed the CAQM to incorporate additional measures like mechanised sweeping of roads, controlled traffic movement, proper disposal of dust and other measures, which were earlier part of stage-3 of GRAP in stage 2.

The top court said it did not want any retired judge to be in the CAQM, even in advisory capacity as it may lead to conflict of interest as this court examines the work of the commission. "We want top experts of different fields to be there in the CAQM. We don't want any retired judges to be there," it said, adding the Centre and other parties may suggest some names by the next date of hearing.

The bench further directed the Delhi and NCR states to ensure payment of subsistence allowance to construction workers, who were affected due to implementation of restrictions to check air pollution level from November 18 to December 5 (both days inclusive). Senior advocate Shadan Farasat, appearing for Delhi government, said 90,000 workers were paid Rs 8,000 rupees each and additional registration process had been initiated with 20,000-odd construction workers coming forward so far.

TMC raises B'ladesh issue, demands statement from PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 12: Trinamool Congress Thursday demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi speak in Parliament on situation in neighbouring Bangladesh.

The issue was raised in the Rajya Sabha in the post-lunch sitting by TMC's Parliamentary Party leader Derek O'Brien, who sought permission to raise a point of order. He quoted Rule 251, and said he wanted the Prime Minister to come and give a statement on Bangladesh issue.

Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar however said it is not a point of order, and did not allow O'Brien to continue. The refusal was followed by TMC MPs breaking out into sloganeering in the House.

Talking to reporters outside Parliament, TMC's deputy leader in Rajya Sabha Sagari-ka Ghose said a statement on the issue should be given in Parliament by the Prime Minister.

"Our party leader Derek O'Brien raised this issue today that we are deeply concerned about people in Bangladesh, particularly the minorities," she said.

"The prime Minister should come to parliament and give a full statement and full clarification on what the government of india intends to do with regard to the situation in Bangladesh," she said. TMC Rajya Sabha MP Sushmita Dev said the government should tell it has done for the Hindus in Bangladesh.

"The situation that is there in Bangladesh, the PM should speak on the issue in both Houses," Dev told reporters outside Parliament.

"The religious minorities there are facing atrocities, he (Prime Minister Modi) should speak on it and the political situation there," she said.



The court does not take pleasure in summoning the officers to the court. However, when in spite of being duly served, the respondents do not put in appearance, we were compelled to do so

APEX COURT

the Centre, despite there being many lawyers present, it passed the order.

"The presence of the officer is dispensed with," the bench

said in its order. "We expect you to respond," the top court said, "when a matter pertains to persons with disability".

"You have so many panel

counsel. Why don't you assign some panel counsel to some courts so that at least when we require somebody's assistance, somebody can be there immediately," it said. While dealing with the plea of the aspirant belonging to the persons with disability category, the bench directed his admission in a government medical college in Rajasthan. On December 11, the bench directed the officer to remain present before it at 10.30 am Thursday.

The bench said it was unfortunate that in the matter related to a person with disability category, despite notice no one had appeared. The court, however, said normally it did not direct government officers to remain present in the court.

# international



**“If they think I'm Assad, and that I'll run away somewhere, I will not. I will fight for Serbia and serve only my Serbian people and all other citizens of Serbia, I will never serve foreigners, those who seek to defeat, humiliate, and destroy Serbia”**  
ALEKSANDAR VUCIC | PRESIDENT, SERBIA

## 'JOY BANGLA' NO LONGER NATIONAL SLOGAN IN B'DESH

Bangladesh Supreme Court has stayed a High Court verdict that declared 'Joy Bangla' -- popularised by Bangbandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman -- as the country's national slogan. Rahman's daughter Sheikh Hasina was ousted as prime minister August 5. Recently, the country's central bank decided to remove Rahman's image from currency notes



### of the day quote

**No one should die of malaria, yet the disease continues to disproportionately harm people living in the African region, especially young children and pregnant women**  
TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WHO



**Schengen membership has been a strategic objective for our country. Over time, there have been numerous obstacles, despite Romania's technical readiness to meet Schengen standards for many years**  
KLAUS IOHANNIS | PRESIDENT, ROMANIA



**The tariff increases announced today will further blunt the harmful policies and practices by the People's Republic of China**  
KATHARINE TAI | OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE



# Trump named Time's Person of the Year

About six months ago, US prez-elect Donald Trump was sitting in a courtroom in lower Manhattan listening to a jury make him the first former president convicted of a crime

**Washington, Dec 12:** Time Magazine named Donald Trump its Person of the Year for the second time, recognizing his significant political impact and historic comeback following his election victory over Kamala Harris November 5.

The magazine said in a statement, "For marshaling a comeback of historic proportions, for driving a once-in-a-generation political realignment, for reshaping the American presidency and altering America's role in the world, Donald Trump is Time's 2024 - Person of the Year." Trump, who beat Vice President Kamala Harris in the November 5 election, adorns the title's cover this week sporting his distinctive red tie and striking a pensive pose. Sam Jacobs, Time's editor in chief, announced on NBC's "Today" show said Trump was someone who "for better or for worse, had the most influence on the news in 2024."



He added that "there's always a hot debate" at the magazine over the honor, "although I have to admit that this year was an

**This is someone who made an historic comeback, who reshaped the American presidency and who's reordering American politics. It's hard to argue with the fact that the person who's moving into the Oval Office is the most influential person in news**  
SAM JACOBS | TIME'S EDITOR IN CHIEF

**Trump was also Time's Person of the Year in 2016, when he was first elected to the White House**

easier decision than past years." Meanwhile, in an interview

with the magazine published Thursday, Trump said, "I called it '72 Days of Fury'. We hit the nerve of the country. The country was angry." Trump also is expected to be on Wall Street Thursday to mark the ceremonial start of the day's trading by ringing the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange. Trump was also Time's Person of the Year in 2016, when he was first elected to the White House. He was listed as a finalist for this year's award alongside notables including Vice President Kamala Harris, X owner Elon Musk, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Kate, the Princess of Wales.

### POST-ELECTION PROTESTS

## 110 people killed in 7 weeks in Mozambique

**Maputo (Mozambique), Dec 12:** More than 100 people including children have been killed by security forces in post-election protests in Mozambique that have lasted nearly two months, rights and civil society groups said. The main opposition leader called Thursday for more demonstrations against what he says was a rigged vote by the governing party. The southern African nation, which endured a 15-year civil war from 1977 to 1992, has been beset by unrest and street protests since two prominent opposition officials were fatally shot in their car by unknown gunmen October 18. Those killings, which were called political assassinations by their party, increased tensions following a disputed October 9 presidential election. Thousands of people have taken to the streets in protest against the long-governing Frelimo party, which has held power in Mozambique for nearly a half-century. Since October 21, 110 people have been killed in the protests, said Plataforma Eleitoral Decide, a Mozambique civil society group that monitors elections. Thirty-four of those were killed between December 4 and December 10 as the protests show no sign of abating, the group said. International rights group Amnesty International repeated that death toll and said Wednesday that the fatalities were among a total of 357 people who have been shot by security forces during the protests. More than 3,500 people have been arbitrarily arrested, Amnesty said. Rights groups have criticised Mozambican authorities for what they call a brutal clampdown on what started as peaceful protests against the election, which opposition parties say was rigged. International observers also reported irregularities with the vote.

### SEDITION CASE

## Another plea filed in B'desh to advance bail hearing of Hindu monk

**Dhaka, Dec 12:** The lawyer of Chinmoy Krishna Das Thursday filed a fresh plea in a Bangladesh court seeking to expedite the hearing of the arrested Hindu monk's bail petition in a sedition case, according to media reports. This comes a day after the court rejected similar petitions by the lawyer, asserting that he did not have the power of attorney from the monk. Lawyer Rabindra Ghosh once again submitted an application to Chattogram Metropolitan Sessions Judge Saiful Islam to hear a bail application, the bdnews24.com news portal reported. "I came yesterday too. Unfortunately, a hearing was not held yesterday. Today (the judge) accepted (the petition). He will hear me out," the lawyer was quoted as saying by the news portal. Responding to a question about why Das' lawyers were not coming to court, he said, "I have spoken to them. The cases that have been filed against them... they are not coming out of fear." Meanwhile, Chattogram District Bar Association President Nazim underscored that Ghosh will face the case "legally". "Today, he presented an application. His letter of attorney was from the Supreme Court bar. The court said, 'If any lawyer gives me a letter of attorney this time, I will hold a hearing.' That is the situation for now," he said. On Wednesday, three petitions filed by the lawyer were rejected at the same court. These included permission to represent Das in the case over which he was arrested, the second requested access to records from a case filed November 26, and the third sought to expedite the bail hearing, the report said.

**Seoul, Dec 12:** South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said Thursday he would "fight to the end" as his own political party shifted closer to voting with the opposition to impeach him over his short-lived martial law order that threw the US ally into turmoil. In a lengthy televised address, he alleged that North Korea had hacked South Korea's election commission, casting doubt on his party's landslide election defeat in April. Yoon, whose country has Asia's fourth-largest economy, hopes political allies will rally to support him but this appeared less likely after his address. The leader of his ruling People Power Party (PPP) said the time had come for Yoon to resign or be impeached by parliament. Late Thursday, six opposition parties led by the Democratic Party submitted a bill for Yoon's impeachment to parliament. A vote is expected Saturday, a week after the first

# Yoon's defiant stand

South Korean President vows to 'fight to the end', defying impeachment threat

REUTERS



- Parliament impeaches police chief and justice minister over martial law
- Vote on new impeachment bill expected Saturday
- President repeats claims of opposition plot to destroy the country
- Yoon says North Korean hack casts doubt on his party's election defeat
- At least 7 members of Yoon's part expected to support impeachment

**I apologize again to the people who must have been surprised and anxious due to the martial law**  
YOON SUK YEOL | PRESIDENT, SOUTH KOREA

one failed because most PPP members boycotted it. At least seven members of the party were expected to support the new impeachment motion. At least eight PPP votes are needed for the two-thirds majority required

to impeach Yoon. Yoon said the opposition was "dancing the sword dance of madness" by trying to drag a democratically elected president from power, nine days after his aborted attempt to grant sweeping powers to the military. "I will fight to the end," he said. "Whether they impeach me or investigate me, I will face it all squarely." His defiance raise the possibility that Yoon, a career prosecutor and a legal expert, may have decided to take his chances to court, hoping to make a

## Russia edges closer to key Ukraine city

ASSOCIATED PRESS



**'INTENSE' FIGHTING**  
"Russian occupiers are throwing all available forces forward, attempting to break through the defences of our troops," Ukrainian army chief Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi said. Russian forces are trying to overwhelm Ukraine's battle-

field defences with sheer numbers of troops and powerful glide bombs that blast fortifications to smithereens. Pokrovsk, which had a population of about 60,000 before Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, is one of Ukraine's main defensive strongholds and a key logistics hub in the Donetsk region. Its capture would compromise Ukraine's defensive abilities and supply routes and would bring Russia closer to its stated goal of seizing the entire Donetsk region.

## India votes in favour of UNGA ceasefire resolution in Gaza

**India was among the 158 nations that voted in favour of the resolution while nine member states, including Israel and the US, voted against it. Among the 13 nations that abstained were Albania and Ukraine**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

tions that voted in favour of the resolution while nine member states, including Israel and the US, voted against it. Among the 13 nations that abstained were Albania and Ukraine. The resolution demanded an "immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire, to be respected by all parties, and further reiterates its demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages." It demanded that the parties fully, unconditionally and without delay implement all the provisions of the Security Council resolution of June 2024 regarding an "immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages, the exchange of Palestinian prisoners, the return of the remains of hostages who have been killed, the return of Palestinian civilians to their homes and neighbourhoods in all areas of Gaza, including in the north, and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza." Last week, India voted in favour of a General Assembly resolution that called for the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and reiterated the call for achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

**United Nations, Dec 12:** India voted in favour of a UN General Assembly resolution that demanded an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Gaza and reiterated the demand for immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. The UN General Assembly has overwhelmingly approved resolutions demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and backing the UN agency for Palestinian refugees that Israel has moved to ban. The 193-member General Assembly voted Wednesday at the 10th emergency special session to adopt the draft resolution 'Demand for ceasefire in Gaza', introduced by Indonesia. India was among the 158 na-



### SHORT TAKES

#### Biggest single-day act of clemency by Biden

**Washington:** President Joe Biden is commuting the sentences of roughly 1,500 people who were released from prison and placed on home confinement during the coronavirus pandemic and is pardoning 39 Americans convicted of nonviolent crimes. It's the largest single-day act of clemency in modern history. The commutations announced Thursday are for people who have served out home confinement sentences for at least one year after they were released. Biden said he would be taking more steps in the weeks ahead and would continue to review clemency petitions. The second largest single-day act of clemency was by Barack Obama, with 330, shortly before leaving office in 2017.

#### Indian student killed in UK road accident

**London:** A 32-year-old Indian student has died in a road accident in eastern England's Leicestershire while four other people were hospitalised with serious injuries, according to police. Chiranjeevi Panguluri died on the spot as a passenger in a car that ended up in a ditch and three co-passengers, one woman and two men, and the driver were all taken to hospital, the Leicestershire Police said of the accident which was reported Tuesday morning. A 27-year-old man, arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving, has since been released on bail.

#### UK gay veterans win compensation

**London:** British military veterans who were discharged or suffered other forms of discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity will receive up to 70,000 pounds (\$89,300) under a government compensation programme announced Thursday. Prior to 2000, service personnel who were discovered to be lesbian, gay or trans were forced to leave the military under policies that designated them as unfit to serve in the armed forces. Many others were subjected to brutal investigations into allegations about their sexual orientation. "The historic treatment of LGBT veterans was a moral stain on our nation," Defence Secretary John Healey said in announcing the compensation. "Our government is determined to right the wrongs of the past and recognise the hurt that too many endured."

## Tourists flood Santa Claus Village, irking locals

Tourism is booming in Rovaniemi — which has hotel and restaurant owners, as well as city officials, excited as it brings lots of money to the town. However, not everyone is happy about the onslaught of visitors, 10 times the town's population, each year at Christmas time

ASSOCIATED PRESS



**Rovaniemi, Dec 12:** Shuffling across icy ground on a cold December afternoon, lots of tourist groups poured into Santa Claus Village, a winter-themed amusement park perched on the edge of the Arctic Circle. They frolic in the snow, take a reindeer sleigh ride, sip a cocktail in an ice bar or even meet Saint Nick himself in the capital of Finnish Lapland, Rovaniemi, which happily calls itself the "official hometown of Santa Claus." The Santa Claus Village theme park, which attracts more than 600,000 people annually, is especially popular during the holiday season. "This is like my dream came true," beamed Polish visitor Elzbieta Nazaruk. "I'm really excited to be here." "We are worried about the

overgrowth of tourism. Tourism has grown so rapidly, it's not anymore in control," said 43-year-old Antti Pakkanen, a photographer and member of a housing network that in September organized a rally through the city's streets. It's a feeling that has been echoed in other popular European travel destinations, including Barcelona, Amsterdam, Malaga and Florence. Across the continent, locals have protested against "over-tourism" — which generally describes the tipping point at which visitors and their cash stop benefiting residents and instead cause harm by degrading historic sites, overwhelming infrastructure and making life markedly more difficult for those who live there. Now, it seems to have spread north, all the way to the edges of the Arctic Circle.

Rovaniemi counted a record 1.2 million overnight visitors in 2023, almost 30 percent growth on 2022, after rebounding from pandemic travel disruptions. "Nordic is a trend," Visit Rovaniemi CEO Sanna Karkkainen, said as she stood in an ice restaurant, where snow carvers were working nearby. "People want to travel to cool countries to see the snow, to see the Northern Lights, and, of course, to see Santa Claus," she added. Thirteen new flight routes to Rovaniemi Airport opened this year, bringing passengers from Geneva, Berlin, Bordeaux and more. Most tourists come from European countries like

France, Germany and the UK, but Rovaniemi's appeal has also spread further. Local critics of mass tourism say many apartment buildings in Rovaniemi's city center are also used for accommodation services during peak season and are thus no longer available for residential use. They say the proliferation of short-term rentals has driven up prices, squeezed out long-term residents, and turned its city centre into a "transient space for tourists." Finnish law prohibits professional accommodation services in buildings intended for residential use, so campaigners are calling on authorities to act.



**Arvind Panagariya** | CHAIRMAN, 16TH FINANCE COMMISSION  
If the US is taking investment from China, if Germany is taking, I would (be) open to their investment. The activities from which you want to exclude are relatively few because I don't see other countries restricting Chinese investment in large number of sectors

### 4TH TIME IN 2024: ECB CUTS RATES

The European Central Bank cut interest rates for the fourth time this year Thursday and kept the door open to further easing ahead as inflation closes in on its goal and the economy remains weak. The central bank for the 20 countries that share the euro reduced the rate it pays on bank deposits, which drives financing conditions in the bloc, to 3.0% from 3.25%. It was at a record 4.0% only in June



### of the day quote

**We need to do it carefully so that we do not throw the baby of economic growth out with bath water in the name of managing energy transition and tackling climate change. Without growth there are no resources to invest for climate change management**



V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN | CEA

**The initial numbers for this quarter, the third quarter show, the festive spending, the rebound in rural growth, the way banks are now seeing traction back again, the way infrastructure spending has come back on track, I think by the time we close the year in March, we will be back on track**



PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

**Strong impetus on infrastructural development and increased budgetary allocation by government has led to India's ranking in the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) improve from 54 in 2014 to 38 in 2023**



SHISHIR BAJAJ | CMD, KNIGHT FRANK

# Retail inflation eases

### Inflation in Nov eases to 5.48% as food prices moderate, creates headroom for rate cut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** Retail inflation declined in November to 5.48 per cent and came within the Reserve Bank's comfort zone mainly due to easing food prices, creating headroom for a rate cut at the central bank's rate-setting panel meeting under new Governor Sanjay Malhotra in February.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based headline inflation was at 6.21 per cent in October and 5.55 per cent in November 2023.

"During the month of November, 2024 significant decline in inflation is observed in vegetables, pulses and products, sugar and confectionary, fruits, eggs, milk and products, spices, transport and communication and personal care and effects subgroups," National Statistics Office (NSO) said in a statement.

According to the CPI data released by the NSO Thursday, inflation in the food basket reduced to 9.04 per cent in November. It was 10.87 per cent in October and 8.70 per cent in November 2023.

The data revealed that the top five items showing highest year-on-year inflation in November 2024 were garlic (85.14), potato (66.65), cauliflower (47.7), cabbage (43.58) and coconut oil (42.13).

The key items having lowest year-on-year inflation were jeera (-35.04), ginger (-16.96), LPG excluding conveyance



**In our view, if the headline CPI inflation eases to 5.0 per cent or lower by December 2024, the likelihood of a rate cut by the MPC in its February 2025 meeting would be very high. We maintain our baseline expectation of two rate cuts of 25 bps each in the awaited rate cutting cycle**

ADITI NAYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA

(-10.24) and dry chillies (-9.73).

The government has tasked the RBI to ensure that the headline inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side. The RBI has maintained a short-term lending rate (repo) at 6.5 per cent since February 2023.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA said led by food inflation, the CPI inflation expectedly eased to 5.5 per cent in November 2024 from 6.2 per cent in October 2024, falling back within the medium-term target range and offering a dose

of relief.

She further said that the cumulative sowing of rabi crops exceeded the year-ago levels by 1.5 per cent year-on-year by December 9, 2024, led by pulses, rice, wheat and coarse cereals, whereas the rabi sowing for oilseeds contracted by 4.3 per cent annually.

Last week, the RBI Governor headed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) had left the repo unchanged at 6.5 per cent citing concern on the inflation front.

Sanjay Malhotra took over as RBI Governor Wednesday after

# IIP growth slows to 3.5% in October

### Poor performance of mining, power and manufacturing among reasons behind weak factory output

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** India's industrial production (IIP) growth slowed to 3.5 per cent year-on-year in October 2024, mainly due to poor performance of mining, power and manufacturing, as per official data released Thursday.

The IIP recorded a growth of 11.9 per cent in October 2023, according to a statement by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation.

However, on a sequential basis, the factory output in October 2024 rose to 3.5 per cent from 3.1 per cent in September and a contraction of 0.1 per cent in August this year.

The growth in the factory output, measured in terms of the IIP, in April-October worked out to be 4 per cent against 7 per cent in the year-ago period, the data showed.

As per the data, the mining output growth decelerated to 0.9 per cent in October from 13.1 per cent expansion in the year-ago month. The manufacturing sector's growth decelerated to 4.1 per cent in October from 10.6 per cent a year ago.

Similarly, in power generation, the output growth slowed sharply to 2 per cent from a 20.4



per cent growth a year ago.

As per use-based classification, the capital goods segment growth decelerated to 3.1 per cent in October 2024 from 21.7 per cent in the year-ago period.

In October this year, consumer non-durables output growth slowed to 2.7 per cent compared to a 9.3 per cent growth in October 2023.

Consumer durable goods production grew by 5.9 per cent during the reporting month against a 15.9 per cent expansion in October 2023.

According to the data, infrastructure/construction goods reported a growth of 4 per cent in October 2024, down from a 12.6 per cent expansion in the year-ago period.

The data also showed that the output of primary goods logged a 2.6 per cent growth in October this year against 11.4 per cent a year earlier.

The expansion in the intermediate goods segment was 3.7 per cent in the month under review, lower than the 9.5 per cent a year ago.

### SHORT TAKES

#### Tata Motors to hike trucks, buses prices

**New Delhi:** Tata Motors Thursday said it will increase prices of its trucks and buses portfolio by up to 2 per cent effective January 1, 2025, citing rising input costs. The price increase is to offset the rise in input costs, Tata Motors said in a statement. While the price increase will vary as per individual model and variant, it will be applicable across the entire range of trucks and buses, it added. Already passenger vehicle makers, including Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai Motor India and Tata Motors, along with luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Audi have announced that they would increase the price of their vehicles from January.

#### Zomato fined ₹803.4cr

**New Delhi:** Food delivery aggregator Zomato Thursday said the GST department in Thane has imposed a tax demand of ₹803.4 crore, including interest and penalty. The demand order has been received in respect of non-payment of GST on delivery charges with interest and penalty thereon, Zomato said in a regulatory filing.

## Samsung accuses CCI of detaining employees, seizing data unlawfully

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** Samsung has accused India's competition watchdog of unlawfully detaining its employees and seizing data in a raid carried out in connection with an anti-trust investigation on Amazon and Walmart's Flipkart, a legal filing shows.

Samsung is embroiled in the Competition Commission of India's (CCI) investigation that in August concluded that the South Korean giant and other smartphone companies broke anti-trust laws by colluding with Amazon and Flipkart to exclusively launch products online.

Samsung's October 11 filing in the High Court in northern city of Chandigarh seeks to quash the investigation findings related to conduct of the company, arguing the CCI had illegally seized material from its employees during a 2022 raid at one of Amazon's vendors.

Three Samsung employees were present in the vicinity of the search when the watchdog's officials detained them, seized their phones and copied all the confidential and privileged data, the company said in its 32-page filing, which hasn't



- Samsung embroiled in India antitrust probe of Amazon, Flipkart
- Asks court to quash evidences seized from three employees
- Antitrust probe found breaches of competition law

been made public.

"The entire search exercise undertaken ... is patently illegal and any material collected thereunder should not be relied upon and should be promptly returned," the Indian unit of South Korea's Samsung Electronics wrote. The CCI "should be prohibited from using or relying upon the data and information unlawfully collected," it added.

Samsung has obtained an injunction from the High Court that has put on hold the CCI proceedings, but the court has not yet ruled on its requests to return the data seized and to not allow the commission to rely on it.

### CAUTIOUS SESSION

# MARKETS END LOWER

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Mumbai, Dec 12:** Equity market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower Thursday due to selling pressure in index majors Reliance Industries, L&T and HUL as investors turned cautious ahead of the inflation data announcement.

Besides, weakness in the rupee and foreign fund outflows hit investors' sentiment, traders said.

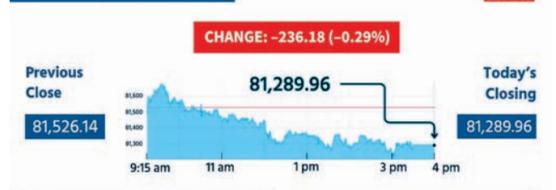
The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex declined 236.18 points or 0.29 per cent to settle at 81,289.96. During the day, it dropped 314.5 points or 0.38 per cent to 81,211.64.

The NSE Nifty dropped 93.10 points or 0.38 per cent to 24,548.70.

"Investors traded with caution ahead of the announcement of inflation and IIP data and steadily cut their equity bets. There is a lack of confidence amongst investors due to global uncertainty, rising US bond yields fuelling fund outflows, and persisting conflicts in the Middle East and West Asia," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Among the 30-share Sensex blue-chip firms, NTPC, Hin-

### BSE SENSEX DECEMBER 12, 2024



| TOP GAINERS   |        |
|---------------|--------|
| TECH MAHINDRA | +1.67% |
| BHARTI AIRTEL | +1.60% |
| INDUSIND BANK | +1.31% |
| INFOSYS       | +0.92% |
| ADANI PORTS   | +0.90% |

| TOP LOSERS         |        |
|--------------------|--------|
| NTPC               | -2.76% |
| HINDUSTAN UNILEVER | -2.42% |
| TATA MOTORS        | -1.59% |
| KOTAK BANK         | -1.38% |
| LT                 | -1.36% |

dustan Unilever, Tata Motors, Maruti, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries, Asian Paints and State Bank of India were the biggest laggards.

Bharti Airtel, Infosys, Adani Ports and Tata Consultancy Services were among the gainers.

The BSE smallcap gauge tanked 1 per cent, and the mid-cap index declined 0.56 per cent.

FMCG dropped 1.15 per cent, energy (1.03 per cent), industrials (0.83 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.81 per cent), oil & gas (0.73 per cent) and auto (0.70 per cent). IT, utilities,

teck and BSE Focused IT were the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the green. European markets were trading on a mixed note. Wall Street ended mostly higher in overnight trade Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.30 per cent to \$73.74 a barrel.

The 30-share BSE benchmark rose by 16.09 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 81,526.14 Wednesday. The Nifty advanced 31.75 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 24,641.80.

### DOWNWARD TREND

## ₹ hits fresh all-time low, settles at 84.88

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Dec 12:** The rupee depreciated by 5 paise to settle at an all-time low of 84.88 against the US dollar Thursday, dragged down by negative domestic equity markets, outflow of foreign funds and rise in crude oil prices.

Forex traders said the rupee remains in a weakening mode due to dollar demand from importers and foreign banks.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.85 and touched the lowest-ever level of 84.89 against the greenback during intra-day trade. The unit finally ended the session 5 paise down at a fresh all-time low closing level of 84.88 against the dollar.

On Wednesday, the rupee settled with a gain of 2 paise at 84.83 against the US dollar.

Rupee's previous record low closing level was recorded December 9, when it settled 20 paise lower at 84.86 against the dollar.



Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said the rupee touched a fresh all-time low on strong US dollar and weak domestic markets. He further said the US dollar gained on rising inflation in the US. However, it was in line with estimates.

"Surge in global crude oil prices may further pressurise the rupee. However, any intervention by the RBI may support the rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from PPI (producer price index) and weekly unemployment claims data from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 84.65 to 85.10," he said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.09 per cent at 106.81.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets Thursday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 3,560.01 crore, according to exchange data.

# Rosneft, Reliance agree biggest ever India-Russia oil supply deal

### The 10-year agreement amounts to 0.5% of global supply and is worth roughly \$13 billion a year at today's prices

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** Russia's state oil firm Rosneft has agreed to supply nearly 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude to Indian private refiner Reliance in the biggest ever energy deal between the two countries, three sources familiar with the deal said.

The 10-year agreement amounts to 0.5% of global supply and is worth roughly \$13 billion a year at today's prices. It would further cement energy relations between India and Russia, which is under heavy Western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine.

Reliance said it works with international suppliers, includ-

ing from Russia, and deals are based on market conditions. The company declined further comment on commercial matters, citing the confidentiality of supply agreements.

The deal comes ahead of the planned visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to India and after US President-elect Donald Trump said he wants to push Moscow and Kyiv to stop the war as soon as he takes office in January.

Russian oil accounts for more than a third of India's energy imports. India became the largest importer of Russian crude after the European Union, previously the top buyer, imposed sanctions on Rus-



sian oil imports in response to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

India has no sanctions on Russian oil, so refiners there have cashed in on the cheaper crude supply. Sanctions have made Russian oil cheaper than rival grades by at least \$3 to \$4 per barrel.

India's rising Russian imports have come at the expense

of rival Middle Eastern producers. The Reliance-Rosneft deal would represent another challenge for competitors, including Saudi Arabia.

Competition among oil producers for a share of the Indian market is hot because it is one of the fastest-growing energy markets, and is becoming more important as a driver of global

- Rosneft to ship 500,000 bpd of various crude grades
- Pricing and volumes to be reviewed annually, sources say
- Agreement strengthens India-Russia energy ties
- India benefits from cheaper Russian oil amid Western sanctions

demand as growth in top importer China slows.

Under the deal, Rosneft would deliver 20-21 Aframax-sized cargoes (80,000 to 100,000 metric tons) of various Russian crude grades and three cargoes of about 100,000 tons each of fuel oil each month, the three sources said.

The shipments will be supplied for Reliance's refining complex, the world's biggest, at Jamnagar in the western state of Gujarat.

In 2024, Reliance had a deal with Rosneft to purchase 3 million barrels of crude a month.

# Maverick of 64 squares

I am just living my dream says Gukesh after becoming the youngest chess World Champion



chess player wants to live this moment. I'm living my dream. I'd like to thank God from the Candidates (tournament) till the championship," the 18-year-old added.

Gukesh praised his opponent Liren. "To me Ding is a real world champion. He fought like a true champion and I'm sorry for him and his team. I would like to thank my opponent," Gukesh said.

The new world champion did not forget to thank his parents. "The dream

of winning the world chess championship is bigger for them than for me. I will never forget the contributions they have made in my life," Gukesh stated.

In the process of becoming the world champion at 18 years, Gukesh also eclipsed the record of Anatoly Karpov who won the title in 1985 at 22 years. Till

Thursday, Karpov was the youngest-ever to wear the chess world crown. Now Gukesh wears it.

Gukesh secured the requisite 7.5 points as against 6.5 of Liren after winning the last classical time control game of the 14-game match that seemed headed for a draw for most part. As title winner, he will get a major share of the USD 2.5 million prize purse.

The reticent teenager grinned widely and raised his arms in celebration after the triumph, a stark contrast from the poker face he usually sports while playing.

One of the first to congratulate Gukesh on his incredible feat was Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Congratulations to Gukesh D on his remarkable achievement. This is the result of his unparalleled talent, hard work and unwavering determination. His triumph has not only etched his name in the annals of chess history, but has also inspired millions," Modi wrote on 'X'

- GUKESH IS THE 2ND INDIAN AFTER VISWANATHAN ANAND TO WIN THE GLOBAL TITLE
- GUKESH WON THE 3RD, 11TH AND 14TH GAMES OF THE MATCH TO EMERGE CHAMPION
- HIS CURRENT ELO RATING IS 2,783 POINTS, THE YOUNGEST PLAYER TO HAVE A RATING OF MORE THAN 2,750

# 2 changes on cards for Brisbane match



Virat Kohli animatedly discusses something with head coach Gautam Gambhir during India's training session Thursday

Washington Sundar and Akash Deep likely to replace Ravichandran Ashwin and Harshit Rana

AGENCIES

**Brisbane, Dec 12:** The management of the Indian cricket team is contemplating two changes to the squad that lost the pink ball Test, sources stated here Thursday. Pacer Akash Deep is likely to replace Harshit Rana while Washington Sundar will come in place of Ravichandran Ashwin, sources informed. After the Adelaide debacle where the batters failed miserably, the think-tank is keen to bring back Sundar who is a more technically equipped batter than Ashwin, they informed.

Meanwhile Virat Kohli was once again the centre of attention here Thursday during the training session as he addressed his teammates. The team huddles before the start of the training session has been a constant

feature for years now and Kohli used to do a lot of talking during his days in charge.

With vice-captain Jasprit Bumrah by his side, Kohli was seen speaking animatedly to the group and everyone, including Rohit, listened to him with rapt attention.

Unlike before the pink ball Test, Rohit looked in far better shape during his net session at the Gabba but question marks remain over whether he would be back to opening the innings or stay put at No. 6, which isn't his preferred slot. However, even though a number of formers including former coach Ravi Shastri have urged Rohit to go back to the top of the order, it looks likely he will bat at No. 5.

The Indian management will go for Akash as he has been the most consistent bowler in the nets. Even though Rana had an impressive debut at Perth, he gave away a lot of runs in Adelaide. It is for this reason only that Akash in all probability will get the nod over Rana.

Sources also stated that Mohammed Shami is unlikely to join the Test team as he is still unsure about his fitness.

## SHORT TAKES

### Jolly-Gayatri keep semis hopes alive

**Hangzhou:** The Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand defeated the Malaysian combination of Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan 21-19, 21-19 in their second Group A tie to keep alive their semifinal hopes at the BWF World Tour Finals here Thursday. Earlier Wednesday, the Indians had lost to World No.1 Liu Sheng Shu and Tan Ning of China in their opening group match 20-22, 22-20, 21-14. The Indians are currently placed second behind the Chinese and will need to win against the Japanese pair of Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida on Friday to book their semifinal berth. Both the games were close affairs, but the Indians played the crucial points well to emerge winners.

### Shah pushes for cricket in Olympics

**Brisbane:** Jay Shah, who took charge as ICC chairman earlier this month, met Thursday top officials of the 2032 Brisbane Olympics organising committee to discuss the sport's potential inclusion in the Summer Games. Cricket will make a return to the Olympics after 128 years when it is played in the 2028 Los Angeles Games. The sport is not yet confirmed for the 2032 edition in Brisbane. "Very exciting time ahead for cricket's involvement in the Olympics movement - a meeting with the @Brisbane\_2032 organising committee in Brisbane, Australia today," Shah posted on X with visuals of the meeting.

### Indian hockey girls rout Thailand 9-0

**Muscat:** Deepika (28th minute, 31st, 35th, 55th) led the way with four goals as defending champions India returned to winning ways, crushing Thailand 9-0 to enter the semifinals of the Women's Junior Asia Cup and also qualified for the upcoming Junior World Cup here Thursday. The other goals for India were scored by Rana Sakashi (17th), Siwach Kanika (23rd and 25th, 40th) and Lalrinpuii (27th). The Indians had earlier registered convincing wins, thrashing Bangladesh 13-1 and Malaysia 5-0 in their first two matches of the five-team tournament. The semifinals are slated for Saturday, with the final scheduled for Sunday.

# 3rd win on trot for Odisha eves



D Janaki Reddy receives her woman of the match award

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Odisha defeated Nagaland by seven wickets to notch up their third win on the trot Thursday in a match of the BCCI Senior Women's ODI Trophy-2024 at the Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad. An all-round show by the batters and bowlers helped Odisha script a convincing victory to keep alive their chances of qualifying for the knockouts.

Nagaland, after being put in by Odisha were dismissed for a paltry total of 73 in 36.3 overs. None of their batters could get going against some disciplined bowling by the Odisha bowlers and the highest scorers for them were Sariba and Alemienla (13 each). D Janaki Reddy (3/7) and Rima Laxmi

Ekka (2/11) were the pick of the Odisha bowlers. Reddy in fact, is having a good tournament both with the bat and ball. She has been scoring runs consistently and picking up wickets at crucial junctures for her side.

Madhuri Mehta (45, 42b, 6x4) then fashioned the chase with a quickfire knock. She played shots all round the park to dismiss whatever aspirations, the Nagaland bowlers may have had. Odisha scored 76 for the loss of three wickets in just 15.3 overs to acquire three points from the game. Madhuri did not let the opposition bowlers to settle down with an aggressive intent, even though Odisha lost a couple of quick wickets at the start of the innings. In the process Madhuri also increased the net run rate for her side.

# HIL games live on Doordarshan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 12:** The upcoming Hockey India League (HIL), which is being revived after seven years, will be telecast live on the country's national broadcaster, Prasar Bharati.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this regard was signed Thursday in a ceremony between Abhishek Agarwal, Deputy Director General Sports, Prasar Bharati, and Hockey India (HI) secretary general Bhola Nath Singh

Set to commence December 28 in Rourkela, HIL will be broadcast live across the nation through Doordarshan and Prasar Bharati's new OTT platform - 'Waves'.

Navneet Sehgal, chairman Prasar Bharati, emphasised the importance of this partnership. "This is a proud moment for hockey and for Prasar Bharati, as we come together to bring HIL to every corner of the country. Our goal is to showcase this prestigious league to households across India, including remote towns and villages where future hockey stars are emerging," Sehgal stated.

Singh said, "The upcoming season of the HIL is historic, with the debut of the women's competition alongside the men's tournament."

# Panda sisters lose



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Dec 12:** Top seeds and home favourites Odisha's own Rituparna Panda and Swetaparna Panda bowed out of the Odisha Masters badminton tournament suffering a shocking three-game loss to compatriots Kanika Kanwal and Bharati Pal here Thursday. Kanika and Bharati defeated the much-fancied duo 21-14, 11-21, 21-15 in a match that lasted more than an hour. It was a sad exit for the Panda sisters as they were expected to win the women's doubles title.

The matches on the day saw some intense competition both in the men's and women's segments. Among the top Indian players to win was sixth seed Sahish Kumar Karunakaran who trounced Raghu Mariswamy 21-8, 21-8. However, the greatest upset of the day came when Hu

Zhe An of China bundled off top seed Jie Heng Jason of Singapore 21-10, 21-15. In another match of the men's segment, Han Qian Xi of China defeated higher-ranked Karuo Sugiyami of Japan 13-21, 22-20, 21-9.

In women's singles India's Anmol Kharb had to fight hard to progress to the next round. She defeated Ishika Jaiswal of the USA 15-21, 21-13, 21-13. In the first game Anmol made a lot of unforced errors and lost it. However, she tightened up her defence and won the next two games comfortably.

In the mixed doubles category second seeds Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani defeated compatriots Bokka Navneeth and Ritika Thaker 21-14, 21-11 to advance to the next round. Overall however, it was a day dominated by the Chinese shuttlers who displayed amazing talent on the courts.

# Arpan to lead 22-strong team

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 12:** Arpan Lakra will lead a 22-member Odisha team for the 78th National Football Championships for the Santosh Trophy, the Football Association of Odisha (OFA) said in a release Thursday. The team have already departed for Telangana where the tournament will be played December 14 to 30.

Odisha are in Group B along with Goa, Delhi, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya. Odisha will open their campaign Sunday (December 15) in this tough group with a match against Delhi. Both Goa and Tamil Nadu are expected to qualify for the knockouts from this group.

**The squad: (Goalkeepers):** Sanjay Hembram, Siddhanta Pradhan, Rahul Oram; **(Defenders):** Abinash Muduli, Ashok Bag, Bisal Tigga, Mahesh Hansda, Srikanta Bhoi, Rakesh Oram, Wangadan Lama; **(Midfielders):** Bikash Sahoo, Arpan Lakra, Chandra Mohan Murmu, Rakesh Kr Sahoo, Jansan Bandra; **(Forwards):** Prakash Naik, Roshan Panna, Arbin Lakra, Kartik Hantal, Dinabandhu Das, Jitu Muduli and Rahul Mukhi.

Akshay Das has been appointed as head coach of the squad with Mahabir Nath and Abani Mohan Mohanty as his deputies.

# MAN CITY'S WOES CONTINUE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Paris, Dec 12:** Manchester City plunged deeper into trouble in the Champions League by losing 0-2 at Juventus, the latest setback in a scarcely believable run of poor results for the ailing English champions. City dropped to 22nd place in the 36-team standings, with only the top 24 advancing to the knockouts.

Progressing to the next round of the new-look format looked a certainty before the season for a team that was European champions in 2023 and have won the last four Premier League titles. But not anymore as City manager Pep Guardiola battles injuries and an apparent loss of belief among his players.

City have won just one of their last 10 matches in all competitions, with goals by Dušan Vlahovic and Weston McKennie inflicting the latest



Barcelona's Ferran Torres celebrates after scoring his second goal against Borussia Dortmund Wednesday

AP PHOTO

defeat and igniting Juventus' qualification hopes.

Meanwhile Barcelona jumped into second place in the league standings, behind Liverpool, and are guaranteed to advance after a 3-2 win at Borussia Dortmund.

Raphinha and Ferran Torres, with two goals, scored for Barca.

Arsenal beat Monaco 3-0 mainly thanks to two goals by Bukayo Saka to move into third place and be the highest of the six teams on 13 points.

The top eight qualify directly for the last 16 and the teams placed nine-24 go into a two-legged playoff.

Vlahovic put Juventus ahead in the 53rd minute when he powered a header goalward straight at City goalkeeper Ederson, who could only parry the ball over his own line. Two American substitutes then sealed the win for Juve, with McKennie volleying home from Timothy Weah's cross. The victory moved Juventus into 14th place.

Torres came off the bench to inspire Barcelona to a fifth win in six games. He came on in the 71st to replace Robert Lewandowski, who had a quiet game against his former club. Just four minutes later, Torres scored a goal on the rebound from Dani Olmo's shot.

Serhou Guirassy's second goal of the game levelled the score at 2-2 but Torres scored again in the 85th off Lamine Yamal's pass on the counter to seal Barca's win.

# OFC overcome EB

AGENCIES

**Kolkata, Dec 12:** Odisha FC (OFC) overcame East Bengal 2-1 at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan Stadium here Thursday in a match of ISL 2024-25. It was OFC's second victory of the season against the Kolkata giants in the ongoing edition of the tournament. The victory catapulted the Kalinga Warriors to third in the table with 19 points from 12 games.

All three goals of the match came in the second half, with Jerry Mawhimingthanga and Hugo Boumous netting in the 55th and the 81st minutes respectively for OFC. East Bengal had earlier taken the lead through a strike by Lal Chungnunga in the 53rd minute. East Bengal were reduced to 10 men in the 43rd minute due to Jeakson Singh's sending off.

The opening essay of the



Hugo Boumous scored one of the goals for OFC

match saw some formidable chances coming in favour of both the teams. Nandhakumar Sekar embarked on an ambitious solo run from the right flank in the 23rd minute, dazzling into the box and holding his shape before making a terrific effort at goal, but was denied by an outstretched Amrinder Singh.

Seven minutes later, Ahmed Jahouh's free-kick inside the EB box, directed to Mourtada Fall, reached the towering defender, but he ended up heading the ball off-target.