

65 'pensioners' booked for forging age proof

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, Dec 14: Police have registered cases against 65 people for forging their age proof documents to reap benefits of old-age pensions under social security schemes in this district, officials said Saturday.

The 65 people are aged between 40 and 50 years, and all of them are from Argala gram panchayat area.

They received old-age pension from February to August this year on the basis of school certificates and other documents, which were later found to be fake. An FIR was lodged against them Friday, Aul Block Development Officer (BDO) Minati Jagdeb said.

A case has been registered against them under sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Further investigation is underway, Aul police station IIC Sabyasachi Satapathy said. **P5**



CAPTIVATING SHOW: Radio City Rockettes perform the Parade of the Wooden Soldiers dance during the Christmas Spectacular at Radio City Music Hall in New York, Friday **AP/PTI**

Cement plant in Malkangiri soon: CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Malkangiri, Dec 14: Focusing on the overall development of tribal-dominated districts, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Saturday announced plans to set up a mega cement factory in this district that would provide employment to 2,000 people.

"A cement factory with an investment of ₹4,000 crore will be set up in the district. This will provide employment for about 2,000 people in Malkangiri," the CM said.

On the second day of his visit to Malkangiri, the CM chaired a review meeting with district officials, which was attended by minister for social security and empowerment of the disabled, scheduled tribes and scheduled castes development, minority and backward classes welfare, and school and mass education Nityanand Gand, Nabarangpur MP Balabhadra Majhi, Malkangiri MLA Narasinh Madakami, Chitrakonda MLA Mangu Khil, southern revenue officer Rupa Roshan Sahu,

southern range DIG Nitish Shekhar, district collector Ashish Elohim Patil, and forest officer Pratap Katapalli.

Majhi emphasised the need for the urgent implementation of various schemes under the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes Development, Minority and Backward Classes Welfare Department, including the development of railway infrastructure, national highways, roads, and rural development. He directed officials to complete these projects on a priority

basis.

Highlighting the importance of education, the CM stressed the need for appointing at least two teachers in every school. He also outlined plans for development through the Jeevan Jeevika Mission, aiming to bring Malkangiri on a par with the state's leading districts.

Majhi directed the southern revenue commissioner and the district collector to review the progress every 15 days and focused on ensuring the development of cut-off areas.

Kendrapara at very high flood, drought risk: IITs

As if the failure of global climate action conference COP29 was not enough, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has recently released its additional guidelines for oil and gas exploration inside forests which is anything but environment friendly. According to the fresh clauses, the ministry has allowed felling of up to 100 trees, for preliminary surveys of projects, without prior clearance. Such disregard for ecosystem and biodiversity may lead to catastrophic repercussions, if reports by two Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are any indication. Released by IIT-Guwahati and Mandi, in collaboration with Bangalore-based Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), the reports suggest that as many as 11 Indian districts, including Odisha's Kendrapara, are at 'very high' risk of being hit by flood and drought in coming days. So, it's time for the government to stop cleaning forests before it's too late



The report was released by the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) Guwahati and Mandi, in collaboration with the Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), Bangalore. According to the report titled *District-Level Climate Risk Assessment for India: Mapping Flood and Drought Risks Using IPCC Framework*, 51 districts in India face 'very high' flood risk, with 118 more categorised as 'high' risk.

Vulnerable regions include Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Odisha, and Jammu and Kashmir.

The report has flagged that 91 districts were identified with 'very high' drought risk and 188 districts faced 'high' drought risk, primarily in Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha and Maharashtra.

Alarmingly, 11 districts, including Patna (Bihar), Alappuzha (Kerala) and Kendrapara (Odisha), are at a 'very high' risk for both floods and droughts, necessitating immediate interven-

tioning immediate interventions, the report said.

"India's agrarian society is deeply dependent on the monsoon, making the challenges posed by climate change increasingly critical. This report, a collaboration between DST, SDC, provides a comprehensive risk assessment for over 600 districts, offering invaluable insights for effective mitigation strategies," said Devendra Jaliyal, the IIT-Guwahati director.

The study integrated climatic hazards, exposure and vulnerability to offer a comprehensive view of district-level risks and ways for data-driven adaptation planning.

"Climate change is one of the most formidable challenges of our time. No single entity can address this alone. Through this report, we take a significant step towards addressing challenges faced by local communities at risk," said Anita Gupta, head of scientific divisions in the Department of Science and Technology.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



It should be abolished. Why do we need to spend so much money to conduct only one election in 5 years?

ALLU WALKS OUT OF PRISON AFTER SPENDING NIGHT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, Dec 14: After spending the night in a local prison after being arrested in connection with the death of a woman in a stampede during the premiere of his latest film, actor Allu Arjun walked out of jail Saturday following an interim bail granted by the Telangana High Court.

Arjun had to spend Friday night in prison despite the HC relief, as the authorities had not received a copy of the bail order until late last night. "He has been released," Ashok Reddy, his counsel, told reporters at the Chanchalguda prison.

Reddy claimed the prison authorities did not release the actor despite having got the High Court order copy.

According to him, Arjun was kept in the jail as a "special category prisoner." The Pushpa actor was arrested from his residence on Friday morning unfolding a day-long dramatic turn of events.

Advani in ICU, condition stable

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Veteran BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani has been admitted in the ICU of Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals here.

"LK Advani ji, former deputy prime minister of India, has been admitted to the ICU of Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals for medical management and investigations," the hospital said in a statement. "He is under the care of Dr Vinit Suri and is currently stable," it added.

Suri is a senior consultant in the neurology department. The hospital, however, did not disclose any information on the reason for his hospitalisation. A source said the 96-year-old was brought to the hospital about two days ago. He had been admitted to the same hospital earlier this year.

Simultaneous polls bills listed for December 16

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: The government has listed two bills related to 'one nation, one election' for introduction in the Lok Sabha Monday.

Union Law Minister Meghwal will introduce The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill in the Lower House.

The ruling BJP took a major step towards implementing its key plank of 'one na-

tion, one election' Thursday 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.

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 consti-

tutional 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 municipal 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.

Indian-origin OpenAI whistleblower dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Dec 14: A 26-year-old Indian-origin former employee of the artificial intelligence giant OpenAI has died by suicide in San Francisco, authorities said.

Suchir Balaji was found dead inside his Buchanan Street apartment in San Francisco November 26, San Francisco police and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner were quoted as saying by The Mercury News.

The medical examiner's office determined the manner of death to be suicide and police officials said there is "currently, no evidence of foul play."

Balaji was known for whistleblowing the block-buster artificial intelligence company which is facing a swell of lawsuits over its business model.

Balaji's death comes three months after he publicly accused OpenAI of violating US copyright law while developing ChatGPT, a generative artificial intelligence programme that has become a moneymaking sensation used by hundreds of millions of people across the



world, the report said.

Its public release in late 2022 spurred a torrent of lawsuits against OpenAI from authors, computer programmers and journalists, who say the company illegally stole their copyrighted material to train its programme and elevate its value past USD 150 billion.

In an interview with the New York Times published October 23, Balaji argued that OpenAI was harming businesses and entrepreneurs whose data were used to train ChatGPT.

Balaji left OpenAI because he no longer wanted to contribute to technologies that he believed would bring society more harm than benefit, the report added.

Bribery: CBI summons Sr IAS officer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) summoned senior Odisha cadre IAS officer Bishnupada Sethi and questioned his drivers as part of its investigation into an alleged bribery case, official sources said Saturday.

The two drivers of the IAS officer appeared before the CBI at its Bhubaneswar office here and recorded their statements.

The drivers were present inside the CBI office for about three hours from 10.30 am on Saturday.

"I was asked about activities of sir (Sethi), whom he met and which places he visited on December 7. I told them whatever was known to me. Personally, I have no involvement in any of the matters being probed by the CBI," Nrusingha Satpathy, one of the drivers, told reporters after coming out of the CBI office here.

Asked whether he has received any amount of money in his bank account, Satpathy replied in negative.

Meanwhile, the senior IAS officer was not immediately available for comment.

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leisure



SYDNEY SWEENEY CLAPS BACK AT BODY SHAMERS

Sydney Sweeney recently shared a social media post clapping back at body critics as she prepares for the Christy Martin biopic. The *Madame Web* star shared the footage of herself working out hard in the gym for her role in the David Michôd-helmed biopic.

HATHAWAY, BAUTISTA TO STAR IN FBI STING ACTION-COMEDY

Oscar Award winner Anne Hathaway and actor-wrestler Dave Bautista are set to star in an untitled action-comedy film which will be written by Jonathan Tropper. The film is reportedly inspired by an actuarial FBI sting in which agents posed as a couple to infiltrate global crime enterprises.



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ARIES
You may stomp your feet all you like, but you're not going to get your way today. The days of 'me-myself' are over. Also, today you may invite unwanted trouble. It may do you some good, suggests Ganesha, if you change the hub of your activities.

TAURUS
You may come across as headstrong to your co-workers and friends today, feels Ganesha. You are known to be stubborn at times and today will be no exception. You may find it unnecessary to meet the other person halfway, regardless of the truth in it. You will remain busy with work all afternoon.

GEMINI
Your quest for spiritual enlightenment continues. You may not want to go to the Himalayas to acquire what you seek, but take a trip to a nearby yoga centre or surf the Internet for Kama Sutra by Deepak Chopra, provided they are for free! It may help you to connect spiritually to your partner, at least.

CANCER
Though the day will bring a lot of challenges, you will be up to it every single time. Your mind will be sharp, and will run like an athlete taking part in a marathon. All you need is a little self-belief.

LEO
A comedy of errors is only funny in hindsight. Anyway, too much practicality is what ruined the world, says Ganesha. So for a change, gear up for an easy and relaxed day. Anything goes today, and having your hair groomed seems to be the best idea you have had in a long time.

VIRGO
You are likely to be the goose mother today - violently protective and intensely reclusive. Intense affairs of the heart will materialise amazingly faster than transporter beams from Star Trek do. Procrastination will finally be slain as Ganesha sees an eventful day in store.

LIBRA
Today promises to be an action-packed day for you at work. So, get ready to take the bull by its horns, says Ganesha. Expect to handle a lot of unknown people and unfamiliar situations at work. Evening might find you making a few trips to the market to buy some provisions. Also, love is in the air, and you are in demand.

SCORPIO
Business will keep you on your toes and make you dance around, says Ganesha. Success is likely to intoxicate you. Ganesha advises you not to let emotions influence your plans and strategies in any way.

SAGITTARIUS
High-octane action might be in the offing at work today. The day will be highlighted by your workaholic and tireless nature. Your bosses may be lenient with you today on certain issues. Love, affection and devotion of your loved ones will keep you preoccupied otherwise.

CAPRICORN
You will try finding the logic and reason behind everything you do and observe today, says Ganesha. Work may leave you a little stressed and worried, but the hope of having something better in the future will keep you going in your endeavours, come hell or high water.

AQUARIUS
Positive thinking and intellectual dexterity will get you going today. A jive session, with pizza and punch, will get your afternoon rolling. Ganesha suggests arranging an evening with your loved ones, where you bask in the warmth of their affection.

PISCES
You will find yourself embroiled in tough situations at the work-place today. However, do not let it make you pessimistic. Even if things do not work out as and when they are meant to be, you will find that as the day progresses, things begin to fall in place of their own accord. Come evening, you should see yourself in a much more relaxed state of mind, after a hard day's work, says Ganesha.

Rashmika

in awe of fan's skills

Mumbai: Actress Rashmika Mandanna, who has been scooping praises for her recently released blockbuster *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, was left pleasantly surprised at the origami skills of one of her fans.

Origami artist Kabir Barot recently took to his social media, and shared a video showcasing his skills which drew a delightful reaction from Rashmika. The clip captures the actor seated inside a car, gazing out of the window with curiosity and interest.

As the artist showcased his intricate paper-folding art, the actress watched him intently, her expression reflecting complete admiration and focus on his craft.

Meanwhile, the actress has been receiving a lot of positive response to her work in *Pushpa 2: The Rule* in which she reprises her character of Srivalli, and acts as a plot point.

Pushpa 2: The Rule, which was released December 5, is racing on the box-office with the downforce of fan adulation and the legacy built by the film's predecessor *Pushpa: The Rise* which was released in December 2021. *Pushpa 2: The Rule* picks up from where *Pushpa: The Rise* ended. It sees the Telugu superstar Allu Arjun reprising his titular role.



Alia exudes vintage elegance

pastel hued flowers and green leaves prints. She completed her look with a soft pearl choker and dewy makeup. For the hair, she chose to keep her hair open.

The actress captioned it, "mud mud ke na dekh."

The song *Mud mud ke na dekh* is from *Shree 420*, the 1955 comedy-drama film directed and produced by Raj Kapoor. The film stars Nargis, Nadira and Raj Kapoor.

Alia's saree look caused a frenzy among fans. The comment section was flooded with heart emojis and sweet words, showering Alia with love for her elegant appearance. Friday, the entire Kapoor family, the first film dynasty of Hindi cinema, hosted the event as they celebrated the excellence of the family's patriarch.

Mumbai: Actress Alia Bhatt looked ethereal in a white saree as she attended the centenary celebrations of the late Indian cinema legend Raj Kapoor in Mumbai Friday.

Alia took to her Instagram, where she dropped a string of pictures looking gorgeous in a white saree with



Showbiz celebrates RK's centenary

Mumbai: Raj Kapoor's children and grandchildren, including actors Randhir Kapoor, Kareena Kapoor and Ranbir Kapoor, joined other industry luminaries like Rekha and Sanjay Leela Bhansali to celebrate the legacy of the Hindi cinema showman at a three-day event commenced here, Friday.

A day before the legendary actor-filmmaker's 100th birth anniversary, the premiere of five of his iconic films - *Awaraz*, *Shree 420*, *Sangam*, *Mera Naam Joker* and *Bobby* - was held at suburban multiplex as part of the extravaganza to showcase the restored classics.

Ranbir Kapoor and his wife Alia Bhatt were the first to step out on the red carpet, which was adorned with movie posters of his grandfather's impressive filmography that has shaped Indian cinema.

Raj Kapoor's daughter Rima Jain, daughter-in-law Babita, Kareena Kapoor and her husband Saif Ali Khan, Karisma Kapoor, Neetu Singh, Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, Kunal Kapoor, Aadar Jain, Alekha and Armaan Jain joined in for pictures for the media.

A live music band at the entrance added to the celebratory mood, belting out



timeless melodies like *Jee- na Yaha Marna Yaha, Mera Joota Hai Japani* and *Kisi Ki Muskurahaton Pe*. PVR INOX Limited and the Film Heritage Foundation have organised the RK Film Festival.

It will showcase Raj Kapoor's 10 films including *Aag*, *Barsaat*, *Awaraz*, *Desh Mein Ganga Behi Hai*, *Sangam*, *Mera Naam Joker*, *Bobby* and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*. These movies will be screened at select PVR INOX theatres in 40 cities.

Hindi film stalwarts such as Prem Chopra, Rahul Rawail, Rajkumar Hirani, Vishal Bhardwaj, Prakash Jha, Ashutosh Gowariker, Rakesh Omprakash Mehra, Padmini Kolhapure, Mahesh Bhatt, Soni Razdan, Anees Bazmee, Anand L Rai, Sriram Raghavan, Nitesh Tiwari, Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari and Vicky Kaushal were also part of the centenary celebrations.

Kangana on poor show of Hindi movies at BO

Mumbai: Actress and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut recently shared her perception on why South films are overshadowing Hindi movies. The actress stated that Hindi films have become superficial these days, which is why they often underperform at the box office.

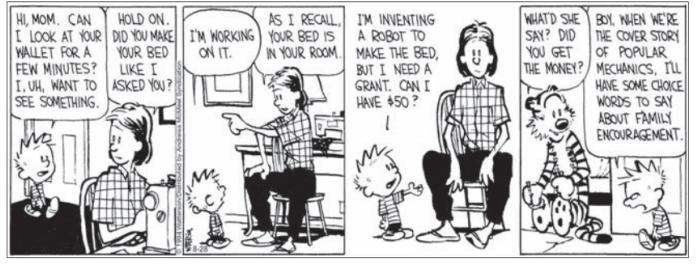
During an interview, the *Queen* actress addressed the reason behind the massive success of Allu Arjun's *Pushpa* franchise, comparing it with several underperformed Hindi movies. She said, "I don't think Bollywood can be dubbed as mainstream. They are not mainstream by any standard. Our films should be defined as the Indian film industry, one industry in which every type of audience is addressed."

Kangana decoded the success of *Pushpa 2* by emphasising how Allu Arjun's character is deeply rooted in realism. "People in Bollywood live in a bubble. And that is one of the biggest reasons I have a problem with them. They don't want to come out of the bubble. All they need is to go to the gym, take protein shakes, take injections. They don't have any connection with reality," she said. On the work front, Kangana is awaiting the release of *Emergency*. It was initially scheduled for release September 6 this year. However, the film's release was postponed due to a delay in CBFC certification.

PEANUTS



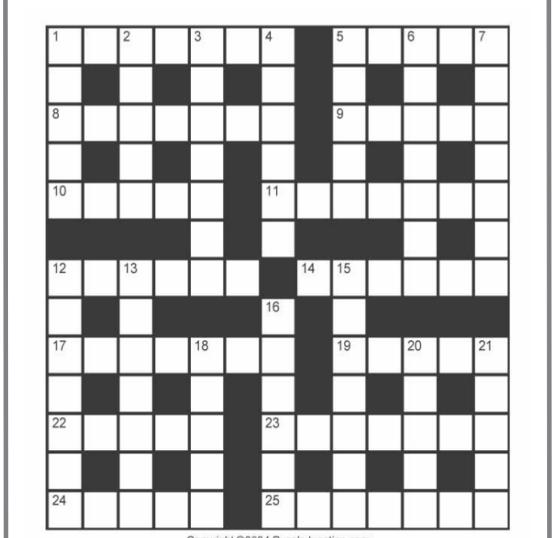
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



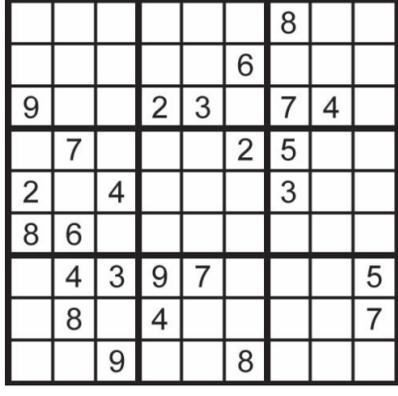
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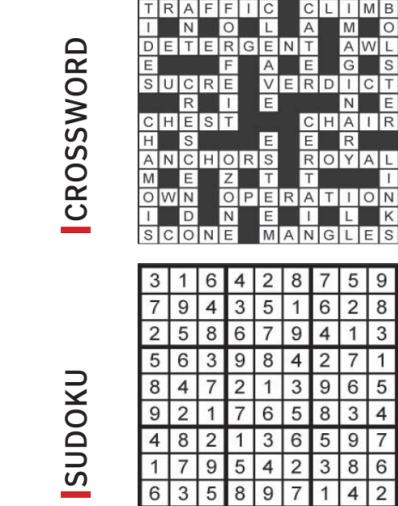
- Across**
- 1 Capital of Northern Ireland
 - 5 Power
 - 8 Type of spirits
 - 9 Fairy tale character
 - 10 Inert gas
 - 11 Jinxed
 - 12 Like a duck's feet
 - 14 Japanese robe
 - 17 Seer
 - 19 Porridge ingredient
 - 22 Princess topper
 - 23 Popular salad ingredient
 - 24 Tournament favourites
 - 25 Shrink's forte
 - Down**
 - 1 Cake maker
 - 2 Like notebook paper
 - 3 Coordinate
 - 4 Boredom
 - 5 Traveler's stop
 - 6 One of the Marx Brothers
 - 7 Hunt cry (5-2)
 - 12 Forest denizens
 - 13 Heavy fabric with a woven design
 - 15 Get well
 - 16 Hellespont, e.g.
 - 18 Flip response?
 - 20 Terrestrial lizard
 - 21 Durable wood

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

Children perform during a cultural programme organised by Sri Aurobindo School of New Thought and Sri Aurobindo Science College in Cuttack, Saturday



downtown

Blame game over delay in resolving Mahanadi row



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Senior BJD leader and MLA Prasanna Acharya Saturday warned that Odisha is heading for a crisis if the Mahanadi water dispute with Chhattisgarh is not resolved quickly.

He raised the concern after Justice Bela M Trivedi was appointed as the new chairperson of the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal, warning that the river may become 'extinct' before the tribunal delivers its final verdict.

Acharya emphasised that despite the tribunal being set up in 2018 no progress has been made, and Odisha continues to suffer from Chhattisgarh's construction of dams and barrages that block the river's flow.

He noted that with the appointment of the new chair-

person, the tribunal will likely restart hearings, leading to further delays.

Acharya stressed that the disruption of the river's water flow is harming Odisha's agriculture and rural economy, particularly in over a dozen districts that depend on it.

He urged the BJD-led governments at the Centre, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh to resolve the issue swiftly.

In response, Odisha Law Minister and senior BJD leader Prithviraj Harichandan blamed former chief minister Naveen Patnaik for the ongoing dispute, accusing the previous BJD government of neglecting its duties.

Harichandan assured that the BJD government would protect Odisha's interests and work with the Centre to resolve the issue.

The Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal was established in 2018 by the Ministry of Water Resources following disputes over water distribution between the two states.

The appointment of Justice Trivedi follows the resignation of Justice AM Khanwilkar, creating a vacancy in the tribunal tasked with resolving disputes related to the Mahanadi river, according to a gazette notification. The Chief Justice of India nominated Justice Trivedi for the position under Section 5A of the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act.

The Centre formalised the appointment through an amendment to the original 2018 notification constituting the tribunal under the Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.

Justice Trivedi's appointment is expected to expedite deliberations on the long-standing Mahanadi water dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

The tribunal was initially formed to address disagreements over the allocation of the river's water -- a critical resource for irrigation, drinking, and industrial purposes.

Cuttack gangrape: NHRC seeks ATR from Collector

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought an Action Taken Report (ATR) within four weeks from the Commissioner of Police, Cuttack, regarding the alleged gang rape of a college girl in the Silver City.

The incident reportedly involved blackmail using obscene videos of the victim.

The apex rights panel recently issued directions in response to a complaint filed by rights activist Sagar Jena.

According to the complaint, the victim, a college student,



had gone to a café within the Puri Ghat police limits during the Dussehra festival to celebrate her birthday with her boyfriend.

However, her boyfriend, with the assistance of the café owner, secretly recorded obscene acts involving the victim on his phone.

The videos were then used to blackmail and repeatedly sexually assault the victim.

The complaint further alleged that four others, including a minor boy and some of the boyfriend's friends, also gang-raped the victim over several days.

Eventually, the victim approached the Badambadi police station and filed a complaint. Acting on the complaint, police arrested six people, including the victim's boyfriend and the café owner.

The petitioner has demanded strict action against all the accused and compensation of Rs 10 lakh for the victim.

Polavaram: BJD to launch stir in Jan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: BJD president Naveen Patnaik Saturday urged party members to intensify their fight for justice on behalf of Odisha's tribal communities, who are likely to be severely impacted because of the Polavaram dam project in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

Patnaik's call came after a delegation of party leaders met him at his residence to brief him on their recent visit to Delhi, where they raised concerns with the Centre regarding the project's potential impacts.

In a post on X, Patnaik said, "The Polavaram project will submerge many areas of Malkangiri and will greatly affect the tribal brothers and sisters. I met and discussed with the delegation of @bjd_odisha who submitted the demand letter to the Central Government. I advised them to continue fighting for the rights of the people. #BJDWithOdisha."

BJD delegation leader Debi Prasad Mishra said they apprised Patnaik regarding their interaction with Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil and senior officials from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, as well as the chairpersons of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) and the Central Water Commission (CWC).

Mishra confirmed that in addition to the seven members of the delegation, the party's



seven MPs had also accompanied the team during their meetings with Central government officials.

Former MP and prominent tribal leader Pradeep Majhi said, "The BJD president informed us that he will fight for the rights of the tribal people and also asked us to continue the fight. The party will launch an agitation from January demanding justice for the people of Malkangiri, particularly the tribals who will be affected by the Polavaram project."

Majhi, who hails from Nabarangpur district, claimed that the Polavaram project would submerge around 200 tribal villages in Motu and Padi blocks of Malkangiri district due to the backwater created by the dam. He also highlighted the potential environmental damage, noting that a large area of flora and fauna in Malkangiri will be submerged by Godavari river's backwaters.

The BJD has planned a series of agitations across the state, starting in Malkangiri district. Additionally, the party is organising demonstrations in Delhi.

The party has planned a series of agitations across the state, starting in Malkangiri district. Additionally, it is also organising demonstrations in Delhi

Majhi further claimed that the Centre is being pressurised by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to continue the project as the TDP has become a key ally of the BJP after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The Centre has allocated Rs 12,000 crore in its 2024 Budget for the completion of the Polavaram project, according to BJD leaders.

The BJD emphasised that the project was conceived under the Godavari Water Dispute Tribunal (GWDT) resolution, which set the framework for agreements between Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh.

However, the party argued that significant changes had been made to the original design, particularly regarding the flood discharge capacity of the dam, which was increased from 36 lakh cusecs to 50 lakh cusecs without sufficient consideration for the backwater impacts in the upstream states of Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

In a statement, the BJD said Patil assured the delegation that Odisha's concerns regarding the Polavaram project

2ND EDITION OF WALKING BOOKFAIRS TRAVEL WRITING FESTIVAL

Literature on wheels: Authors share culinary quest



DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Puri, Dec 14: The second edition of the Walking Bookfairs Travel Writing Festival captivated literature enthusiasts and food lovers alike with tales of culinary exploration inspired by travel.

Held in Puri, the day-long festival began with a unique train journey from Bhubaneswar railway station Saturday, bringing together hundreds of writers, chefs, and food enthusiasts.

Joining the festival during the journey, chef Shweta Biswal, author of Beyond Dalma, said recipes originating from a particular geographical area present unique textures of taste.

For instance, she said, due to use of coconut by people in coastal Odisha, the food offers a mellow and tangy flavour. The opposite could be found in western Odisha.

Akshay Bahibala said the enthusiasm among participants to dedicate an entire day, fostering deep human connection makes the festival special.

Shweta presented 'Ada Hengu Khichdi' and 'Ramrochak curry' which she had prepared at home.

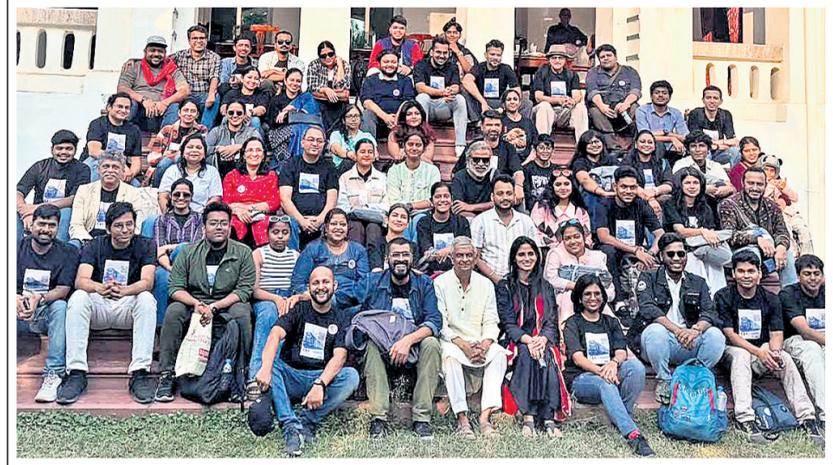
On their arrival in Puri, the participants embarked on a rickshaw-ride to 'Honey Bee' restaurant where they savoured delightful pizza.

As dusk approached, they huddled up in an interactive session at Blue Flag Beach.

Shweta said experiencing food is a deep intimate experience.

Sharing thoughts, chef Rachit said he makes it a

Puri has lost its pristine charm: Satpathy



PURI: The coastal town of Puri has lost its pristine charm, of late, slowly becoming an ugly distortion, said Orissa POST and Dharitri Editor Tathagata Satpathy here, Saturday.

Speaking at the 2nd edition of Walking Bookfairs Travel Writing Festival at the iconic Z Hotel in the pilgrim town, Satpathy took the audience on a nostalgic journey down the memory lane of Puri in the 1980s, sharing anecdotes from his observations.

Satpathy said back then the heritage city was in its most undulated form. "One could easily spot the sea waves right from the Chakratirtha Road. The nooks of this street invited the likes of film auteur Satyajit Ray, poet Allen Ginsberg, and many others," he said.

However, the old charm of

the City was lost in the following decades owing to rapid and mindless urbanisation, he said.

Shedding lights on the inception and evolution of Z Hotel, which he owns, Satpathy said the initial days of running the property were fraught with painstaking struggle - from financial shortcomings to gathering trained manpower. "Topping it all was to make the hotel accessible for public," he said. Satpathy said the hotel was earlier commonly referred to as 'European Hotel' since it was popular among foreign tourists. "Back then, amongst the handful of luxury hotels in Puri, ours had the best ambience," he added.

He said earlier, the National Cadet Corps (NCC) took

point to visit the 'local mandi' as they preserve the true flavours of a particular area.

Author Ravi Mantha said being from a strict vegetarian family, he faced a dilemma after moving to the United States as he could not find anything beyond spaghetti and meatball.

Talking about travel writing, author Chandrashekhra Chowdhury said one's skills get better with age.

Pitching in, Mantha likened travel writing to hiking. "One gets better with time," he said.

Flu virus can remain infectious in refrigerated raw milk for 5 days

Influenza or flu virus can remain infectious in refrigerated raw milk for up to five days, scientists have warned.

The new Stanford University study comes at a time when outbreaks of bird flu in dairy cattle have raised concerns about the potential for a new pandemic.

"This work highlights the potential risk of avian influenza transmission through consumption of raw milk and the importance of milk pasteurization," said study senior author Alexandria Boehm from the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability and the Stanford School of Engineering.

Proponents of raw milk claim that it leaves more beneficial nutrients, enzymes, and probiotics than in pasteurised milk, and can boost immune and gastrointestinal health.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has tied raw milk to over 200 outbreaks of illnesses, and warns that germs, such as E coli and Salmonella, in raw milk present "serious" health risks, especially for children, the elderly, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems.

The study, published in the journal Environmental Science and Technology Letters, explored the persistence of a strain of human influenza virus in raw cow's milk at typical refrigeration temperatures.

The flu virus, called H1N1 PR8, survived and remained infectious in the milk for up to five days.



Researchers found that flu virus RNA - molecules that carry genetic information but are not considered a health risk - remained detectable in the raw milk for at least 57 days

inate surfaces and other environmental materials within dairy facilities, posing risks to animals and humans."

Notably, the researchers found that flu virus RNA - molecules that carry genetic information but are not considered a health risk - remained detectable in the raw milk for at least 57 days.

By comparison, pasteurisation completely destroyed infectious influenza in the milk and reduced the amount of viral RNA by almost 90 per cent, but didn't eliminate the RNA entirely.

The findings underscore the importance of improving monitoring systems, particularly as bird flu continues to spread among livestock, according to the study's authors.

OUTR hosts Annual Alumni Meet



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The Annual Alumni Meet of Odiha University of Technology and Research (OUTR) was held Saturday at the university campus, drawing over 150 alumni from India and abroad. Organised by the university's Alumni Association, the event showcased a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening ties between the institution and its former students.

OUTR VC Bibhuti Bhusan Biswal delivered an inspiring address, emphasising the importance of alumni contributions to the university's growth. The highlight of the event was the presentation of the Distinguished Alumni Awards to four eminent graduates of OUTR (formerly CET). IIT Bangalore director Debabrata Das was the chief guest and one of the honorees. Other awardees included former engineer-in-chief of the Works

department Narayan Chandra Pal, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport, Kolkata executive director Pravat Ranjan Beuria, and former Principal of Parala Maharaj Engineering College, Berhampur Ranjan Kumar Swain. Each awardee delivered an acceptance speech, reflecting on their journey and contributions.

The event was graced by Subhendu Pattnaik (Vice President), Bikram Bahinipati (Secretary), Bibhu Prasad Dash (Treasurer), and other executive committee members of the Alumni Association. Meera Viswawandya welcomed the attendees, while Jyotirmoy Nandi concluded the ceremony with a vote of thanks.

The meet highlighted the alumni association's proactive efforts in fostering meaningful engagement and giving back to the alma mater.



FOR A CAUSE: Students take part in a procession from Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Saturday, on the occasion of state-level observance of National Energy Conservation Day

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Ranjita Das, W/o Kalandi Bhuyan, Resident of At - Keutagarh, P/O - Ayeaba, P/S : Kendrapara Sadar, Dist : Kendrapara, declare that She was the natural mother of Anvi Ananya Priyadarshini who is minor one. I swear this affidavit that I want to change my daughter name from Anvi Ananya Priyadarshini to Ananya Bhuyan.

I, Sridhara Kumar Pradhan, S/o- Jaya Pradhan, Resident of Vill./P.O.- Rambha, P.S.- Rambha, Dist.- Ganjam, Pin- 761028, Odisha declared by this Affidavit No.- 2119 dtd. 04.12.2024. Before Executive Magistrate, Shallikote that onwards I shall be known as SRIDHAR PRADHAN for all future purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate (P), Uditnagar, Rourkela I, Damodar Behera, R/o. D/197, Sector-20, Rourkela, Dist. Sundargarh, Odisha declared that my daughter Sradhanjali Behera passed in the year 2024. But in pass certificate of ISCE, New Delhi vide unique ID No.8070288 where my wife's name inadvertently recorded as Priyadarshani Behera instead of her actual name Priyadarshini Behera. I am swearing this affidavit to make necessary correction.

I, Mohammad Khadim, S/o. Dayan Mohammad, Sutahat, P.O.- Buxibazar, Cuttack- 753001, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.8425, dated 11.12.24 that in passport of my daughter Aamna Anjum my name has been wrongly recorded as Mohammed Khadim instead of Mohammad Khadim. So it should be corrected as Mohammad Khadim.

'Energy conservation crucial in combating climate change'



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Our initiatives in energy conservation must reflect in our daily habits. Simple actions like switching off unused electrical appliances, using renewable energy, and promoting green energy can significantly combat climate change, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Agriculture, Farmers' Empowerment, and Energy, Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo said at an event here Saturday.

The event was organised to observe a state-level National Energy Conservation Day by the Energy department here featuring a series of activities

aimed at promoting energy conservation.

Addressing the gathering as the chief guest, Singh Deo urged the audience to align their efforts with the vision of a "Viksit Bharat, Viksit Odisha" (Developed India, Developed Odisha) by taking decisive steps in energy conservation and involving future generations in these practices.

On the occasion, a public awareness rally was flagged off by Singh Deo. The rally started from Kalinga Stadium and concluded at Power House Square.

A state-level exhibition was also held at the Convention Center of Lok Seva Bhawan,

organised by the Chief Engineer (Electricity), department of Energy. The event saw participation from government agencies, private organisations, industrial groups, professionals, teachers, and students.

Students from all 30 districts showcased innovative models related to energy conservation. Energy-efficient devices, electric vehicles, and solar panels were displayed, encouraging the adoption of sustainable energy practices.

The event also featured a quiz competition on energy conservation, conducted at block and district levels. The top 30 participants from across the state advanced to the state-level exhibition, where the top three winners were awarded cash prizes of ₹7,000, ₹5,000, and ₹3,000, along with certificates. The competition saw participation from approximately 1.5 lakh students from Classes VII to X.

Additionally, state-level awards were presented to various industries for outstanding energy conservation projects. The programme concluded with chief engineer Nilanchal Panda delivering the vote of thanks.

S&T dept holds State Youth Science Festival



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Science and Technology Minister Krushna Chandra Patra inaugurated the State Youth Science Festival at Kalinga Stadium here Saturday. Nearly 100 students from 20 districts participated in the festival. Department principal secretary Chithra Arumugam graced the occasion as chief speaker.

Around 58 projects, including 39 from senior level and 19 projects from the junior level, were displayed on the occasion. Winners from both senior and junior level were awarded with certificates and cash prizes at the event.

In the senior category, Subhas Prusty from The Institute of Life Sciences secured the first position, Rakshit Kumar Mohanty from OUTR secured

second and Siddhi Mohan Pattnaik of Utkal University secured the third position.

In the junior category, Ayusman Choudhary from Ramanguda Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya, Rayagada secured the first position, Jyoti Ranjan Barik from Mayurbhanj's Ranibhol Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya stood second and Shreyan Dash from Pokhariput DAV Public School secured the third position. On the occasion, eminent personalities who participated in the jury were felicitated and certificates were also given to all the students.

Department's additional secretary Sibani Mohanty delivered the welcome address while Odisha Bigyan Academy president Bibhuti Bhushan Mishra proposed the vote of thanks.

Measures to prevent illegal inflow of paddy from other states

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: As paddy procurement for the Kharif season continues in Odisha, the state government has implemented stringent measures to prevent the illegal inflow of paddy from neighboring states into local mandis.

Procurement operations are currently underway nine in districts including Bargarh, Sambalpur, Nuapada, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Subarnapur, Koraput, Jharsuguda, and Nabarangpur. Registered farmers are being offered a minimum support price of ₹2,300 per quintal and an additional ₹800 as input assistance.

To curb irregularities, enforcement teams have been stationed along the state borders. A total of 40 teams comprising 120 officials and staff have been deployed to monitor incoming vehicles carrying paddy.



"Strict action is being taken against vehicles bringing paddy from outside the state. Additionally, awareness campaigns are being conducted across the districts to inform people about the regulations," said an official.

The district administrations have instructed officers to promptly report any incidents of irregularities. In cases of non-compliance, vehicles carrying illegal paddy will be seized, and further action will be taken by the respective civil supply officers. "If required, more officers will be deployed in phases to strengthen enforcement. Officials have been directed to act immediately on complaints of irregularities," added the official.

The state government's efforts aim to protect the interests of local farmers and maintain the integrity of the procurement process.

2nd edition of purvodaya perspectives conference

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: The second edition of the International Conference on Purvodaya Perspectives: Reclaiming India's Maritime Heritage was inaugurated here Saturday.

Organised by The Energy Forum (TEF) in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the two-day conference aims to explore India's maritime legacy and its potential in shaping sustainable development strategies for the future.

Former secretary to the Government of India and Trustee of The Energy Forum, Sidhartha Pradhan, welcomed the gathering and emphasised the significance of the event. He said, "Purvodaya's maritime heritage represents a legacy of knowledge, culture, and connectivity that has profound relevance for contemporary maritime strategies. The platform is a unique opportunity to bring together leaders and experts to reimagine India's role in the Indo-Pacific region."

Secretary (East) of the Ministry of External Affairs Jaideep Mazumdar highlighted the historical and cultural links between India, particularly



Odisha, and Southeast Asia. He stated, "This conference emphasises the shared maritime heritage between India, especially Odisha, and Southeast Asia. Odisha's rich history and industrial base position it as a leader in maritime trade, exploration, and collaboration."

Sports and Youth Services Minister, Suryabanshi Suraj, spoke about Odisha's growing prominence as a hub of growth and development. He said, "Prime Minister Modi has highlighted Odisha as a rising epicenter of growth. The state is advancing significantly in areas such as ports, industries, and tourism, setting an example for the world."

The conference also featured cultural performances celebrating India's maritime traditions and offered a platform for networking and global dialogue. Discussions will continue on the second day, focusing on port-led development, the blue economy, and a roundtable on heritage and connectivity.

CUO holds workshop on open access publishing

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput/ Bhubaneswar, Dec 14: Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (JMC) at Central University of Odisha (CUO) in Koraput, in collaboration with IIT-Delhi's Central Library concluded a two-day workshop on open access publishing at its Sunabeda campus Saturday. CUO vice-chancellor Chakradhar Tripathi had inaugurated the workshop.

Also present on the occasion were CUO's academics and administration advisor Vibhash Chandra Jha, IIT-Delhi librarian Nabi Hasan and assistant librarian Mohit Garg. Department of JMC at CUO head Nikhil Kumar Gouda was the convener of the workshop.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Tripathi said that research should always be of good quality and good quality publications are necessary now. "We should enhance our publications based on Indian system rather than following the western principle. Our publications should be visible at international level, so that India will be projected



positively at the international academic arena," he added.

On the occasion, Hasan explained the purpose and functions of Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID). "It is necessary to maintain good quality publications in academics. Odisha is rich in talent and the academicians should make their talent visible through good publications," Hasan added.

Assistant librarian Jha insisted upon good quality publications by young academicians to maintain positive ethics in the society. He said that in the era of information and digitisation, every publication should be

known to society.

Nikhil Kumar Gouda delivered the welcome address and explained the purpose of the workshop. Co-convener Pradosh Kumar Rath proposed the vote of thanks.

The two-day workshop dealt with technical sessions consisting of research publications, good quality journals, and related topics. The workshop was conducted by Nabi Hasan and Mohit Garg from IIT-Delhi and D Narayana from Central Tribal University, Andhra Pradesh.

More than 70 members, including faculties and research scholars participated in the workshop.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	27.9°	25.5°
Min Temp	14.0°	12.0°
Humidity	54%	71%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST	Partly cloudy sky with haze	

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65 'pensioners' booked for forging age proof

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, Dec 14: Odisha Police has registered cases against 65 people for forging their age proof documents to reap benefits of old-age pensions under social security schemes in Kendrapara district, officials said Saturday.

The 65 people are aged between 40 and 50 years, and all of them are from Argala gram panchayat area.

They received old-age pension from February to August this year on the basis of school certificates and other documents, which were later found to be fake. An FIR was lodged against them Friday, Aul Block Development Officer (BDO) Minati Jagdeb said.

A case has been registered against them under sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Further investigation is underway, Aul police station Inspector-in-Charge Sabyasachi Satapathy said.

The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) is

a Central government-sponsored scheme that provides financial assistance to the elderly, widows and persons with disabilities in the form of social pensions, BDO Jagadeb said.

Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY) is a state government scheme which provides pension to persons above 60 years of age, widows (irrespective of age), AIDS patients and persons with disability.

As per the guidelines of NSAP and provisions of MBPY Rules 2008, gram panchayats and panchayat samitis will report every case of death of a pensioner immediately to the BDO or sub-collector concerned.

Further, annual verification of pensioners should be conducted by the competent authority to ascertain that the pensioner is alive and continues to fulfil all the conditions of eligibility. Pension will cease to be payable following the death of the pensioner, she added.

TED demo: No Olive Ridley netted at Barunei estuary

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paradip, Dec 14: The first demonstration of Turtle Excluder Device (TED), that allows fishing while ensuring protection to the protected Olive Ridley turtles, near the Barunei estuary here, was successful, a report said. The estuary is close to Gahirmatha marine sanctuary, the nursery of the rare sea turtles which is known for mass congregation on the beaches of Odisha.

The demonstration was carried out during a collaborative survey to monitor the activity of Olive Ridley turtles in the sea conducted by the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) of Government of India, State Fisheries Department, and representatives from the fishermen's Association.

The survey team, comprising technical experts, departmental officials, and representatives of the fishermen's association, used two boats equipped with TEDs for fishing.

Participants in the study included Muralidhar Jena, Joint Director of the Fisheries Department; Subhrakant Mohapatra, MPEDA state coordinator; Bijay Kumar Kar, Marine Fisheries Officer; and Purinder Biswal, a member of the Odisha Marine Fish Producers' Association (OMFPA).

Fishing activities using TEDs were carried out in two



What is TED

TED, or Turtle Excluder Device is a specially designed net used in fishing to protect marine turtles. Prepared in the United States, the device allows turtles to escape if they get caught, unlike conventional square or mesh nets where they often die after getting ensnared in the nets. TED nets have been introduced as a solution to meet international conservation standards.

boats throughout the day near Barunei sanctuary. OMFPA member Purinder Biswal confirmed that no Olive Ridley turtles were captured during the exercise.

Speaking on the survey, MPEDA coordinator Subhrakant Mohapatra said, "We carried out fishing for several hours using both regular nets and TED-equipped nets on two boats. Initially, the TED nets yielded 64 kg fish in one boat, and 93 kg in the other. Similarly, fishing with conventional nets during the same duration

resulted in 13 kg fish in one boat and 67 kg in the other."

The catch from the TED-equipped nets included species like ribbonfish, pomfrets, shrimps, and other varieties of fish. However, no turtles were caught, reaffirming the effectiveness of the TEDs in conserving marine biodiversity, Mohapatra said.

TED is a specially designed net used in fishing to protect marine turtles. Prepared in the United States (US), the device allows turtles to escape if they get caught, unlike conventional square or mesh nets where they often die after getting ensnared in the nets. TED nets have been introduced as a solution to meet international conservation standards.

Since 2018, the US has banned the import of Indian marine fish due to concerns over the harm caused to Olive Ridley turtles in Indian waters. Following this ban, European nations have also stopped importing Indian marine fish. The continued use of square nets has been cited as a reason for these restrictions.

In response, the Indian government has launched efforts through organisations like NETFISH and the MPEDA to promote the use of TEDs. The US has indicated that the ban will be lifted if TED nets are adopted, as they allow turtles to escape without compromising the catch.

10-yr RI to principal for raping ex-student

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Dec 14: A fast track court here sentenced the principal of a private school to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment after convicting him in the rape of a former girl student back in 2019, a report said Saturday.

The convict was identified as Bibhuti Gupta, who the principal-cum-owner of Gyanodaya Vidyalaya under Bandhamunda police limits in the City. The court also directed Gupta to pay ₹5 lakh to the survivor, Special Public Prosecutor Kailash Pradhan said.

Apart from the above sentence, the court also slapped two year jail term and cash fine of ₹50,000 on Gupta under Section-506 IPC. On failure to pay the fine amount, the convict has to undergo an additional two years and six months of im-

prisonment, the court observed while pronouncing the order.

The court passed the order after examining statements of 25 witnesses, 38 documentary and circumstantial evidences in the case, Pradhan added.

According to the case diary, Gupta had summoned the survivor, a former girl student of the school, for a discussion over waiver of school fees of her brother. Despite protests by the survivor, Gupta raped her. The incident pushed the survivor into depression. Later, she mustered courage and lodged a written complaint at Bandhamunda police station in 2020. Police then registered a case and arrested Gupta.

The case was first taken up for hearing in the court of Additional District Judge-1 in the City before being transferred to the fast track court.

Jumbo attacks: 2 killed, another injured

Rourkela/Rayagada: A man was killed and a Forest department worker severely injured Saturday in separate elephant attacks under the Bonai Forest Division in Sundargarh district. At around 5am, Rajesh Munda, 43, from Sukuda village, was attacked by a male elephant outside his house. The elephant, enraged after being chased by villagers, lifted Munda and trampled him to death. Villagers tried to drive the elephant away, but it left shortly after the attack. In another incident, para forest staffer Ludhia Singh was tracking elephants in the Tamada range when one elephant became aggressive and chased the team. Singh fell and was kicked by the animal, but he managed to shelter himself under a large stone. After an eight-hour search, his colleagues found him, and he was taken to Bonai PHC before being transferred to Rourkela Government Hospital. X-rays revealed broken ribs and a fractured leg. In yet another elephant attack in Rayagada district late Friday night, a Dongria youth was killed at Lakhapada village under Kalyansinghpur block. The deceased was identified as Salupu Kutruka, 30. Salupu was guarding his paddy field Friday night when a tusker attacked him, leading to his death on spot.

House owner held for rape of female health worker

KENDRAPARA: Aul police have arrested a 42-year-old man for his alleged involvement in rape of a female health worker. The Aul JMFC Court remanded him to judicial custody for the crime. According to police sources, the victim had lodged an FIR with Aul police alleging that accused, Rati Ranjan Behera, owner of a rented house, raped her and also captured the videos of the incident. The woman health worker was staying in the rented house at Sanamanga village. She further stated that Rati Ranjan started blackmailing her threatening to make the video of her intimate moments viral in social media and forced her to keep a physical relationship. Acting on the FIR, Aul police registered a case, arrested the accused and booked him under Section 64, 308(4), 79, 351(2) of BNS December 12. Rati Ranjan was produced before the Aul JMFC Court which remanded him into jail custody Friday, IIC of Aul police station Sabyasachi Satapathy said.

Biodiversity of Tampara Lake at risk



POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Dec 14: Odisha, known for its growing tourism industry, attracts both national and international visitors owing to its scenic landscapes, including beaches, lakes, and lagoons. Among these natural wonders is Tampara Lake, located near Chhatrapur in Ganjam district, about 140km from capital Bhubaneswar. Easily accessible by road, rail, and air, the lake draws hundreds of tourists each weekend, year-round.

Spanning 7km along the Bay of Bengal coastline, Tampara Lake is home to a rich variety of flora and fauna, maintaining a healthy ecological balance. The isthmus of the lake is covered with a forest of oak, pine, mangrove, banyan trees, and wild shrubs, enhancing the serenity of the landscape. Recently, due to

increased tourism, the government has developed resorts, restaurants, parks, and water sports facilities, further elevating the area's popularity.

However, this development has a darker side. The growing number of visitors, coupled with unchecked construction around the lake, is contributing to water contamination. Waste disposal in the area is a common problem, affecting the lake's ecosystem. Despite the importance of maintenance in preserving such a geographically significant site, Tampara Lake is suffering from a lack of proper upkeep.

Water sports, while providing entertainment, are also harming marine life. The noise, smoke, and artificial whirlpools caused by motorboats threaten the delicate aquatic ecosystem. In winter, migratory birds from Siberia and far-off ar-

eas, find refuge in Tampara besides Chilika Lake. However, the noise from motorboats causes distress among these birds, disrupting their peaceful environment. If this continues, the lake may no longer be an attractive destination for migratory birds, which depend on calm, quiet spaces and suitable temperatures.

Additionally, the water level in Tampara is declining each year due to below-average rainfall in the region. This, combined with pollution, threatens the aquatic species that live in the lagoon, including fish and prawns. Though the damage may not be visible above the water's surface, it poses a significant risk to the marine life beneath.

On the other side of the lagoon, the forest is also facing threats. Some species of trees, such as oak pine, which are integral to the area's identity, are nearing extinction. Though cyclones have caused some tree loss, locals suspect illegal deforestation is also a problem. Timber is often cut and sold to external vendors, who resell it at a higher price. Without proper supervision, the area's natural beauty could be irreversibly damaged, leaving the once-thriving ecosystem in ruins.

To protect this iconic location, both the local community and tourists have a responsibility to help preserve its beauty. Strict monitoring and conservation efforts are crucial to safeguarding Tampara Lake's biodiversity and ensuring its future.

Leopard skin seized; 1 held

BHUBANESWAR: The Special Task Force of Odisha Police arrested one person and seized a leopard skin from his possession in Boudh district, an official statement said Saturday. Based on reliable information, the STF team conducted a raid Friday evening on Manamunda-Sagada road near Meheruni bridge and apprehended a man. "During search one number of leopard skin along with other incriminating materials were recovered from his possession," the police said in a statement. It said that the accused person was arrested under different sections of BNS and Section 51 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. The skin will be sent to Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun for biological examination. Investigation is going on, the police said.

Over 47 cases settled in a day in Lok Adalat

CHHATRAPUR: Over 125 cases were taken up for hearing and judgements passed in more than 47 of those during the National Lok Adalat held on the Civil Courts premises here Saturday. Organised by the Taluk Legal Services Committee, Chhatrapur, courts of the ADJM Manoranjan Das, Senior Civil Judge Pooja De, SDJM Pritish Kumar Rath and JMFC Swagatika Swain passed judgements on litigations from banking, unresolved financial disputes between parties, and other cases. About ₹30 lakh was collected from the cases in the form of settlements from the parties. A team of advocates, comprising Pradip Kumar Padhi, president of the Chhatrapur Bar Association played a pivotal role in organising the Lok Adalat.

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, MALKANGIRI
Odisha, PIN - 764045, Ph.: 06861-230244
e-Mail: eomalkangiri@gmail.com

Lt. No. 4838/Mpl./2024 Dated: 14.12.2024
On the eve of Malyabant Mahotsav - 2024, Malkangiri Municipality wishes to Public "Make City Clean & Green".

ACHIEVEMENTS OF MALKANGIRI MUNICIPALITY

1. Model Crematorium at Goudaguda at Ward No. 09
2. Smart Children Park at Back side of Collector Res. Office at Ward No. 09
3. Fecal Sludge Treatment Plant at Pradhaniguda at Ward No. 01
4. MCC & MRF at Pradhaniguda at Ward No. 01
5. B.T. Road from Model Police Station to M.V. - 02
6. B.T. Road from NH - 326 to Model Degree College, Ward No. 19
7. B.T. Road from DNK Chhaka to BB Guda School connected to MV-2, Ward No.-16.
8. B.T. Road from Canal Bridge to Malikeswar Temple at Ward No. 07.

**Sd./- Executive Officer
Malkangiri Municipality**

Government of Odisha e-Procurement Notice
E-Mail: rw_boudh@yahoo.co.in
Bid Identification No. Online tender/05/S.E.R.W. Boudh/2024-25
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT

Name of the work : Road works - 3 Nos.

1 Estimated cost	: Rs. 6.84 lakhs to 41.34 (approximately)
2 Period of completion	: 02 Calendar months
3 Date & Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal	: from 18.12.2024, 10.00 A.M. to 24.12.2024, 5.00 P.M.
4 Last date / Time for receipt of bids in the portal	: 24.12.2024 up to 5.00 P.M.
5 Last date / Time for seeking of Tender clarification	: 23.12.2024 up to 5.00 P.M.
6 Date & Time of opening of Tender / Bid	: 26.12.2024 at 11.00 A.M.
7 Name & Address of the officer inviting Bid	: Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division, Boudh

Further details, corrigendum(s) etc can be seen from the e-procurement portal "https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in"

**Sd./- Superintending Engineer
R.W.Division, Boudh**
OIPR-25061/11/0008/2425

Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. : Online-AGL-12 of 2024-2025

1 Name of the Work	: Road Work
2 Estimated Cost	: Rs. 18.49 Lakhs
3 Period of Completion	: 02 (Two) Calendar Months
4 Date & time of availability of	: From 18.12.2024 to 24.12.2024 upto 5.00 P.M.
5 Last Date/time for receipt of bids in the portal	: 24.12.2024 upto 05.00 P.M.
6 Name & Address of the OIT	: Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Angul

Further details can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersorissa.gov.in

**Sd./- Executive Engineer
R.W.Division, Angul**
OIPR-25096/11/0015/2425

CUTTACK MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Tender Call Notice No. 10433 (PW) Date: 13.12.2024
No. C-1263 Tender ID: 2024_ORULB_107485

Civil Work : 6 Nos.
Bid Value : Rs.2.59 Lakhs to Rs.17.18 Lakhs

Date and Time Schedule :

Start	End	Opening
11.00 A.M. on Dt.17.12.2024	5.00 P.M. on Dt.24.12.2024	11.00 A.M. on Dt.30.12.2024

Tender details can be seen from the procurement portal: www.tendersorissa.gov.in.

**Sd./- Executive Engineer
City Division-III, CMC**
OIPR-13031/11/0108/2425

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER No. O-843
RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, GANJAM, BERNAMPUR
Phone: 0680-2404096, E-Mail: eerwgmt@yahoo.co.in
Government of Odisha, e-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. Online Tender/09/SERWD-II/2024-25
Memo No. 7686/RWD-IIGB, Date: 10.12.24

1 Name of the Work	: Road Works
2 Estimated Cost	: Rs. 5.88 Lakhs to Rs. 33.61 Lakhs
3 Period of Completion	: 1 (One) Month as per Annexure
4 Date & Time of availability of Bid Documents in the Portal	: 21.12.2024 at 10.00 A.M. to 03.01.2025 upto 5.00 P.M.
5 Last Date/Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal	: 03.01.2025 upto 5.00 P.M.
6 Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid	: Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Ganjam, Berhampur

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal tendersodisha.gov.in/nicep/app

**Sd./- Superintending Engineer
R.W. Division-II, Ganjam, Berhampur**
OIPR-25073/11/0008/2425

EAST COAST RAILWAY

(1) Tender No. ELOP-T-11-2024
NAME OF WORK : MAINTENANCE OF CREW LOBBY & RUNNING ROOMS AT CUTTACK INCLUDING PROVISION OF SUBSIDIZED MEALS THROUGH OUTSIDE AGENCY FOR A PERIOD OF 02 (TWO) YEARS.
Advertised Value : ₹ 3,03,31,572.08, EMD: ₹ 3,01,700/-

(2) Tender No. ELOP-T-12-2024
NAME OF WORK : MAINTENANCE OF CREW LOBBY, OLD & NEW RUNNING ROOMS AT BHADRAK ALONG WITH PROVISION OF SUBSIDIZED MEALS THROUGH OUTSIDE AGENCY FOR A PERIOD OF 02 (TWO) YEARS.
Advertised Value : ₹ 5,47,12,352.26, EMD: ₹ 4,23,600/-

(3) Tender No. ELOP-T-13-2024
NAME OF WORK : MAINTENANCE OF CREW LOBBY, OLD & NEW RUNNING ROOMS AT TALCHER ALONG WITH PROVISION OF SUBSIDIZED MEALS FOR A PERIOD OF 02 YEARS.
Advertised Value : ₹ 2,68,97,504.34, EMD: ₹ 2,84,500/-
Cost of Tender Document : ₹ 11,800/- (for all Tenders). Period of Completion: 730 Days (for all Tenders).
Bidding Start Date : 17.12.2024 (for all Tenders).
Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1100 Hrs. of 31.12.2024 (for all Tenders).
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.
Complete information including e-tender documents and corrigendum is available in website www.lreps.gov.in
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer(OP), Khurda Road

ଓଡିଶା ବିଦ୍ୟୁତ୍ ନିୟମାବଳୀ ଆୟୋଗ
ODISHA ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION
BIDYUT NIYAMAK BHAWAN
PLOT NO.4, CHUNOKOLI, SHAILASHREE VIHAR, BHUBANESWAR -751021
TEL. No.: 2721048, 2721049
E-MAIL: oerc@odisha.gov.in / orierc@gmail.com, WEBSITE: www.orierc.org

CASE No. 90/2024
PUBLIC NOTICE

Hearing of Application of TPCODL for approval of Truing up for FY 2023-24 along with reconsideration/revisit of Truing up for FY 2021-22 & FY 2022-23.

TPCODL has submitted its Application to the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission on 30.11.2024 for approval of Truing up for FY 2023-24 along with reconsideration/revisit of Truing up for FY 2021-22 & FY 2022-23, which has been registered as **Case No.90 of 2024**. The application has been filed under Sections 62 & 86 (1) and other applicable provisions of the Electricity Act, 2003 read with OERC (Terms and Conditions for Determination of Wheeling Tariff and Retail Supply Tariff) Regulations, 2022 and OERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2004. The Commission has decided to dispose of the case through a public hearing along with the ARR & RST application for FY 2025-26 of the applicant in **Case No.88 of 2024**.

The petition along with all Annexures submitted by M/s. TPCODL in this regard is available in TPCODL's website www.tpcodlodisha.com as well as in Commission's website www.orierc.org. The Interested persons / organizations those who were parties to the previous year Tariff Proceedings i.e. for FY 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 want to participate in the above proceeding may file their objections/suggestions, if any, on the present petition of M/s. TPCODL by **16.01.2025** with a copy to TPCODL. TPCODL is to file its rejoinder to the objections/suggestions of the Respondents by **27.01.2025** with a copy to the Respondents. Those who are interested to participate in the public hearing through video conferencing should also indicate their e-mail address & mobile number respectively to the Commission at OERC e-mail (oerc.vc@gmail.com) beforehand.

Date: 13.12.2024
By Order
Sd/- Secretary

*In case of any ambiguity in the notice published in the Odia language, the notice published in English language may be referred for authenticity.

“The spiritual path is one of falling on your face, getting up, brushing yourself off, turning and looking sheepishly at God and then taking the next step”

SRI AUROBINDO



Numbers Speak

In 2021, I wrote a book called “Price of the Modi years.” In one of its chapters I compared India’s rankings on various global indices that I had been tracking over the years to see whether they had improved, stayed the same or deteriorated since 2014. Periodically, I keep going back to these to see whether India has risen or fallen on them or stayed the same. Today’s column looks at some of the more important ones as we end 2024.

The United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index monitors life expectancy at birth, education and national income. Our 2014 rank was 130, and it is today 134, a fall of four places. The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index monitors civil liberties, pluralism, political culture and participation and electoral process in nations. Our 2014 rank was 27 and the latest is 47, a fall of 20 places. India is classified as a “flawed democracy.”

The CIVICUS Monitor’s National Civic Space Ratings assesses freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression. In 2017, it rated India as a place where freedoms were “Obstructed.” India’s current rating has fallen to “Repressed” and the reason is that “the deterioration of India’s civic space is alarming.”

The Lowy Institute Asia Power Index monitors national power and influence based on economy, diplomacy, military capacity, resilience, trade, future trends and cultural influence. Foreign Minister Jaishankar met with Lowy Institute experts in November in Sydney. According to Lowy Institute, India lost its “Major Power” status by falling below the 40-point threshold in 2020 and then falling further in 2021 and 2022. It remains below 40 in 2024.

Freedom House’s Freedom in the World looks at rule of law, political pluralism and elections, functioning of government, civil liberties, freedom of expression, association and individual rights. It rates nations out of 100 and in 2014 India was rated 77/100 and classified as being “Free.” Today it is rated 66/100 and classified as “Partly Free” for a variety of reasons.

The World Justice Project’s Rule of Law Index rates nations on criminal and civil justice system, fundamental rights, constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, transparent government, order and security and regulatory enforcement.

In 2014 India ranked 66 and but fell to 77 in 2022 and 79 in 2024. India fares weakly on, among other things, fundamental rights and the criminal justice system.

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network World Happiness Report looks at GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, perceptions of corruption and dystopia. India fell from a 2014 ranking of 111 to 126. Reasons given included “large and steady decline in life evaluation,” low optimistic outlook of inhabitants (2020) and “longer-term slide in Indian life evaluations” (2021).

Fraser Institute’s Global Economic Freedom Index looks at size of government, legal structure, freedom to trade internationally, regulation of credit, labour and business. India’s ranking here has risen from 112 in 2014 to 84.

The Reporters Without Borders’ World Press Freedom Index monitors media independence, pluralism, self-censorship, abuses and transparency. India has fallen from a global rank of 140 in 2014 (which was not good in the first place) further to 159.

The World Bank’s Women, Business and the Law Index monitors laws and regulations that limit women’s economic opportunities on indicators like mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets and pension. India fell from its 2014 ranking of 111 to 113.

Transparency International Global Corruption Perceptions Index looks at corruption in the public sector of nations. India has fallen from a global rank of 85 in 2014 to 93. The Heritage Foundation Global Economic Freedom Index monitors rule of law, government size, regulatory efficiency and open markets.

India in 2014 was ranked 120 and has since fallen to 126. Reasons cited include “large scale political corruption”; “little evidence that anti-corruption laws are effective”; “foundations for long-term economic development remain fragile without an efficiently functioning legal framework”; “overall rule of law is weak in India.”

The International Food Policy Research Institute’s Global Hunger Index monitors hunger, stunting in children and undernourishment. Here India was ranked 55th out of 76 nations in 2014 and is now ranked 105th out of 127 nations. More than 13 per cent of Indians are undernourished, with 37 per cent of children under five being stunted (low height for age) and 18 per cent being wasted (low weight for height). India has rejected the findings of the hunger index as being flawed, saying that it does not reflect the country’s true position. But the true position is also that 60 per cent of Indians are thought by the government itself to require free ration monthly.

Similarly, the government has rejected the fall in other indices as being motivated or biased or based on flawed data or something else. Some indices it has stopped responding to totally. This was not the case when this government first took office and assumed that it would improve things. When India rose on the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Index in Modi’s first term, it was celebrated as an achievement of good governance. This index was discontinued after it was found that countries were gaming the system to rise in the rankings in 2018.

My broader point is this: That those who have been looking at the numbers over a decade or more, can only conclude that there has been slippage on key indicators linked to governance.

WISDOM CORNER

“Human greatness does not lie in wealth or power, but in character and goodness. People are just people, and all people have faults and shortcomings, but all of us are born with a basic goodness.”

ANNE FRANK

“So long as the universe had a beginning, we could suppose it had a creator. But if the universe is really completely self-contained, having no boundary or edge, it would have neither beginning nor end: it would simply be. What place, then, for a creator”

STEPHEN HAWKING

“If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

FOCUS WARFARE

IMPOSTERS AT WAR



Every day in every conflict zone around the world, fighters and civilians must be on the lookout for imposters, because the consequences of missing one can be devastating

Israel’s detonation of thousands of paggers held by Hezbollah fighters and loyalists in mid-September will be remembered as one of the most ingenious plots in the history of spycraft. It is also a reminder that the most powerful weapon in war is not a fighter jet, a drone, or even artificial intelligence, but rather something much older: impersonation.

Central to the Israeli operation was the human infiltration of supply chains. Three years ago, Israel’s intelligence agency, Mossad, developed a custom pager containing plastic explosives. It then sent agents to trick the Taiwanese company Gold Apollo into marketing the device to the right buyers. Thus, Israel’s biggest blow to Hezbollah in 40 years hinged on the simple dynamic of one human persuading another that he was someone else.

Impersonation – or “identity mimicry” as we call it in a recent book on the topic – is a widely used weapon of war. When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, the first Russian convoy headed for Kyiv was disguised as a Ukrainian unit to avoid detection. Male jihadists have dressed as women to pull off suicide bombings so often that several Muslim countries now ban face veils on security grounds. And it is not just Islamists who use this ploy. Earlier this year, Israeli soldiers entered a West Bank hospital dressed as Palestinian women and doctors to kill three suspected militants.

Mimicry also serves many other purposes. Spies routinely use it to steal sensitive information, which is probably why Bulgarians arrested on espionage charges in the United Kingdom last year were in possession of passports from nine different countries. And rogue actors use it to acquire illegal

products, as North Korea has done to great effect in its nuclear weapons programme.

Mimicry can also allow one to escape captivity, as Colombian drug cartel leader Juan Castro demonstrated when he walked out of a maximum-security jail in 2022 dressed as a guard. And it can be used to distract, as Saddam Hussein did by hiring body doubles to confuse potential assassins. Impersonation is powerful because it is upstream to many other war tactics, making it the master form of deception.

Every day in every conflict zone around the world, fighters and civilians must be on the lookout for imposters, because the consequences of missing one can be devastating. Let the wrong people into your base, and you will be attacked from the inside. Trust the wrong taxi driver, and you can be captured and tortured.

Impersonation is as old as war itself. Mimicry episodes were so frequent in antiquity that the classical authors Frontinus and Polyaeus wrote catalogues with hundreds of examples as a warning to generals. Subsequent

periods featured no less of it – from sixth-century Byzantine spies dressing as Persians to infiltrate the Sassanid army to Jews in World War II pretending to be Catholics to escape Nazi persecution.

The phenomenon persists because humans are dependent on identities for cooperation. To trust other people, we need a sense of how they will behave in the future, and reputations help. Mimicry is therefore parasitic on the benefits we derive from honestly signaling our identity. Countering mimicry is difficult because what makes or breaks an impersonation varies by context. The devil is often in the details, which is why British interrogators in WWII sought to weed out suspected German spies by testing their knowledge of pre-war cricket scores.

Some techniques have stood the test of time. The Old Testament Book of Judges relates how the Gileadites sought to identify Ephraimite pretenders by making them say “shibboleth,” a word that an Ephraimite would pronounce with an accent. Fast forward

to the start of the Ukraine war, and we find Ukrainians using the word palyanitsya (a type of bread) as a pronunciation test for suspected Russian spies. By now, though, the word has likely lost its probing power. Impersonation is a dynamic affair, with mimics and counter-mimics constantly adapting to each other’s tactics.

Technology can alter the game. A key concept in mimicry research is the hard-to-fake or costly sign. Historically, things like faces, skin colour, and voices have been difficult to imitate, so when we saw a video of a politician engaged in lurid activity 25 years ago, we rarely questioned its authenticity.

This has changed with generative AI. Earlier this year, a finance worker in Hong Kong was duped into transferring \$25 million after attending a group videocall in which everyone else was synthetically created. Deepfakes have already been deployed for war propaganda, notably in Ukraine, where fake videos of Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelenskyy proliferate. Reports of operational use remain few, but that is likely to change, for we are entering a golden era of wartime mimicry in which impersonation is a threat no less powerful than the most sophisticated weapons systems.

Diego Gambetta, Chair in Social and Political Science at Collegio Carlo Alberto in Turin, is the co-author (with Thomas Hegghammer) of Fight, Flight, Mimic: Identity Mimicry in Conflict (Oxford University Press, 2024). Thomas Hegghammer is Senior Researcher Fellow in Politics at All Souls College, Oxford University.

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Diego Gambetta & Thomas Hegghammer

IMPERSONATION IS POWERFUL BECAUSE IT IS UPSTREAM TO MANY OTHER WAR TACTICS, MAKING IT THE MASTER FORM OF DECEPTION

SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

Power games & the Syrian puzzle

Days after a blitzkrieg by rebels in Syria toppled its dynast ruler Bashar al-Assad, answers to questions on how and why it happened are emerging. Facile explanations are being offered in the Western media which has lionised the Islamist militias, backed by Assad’s enemies including the US and Turkey, who have their separate agendas. There was no doubt that the Assad regime was brutal to its own people, but all those who are singing paeans to the Hayat Tahrir al-Shams (HTS), the fundamentalist rebel force which is now in control of most of Syria, have dreaded it, including the US which characterised it as part of al Qaeda and the European Union found it guilty of the worst human rights violations.

Syria appears to be headed for the fate of Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan, with various rebel forces owing allegiance to foreign powers preventing stabilisation by challenging HTS. The Astana process set in motion in 2017 by Iran, Turkey and Russia to stabilise strife-torn Syria is now dead in water, and Israel, like a vulture

on a battlefield pecking at the dead, is grabbing as much land as it can on the Golan Heights, violating the 1974 agreement with Syria.

So, how did the collapse of the Assad regime like a house of cards a la Taliban in Afghanistan on Indian Independence Day in 2021, come about? More importantly, why has Russia has now accepted the fait accompli in Syria, which it protected against Western and Turkey-backed rebels way back in 2015 with military force, defeating HTS and other anti-Assad forces?

The answers, in simple terms, could lie in the Ukraine war, which continues to rage. A deal between US-NATO and Russia appears to have taken place, involving Russia giving up on its interests in West Asia, and go cold on Iran, in return for it to keep Crimea, Lugansk and Donetsk, which are in its control any way. US President-elect Donald Trump, and his chief advisor Elon Musk, have made some mutterings along the lines in the past.

Trump has announced that he will cut the US funding

of the Ukraine war. Trump does not want to spend US tax dollars on the losing cause in Ukraine, and wants, instead, to spend them in creating jobs in the US. That suits Russia, which is bleeding billions of rubles a day, and dozens of casualties every day on the war. Furthermore, US’ Europe allies, alarmed that they would be left holding the can in Ukraine when Trump occupies the White House for a second term, are now slowly sidling away from Ukraine.

As the US aid to Ukraine which had kept the war going set to be scaled down, Europeans, scared at having left to carry the burden, are now working out alternative plans to replace the shortfall by loans to Ukraine, with repayment by Kyiv coming out of Russian funds frozen in Euroclear and other Western banks, which is plain theft, but that is another story. But the exercise of ditching Ukraine, which was always the sacrificial pawn, seems to have begun.

The clanger fell during the meeting between Trump and Ukrainian President Volody-

myr Zelenskyy, organized by Emmanuel Macron in Paris early last week. After the meeting, Zelenskyy, who seems to have realised that he cannot continue to milk billions from a Trump-led US, was sobered up. He announced that he wants a “just” peace settlement, a la Neville Chamberlain in 1939, and Nixon just before the Paris accords on Vietnam when faced with the inevitable.

On Moscow’s part, it could not afford to stretch its resources between the Ukraine war, and asserting its presence in West Asia. It realised that supporting Syria was futile, although in return it got two bases, for its air force and navy, at Hmeimim and Tartus. Tartus gave it access to the Mediterranean, critical for its trade. And in any case, the new rulers in Syria have assured Moscow that its bases would not be touched.

So, in the coming days, one can expect a peace settlement on Ukraine.

The writer, a senior journalist, is an analyst of geopolitics.



KV Ramesh

THE ASTANA PROCESS SET IN MOTION IN 2017 BY IRAN, TURKEY AND RUSSIA TO STABILISE STRIFE-TORN SYRIA IS NOW DEAD IN WATER

Uncalled for

Sir, This refers to “Outrageous: Allu Arjun arrested,” **OrissaPOST**, December 14. For Telangana police to charge Telugu superstar Allu Arjun with culpable homicide was ridiculous. For a trial court to send him to judicial custody for 14 days was miscarriage of justice. Fortunately, he got swift relief from the High Court. The case as it stands is that a woman died and a child was critically hurt in a stampede that occurred when Allu Arjun attended the opening of his blockbuster Pushpa 2. The theatre and the actor’s team claim they informed the police ahead of his visit. Whatever the case’s merits, police neglected their obligation to manage crowds. Film audiences in Telugu states are known to break into frenzy at star-studded movie openings, even without the presence of their idols. Even if Allu Arjun was not present, the opening of Pushpa 2 was a hugely anticipated event and large crowds were expected at the busy Hyderabad location where Sandhya theatre is located. Crowd control is police work, but as is seen repeatedly in several such situations countrywide where expert crowd control is required, police fail hopelessly to control the situation – ill-equipped, ill-trained, and in several cases, it’s simply dereliction of duty. Also, the political interference in the episode can’t be ruled out.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Shun violence

Sir, This refers to “SC advises farmers to go Gandhian way,” **OrissaPOST**, December 14. There can be no better advice other than the advice given by the apex court to farmers to abstain from the path of violence in achieving their demands howsoever legitimate they may be. Since the apex court has taken cognisance of the matter, there shall be no room for violence. In the fitness of things, the government at the Centre should also show the right gesture in resolving the issues with open mind, which has not been done so far even after seeing the loss of farmers’ lives.

Arun Gupta, KOLKATA

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

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

Decades-old temple re-opens after 46 years in UP's Sambhal



The move comes weeks after four people died in violence over a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid in this UP district

confirmed it had been locked since 1978.

The temple also has a well nearby which the authorities plan to reopen.

Weeks after four people died in a violence over a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid in this Uttar Pradesh district, the administration has launched a campaign to tackle encroachments and power theft in areas around the Mughal-era mosque.

Local residents shared their memories of the temple, with many highlighting its importance as a religious site for the community.

The temple, located in Khaggu Sarai is just over a kilometre away from the Jama Masjid which is situated in Kot Garvi area.

Mukesh Rastogi, a resident of Kot Garvi, said, "We had heard a lot about this temple from our ancestors. It is an ancient temple but it was closed long ago because people of only a particular community lived there."

"We have heard that this temple must be at least 500 years old," he said.

Vishnu Shankar Rastogi, 82-year-old patron of the Nagar Hindu Mahasabha, shared his personal connection with the temple.

"I have lived in Khaggu Sarai since my birth. After the 1978 riots, our community was forced to migrate from the area. This temple, dedicated to

our Kulguru, has been locked since then," Rastogi said.

"Around 25-30 Hindu families, including ours, used to live in the Khaggu Sarai area. After the 1978 riots, we sold our house and left this place," Rastogi said.

He said it is an ancient temple and was known as Bhasma Shankar temple. It was called the temple of the Rastogi community, he added.

Earlier, the people of our community used to come here for worship, he said.

Sanjay Sankhydar, a resident of Sambhal, said he has heard a lot about this temple. People's sorrows were relieved by visiting here. But it was closed for a long time. Now the people here will visit again and earn the benefits of virtue, he said.

Violence had taken place in Sambhal November 24 over surveying of the Mughal-era Shahi Jama Masjid. Four people were killed and several, including police personnel, were injured in the violence.

An imam of another mosque in Sambhal was Friday fined ₹2 lakh for allegedly using a loudspeaker at high volume, officials said.

The incident took place in the Anar Wali Masjid in the Kot Garvi area, according to administration officials.

The imam was directed to refrain from similar conduct for the next six months, according to an order passed by the SDM.

AGENCIES

Sambhal (UP), Dec 14: The Sambhal administration Friday reopened a temple locked since 1978 following communal riots in the town.

Officials said the temple, a stone's throw from the Shahi Jama Masjid, was opened after authorities stumbled on it during an anti-encroachment drive.

The Bhasma Shankar temple houses an idol of Lord Hanuman and a Shivling.

The temple had remained locked since 1978 after the communal riots that led to the displacement of the local Hindu community, locals claimed.

Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Vandana Mishra, who was leading a campaign against electricity theft in the area, said, "While inspecting the region, we stumbled upon this temple. Upon noticing it, immediately informed the district authorities."

"We all came here together and decided to reopen the temple," Mishra said, adding that the temple had been closed for decades and the local residents

Kejriwal faces off against sons of ex-CMs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: The prestigious New Delhi Assembly seat is likely to witness a fierce electoral contest with sitting MLA and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal pitted against the sons of former Delhi chief ministers as the BJP and Congress candidates.

Parvesh Verma, the son of former Delhi chief minister Sahib Singh Verma, Saturday told PTI that he has been asked to prepare for contesting from the New Delhi constituency.

The Congress has already announced its candidate Sandeep Dikshit on the seat. He is son of three-time former Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit.

Speaking at an event earlier Friday, Kejriwal rejected the rumours that he was going to shift from the New Delhi seat to some other constituency in the upcoming Assembly elections which are due in February next year.

"There will be no change. I will contest from New Delhi seat and Chief Minister Atishi from Kalkaji," he said when asked about the possibility of changing seats by them.

Referring to Dikshit and Verma, the AAP supremo said they are the sons of former chief



ministers and claimed himself to be an Aam Aadmi.

The former Delhi chief minister asserted that the contest in the New Delhi constituency will be a battle between the CM sons and the common man.

Verma, a former West Delhi Lok Sabha MP, said, "My party has asked me to prepare from

this seat." The list of BJP candidates is yet to come out, he added.

Asserting the BJP will win the New Delhi seat, Verma claimed that Kejriwal has not fulfilled his promises despite representing the constituency thrice in the Assembly since 2013.

The AAP supremo shot to fame in the political arena of the country by defeating then chief minister Sheila Dikshit from the New Delhi constituency in the 2013 Assembly polls by a margin of over 25,000 votes.

In 2015, he again won from New Delhi defeating the BJP candidate by more than 31,000 votes. His victory margin reduced to 2,000 votes in 2020 polls.

The New Delhi constituency is one of the smallest, numerically speaking, of the total 70 Assembly seats and is dominated by the government employees as voters.

Centre revises air pollution control plan for Delhi-NCR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Centre's panel on Delhi-NCR air quality has issued a revised plan to tackle winter pollution, asking states to implement stricter measures when the air quality deteriorates and making it mandatory for schools to shift to hybrid learning on days with severe air pollution.

Poor air quality, driven by unfavourable weather conditions, usually persists for long periods during winter, from November to January.

During this time, Delhi frequently enforces restrictions under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), which categorises air quality into four stages Stage I (Poor) with AQI between 201 and 300, Stage II (Very Poor) between 301 and 400, Stage III (Severe) between 401 and 450, and Stage IV (Severe Plus) for AQI above 450.

According to the revised plan, inter-state buses from NCR states, except those EVs and those running CNG or BS-VI diesel, will not be allowed to enter Delhi under Stage II. This provision earlier came into effect under Stage III.

Resident welfare associations will also be required to provide electric heaters to staff involved in sanitation, gardening, and other services, in addition to security staff, to prevent open burning of biomass or solid waste during winters.

Persons with disabilities are exempt from restrictions imposed on BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel cars in Delhi and the districts of Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, and Gautam Budh Nagar under Stage III.

The Delhi government has been directed to ban diesel medium goods vehicles (MGVs) with BS-IV or older standards, except those carrying essential



goods or services, within the city under Stage III.

Similarly, non-essential diesel light commercial vehicles (LCVs) of BS-IV or older standards, registered outside Delhi, will not be allowed to enter the city. Previously, such restrictions applied only to BS-III vehicles.

The panel has also mandated that schools and colleges in Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, and Gautam Budh Nagar shift classes up to Class V to hybrid mode (both online and offline) under Stage III. Students and parents will have the option to choose online education wherever it is available.

Under Stage IV, which is invoked when the AQI crosses the 450 mark, schools in Delhi and NCR districts will be required to conduct classes for students from Class VI to IX and XI in the hybrid mode.

The Delhi and NCR state governments have also been directed to stagger timings for public offices and municipal bodies under Stage III. The Centre may decide on similar staggered timings for Central government offices in Delhi-NCR.

NGT gives UP govt time to submit sewage mgmt plan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: The National Green Tribunal has allowed time for the Uttar Pradesh government to place on record a comprehensive sewage management system plan for the upcoming Mahakumbh Mela.

The 2025 Mahakumbh will be held at Prayagraj from January 13 (Pausa Pournima) to February 26 (Maha Shivratri). It is organised every 12 years.

The green body was hearing the issue of preventing sewage discharge into the Ganga and Yamuna rivers in Prayagraj.

In the order dated December 9, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava noted the submissions by the additional advocate general (AAG) for Uttar Pradesh seek-



ing three days to place on record the comprehensive sewage management system which had been prepared by the authorities concerned, in view of the existing load and increased load during the Mahakumbh.

In this plan, a disclosure will be made about the expected generation of sewage in the Kumbh Mela area and the treatment facility that is being

created therein to prevent the discharge of untreated sewage generated in the Kumbh Mela into rivers Ganga and Yamuna.

This will also take into account the expected increase in the generation of sewage within the city of Prayagraj, said the bench also comprising judicial member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and expert member A Senthil Vel.

It said the plan also needed to

disclose the details of the drains falling into the rivers and the method of treating their sewage to attain the objective of zero untreated sewage discharge in both rivers.

There shall be a clear disclosure in respect of contracts which have been awarded in this regard, funds and land which has been made available for that purpose and the agency responsible for the same and if the work has been completed and if not, the timeline for completion of the same, the tribunal said.

It then allowed the report to be filed by the state's principal secretary of the environment department within three days.

During the proceedings, the AAG said that 81 drains in Prayagraj were discharging treated and untreated sewage in

the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, of five were drains, three were storm water drains and two were sewage drains.

She (AAG) has stated that these drains have low flow and an on-site method will be adopted to prevent the discharge of untreated sewage from these drains into the river Ganga.

She has further submitted that there are 39 untapped drains out of which 60-70 million litres per day (MLD) of sewage from 22 drains will be treated through the advanced oxidation system, and with respect to the remaining 17 drains, the process of interception and diversion to the existing sewage treatment plant (STP) is on, the tribunal noted.

The matter has been posted December 16 for further proceedings.

3RD INCIDENT THIS WEEK 6 Delhi schools get bomb threat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: At least six Delhi schools received a bomb threat Saturday, officials said, marking the third instance of threat emails being sent to schools in the national capital this week.

We received a call about a bomb threat at Delhi Public School, RK Puram, at 6.09am, a Delhi Fire Services official said.

The fire department, local police, dog squads and bomb detection teams reached the school and launched a search operation, the official said.

Five more schools, including Ryan International School in Vasant Kunj and Gyan Bharati School in Saket, received the same email from the same sender, he further said. A police official said nothing suspicious was found after search and inspection in any of the schools.

Kejriwal writes to Shah on law and order, seeks urgent meeting

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 14: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convener and former Chief Minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal has expressed grave concerns over the deteriorating law and order situation in the national capital. In a letter addressed to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Kejriwal sought an urgent meeting to discuss the escalating crime rate in the city.

Kejriwal pointed out that despite Delhi's law and order being under the jurisdiction of the Centre, the city has gained notoriety as the "crime capital" of the nation.

He highlighted alarming statistics, emphasising that among India's 19 metro cities, Delhi ranks highest in crimes against women and murder cases.

"Extortion gangs are flourishing in Delhi, operating openly and running their

ransom businesses without fear. Our airports and schools are being targeted with bomb threats through emails and phone calls, creating panic and endangering public safety. Also, drug-related crimes have surged by an astonishing 350 per cent," former Chief Minister Kejriwal wrote in the letter to the Union Home Minister.

"Delhi is now being recognised as the crime capital in the country and abroad," Kejriwal added. The AAP leader expressed deep concern over the safety of Delhi's residents, urging immediate and effective action to curb the rising crime wave.

"I am gravely worried about the safety of every Delhiite. Concrete steps must be taken without delay," Kejriwal stated.

The AAP has been vocal in attacking the Union government's handling of Delhi's law and order.

Delhi HC bins plea seeking possession of Red Fort by 'Mughal family member'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 14: The Delhi High Court Friday dismissed a plea in which a woman claiming to be the widow of the great-grandson of Bahadur Shah Zafar II from the Mughal dynasty sought possession of the Red Fort in the national capital.

A division bench of Acting Chief Justice (ACJ) Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela refused to entertain the appeal moved by the woman challenging the 2021 decision of the single-judge bench which had rejected her petition.

Without entering into the merits of the case, ACJ Bakhru-led Bench rejected the matter on delay in filing the appeal.

It opined that the delay spanning over two-and-a-half year should not be condoned.



According to the plea, their family property was taken away by the British East India Company following the first War of Independence in 1857, after which the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar was exiled from the country and possession of the Red Fort was taken away from the Mughals.

The petitioner woman sought adequate compensation from 1857 till date for 'illegal possession' by the government or any other relief deemed fit.

In the course of hearing, a single-judge bench of Justice Rekha Palli had said: "My history is very weak, but you claim injustice was done to you by the British East India Company in 1857. Why is there a delay of over 150 years? What were you

doing for all these years?" Justice Palli also noted that there was no documentary evidence to support the claim that the petitioner was related to the last Mughal emperor.

"You have not filed any inheritance chart. Everyone knows Bahadur Shah Zafar was exiled by the British, but if his heirs did not file any plea, can she do it?" The Delhi HC had asked. In response, the petitioner's counsel said that Begum was an illiterate woman.

However, the court had rejected the petition saying merely because the petitioner is an illiterate woman there is no reason why, if the petitioner's predecessors were aggrieved by any action of the East India Company, no steps were taken in this regard at the relevant time or soon thereafter.



Unfortunately, this NDA government is destroying India's Constitution day by day. India is a federal country, which has a federal structure. By talking of 'one nation, one election', you are undermining that federal structure
MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

NAVY CHIEF EMBARKS ON 4-DAY VISIT TO INDONESIA

Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi will begin a four-day visit to Indonesia from Sunday to consolidate a comprehensive strategic partnership, especially in the maritime domain, between the two countries



of the day quote

Jharkhand has every potential to become a developed state. It has a huge reserve of minerals. Despite this, it could not be a developed state. It is the time to introspect within ourselves and think why a government or alliance was elected again, which only thinks of its own development after winning an election
CHIRAG PASWAN | UNION MINISTER



It's so shameful that under your watch, our grand capital due to failure of law and order is being called rape capital, gangster capital, drug capital
ARVIND KEJRIWAL | AAP SUPREMO



The BJP has now demanded a SIT probe into the contracts awarded for construction of roads. We demand an EOW probe into this
ADITYA THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) LEADER



Farmers' third attempt for Delhi march foiled

The farmers under the banner of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha have been pressing for various demands, including a legal guarantee for MSP. They have also demanded that the Centre initiate talks with them to address their issues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Shambhu, Dec 14: Protesting farmers suspended their foot march to Delhi after some of them were injured Saturday in teargas shelling and use of water cannons by Haryana security personnel, who foiled the agitators' third attempt in less than 10 days to cross the Punjab-Haryana border. Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher claimed that 17 farmers were injured in the action by the Haryana security personnel.

No discussion is taking place on the issue of farmers in Parliament, Pandher said. On the next course of action, he said a tractor march will be taken out in states except Punjab December 16. A 'rail roko' protest will be held December 18 from 12 noon to 3 pm in Punjab, he added. The farmers under the banner of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha have been pressing for various demands, including a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP). They have also demanded that the Centre initiate talks with them to address their issues. It was the third attempt by protesting farmers to march towards the national capital. Farmers had earlier made two attempts to cross the Shambhu border point December 6 and December 8 but they were not allowed to proceed by security personnel in Haryana. Ahead of the resumption of their march, the Haryana government had Saturday suspended mobile internet and bulk SMS services in 12 villages in Ambala till December 17 "to prevent any disturbance of peace and public order". The group of 101 farmers started their foot march to Delhi shortly after 12 noon from the Shambhu protest site on the Punjab-Haryana border. Ambala Deputy Commissioner Parth Gupta and Superintendent of Police S S Bhoria tried to persuade the farmers to stop, but when the impasse continued Haryana security personnel fired teargas shells and used water cannons to disperse them. Farmer leader Manjit Singh Bhoria alleged that rubber bullets were also used by security personnel due to which one farmer was seriously injured. Farmers injured in the teargas shelling were taken to a nearby hospital in ambulances stationed at the protest site, said the protesting farmers.

Before the police action, Gupta and Bhoria held talks with some protesting farmers for over half an hour, trying to convince them to get permission from Delhi to go towards the national capital. They also urged them to hold a dialogue with the Supreme Court constituted high-powered committee. However, the protesting farmers, who were adamant about going to Delhi, said they wanted to hold talks with the Centre for the resolution of their issues. As the protesting farmers were stopped by a multilayered barricade erected by Haryana authorities, they urged the security personnel to allow them to proceed to Delhi. Ambala's SP Bhoria said if they have to go to Delhi for any dharna, they should apply for permission under the law, and if that is granted, "we will ourselves help you reach there". Appealing to the protesting farmers to move back, Bhoria also referred to the apex court's statement on Friday that a high-powered committee constituted by it would talk to the protesting farmers and make recommendations to the court which would eventually be put to the stakeholders for a decision.

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Himachal BJP slams CM Sukhu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Dec 14: The Himachal BJP Saturday accused Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu of encouraging his associates to eat "Jungli Murga" (Grey Junglefowl), which is an endangered species, during a dinner in a remote area in Shimla and demanded that he apologise for his behaviour. However, Sukhu responded that local villagers had cooked "desi murga" and he offering it to others as he doesn't eat non-vegetarian food due to health reasons. He stressed that eating non-vegetarian food is a way of life in villages and slammed the Opposition leaders of making an issue out of it.

The BJP's statement came after a video came up online in which Sukhu is heard saying, "Inko do Jungli Murga, hume thodi khana hai (Give them Jungli Murga, I don't want to eat)." Sukhu then asks his companions if they wish to eat the dish. The video was shot at the remote Tikkar area of Shimla district, where the Chief Minister was having dinner with Health Minister Dhani Ram Shandi and other officials Friday night and the particular dish was listed on the menu. BJP leader Jai Ram Thakur claimed that Sukhu had later changed his words from "jungli" to "desi murga."

"Jungli Murga (Grey Junglefowl) is an endangered species listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act 2022. Hunting and eating this species is illegal," said BJP spokesperson and state social media in-charge Chetan Bragata in a statement issued Saturday. Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur pointed out that there are provisions for imprisonment and fines for hunting and eating "Jungli Murga." He accused the CM of not only having the dish featured on the dinner menu but also encouraging his associates to eat it.

Doctors, political parties stage protests after RG Kar case suspects get bail



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 14: A day after two key suspects in the rape-murder of a doctor at RG Kar hospital were granted bail, the Left parties and Congress organised protest rallies across Kolkata Saturday, accusing the CBI of "failing" to deliver justice. They also alleged a "tacit understanding" between the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal and the BJP-led Centre. Congress took out a procession from Rabin-dra Sadan to the CBI office at Nizam Palace in southern Kolkata, where they criticised the agency for its alleged failure to frame charges against the accused.

The protesters were seen holding party flags and chanting slogans like "We demand justice" and "Bichar Chai Tilotoma". Police stopped the Congress activists from entering the Nizam Palace, which led to a scuffle between the protesters and police personnel. A rally organised by the West Bengal Junior Doctors Front (WBJDF) also took place, with hundreds of participants marching from Karunamayee to another CBI office at CGO Complex in Salt Lake, protesting the "delay in framing charges" against the conspirators involved in the rape-murder of the woman doctor at RG

Kar Medical College and Hospital August 9.

The parents of the deceased doctor also joined the rally, with the mother saying, "We will fight for justice, and it is our right." Eight representatives from WBJDF met a CBI representative at Nizam Palace and handed over a memorandum demanding the agency expedite the probe. "We were told by the CBI representative that the trial is on and the agency is on the path of investigation, aiming to submit a foolproof chargesheet. They assured us that releasing two on bail does not mean they are not above trial. But we are not happy with the pace of the CBI probe," one of the doctors in the delegation said. In a separate rally, members of Abhaya Manch, a platform consisting of civil society members, rights groups, and left-wing organisations, marched from College Square to Rani Rasmoni Avenue.

The protesters held placards reading, "If the system has failed, we will make it function to deliver justice." There was a brief scuffle with police when they blocked the road, but they later moved to one side of the road to hold a protest meeting. Rallies were also organised by SUCI (Communist) and the Students' Federation of India (SFI), the student wing of the CPI(M), in other parts of the city.

SHORT TAKES

3 members of KZF detained in Punjab

Chandigarh: Three members of the Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF) module have been arrested in connection with a hand grenade attack at a police post in Nawanshahr in Punjab, Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said Saturday. The accused were identified as Yugpreet Singh, Jaskaran Singh and Harjot Singh. Police teams also recovered two weapons -- one country-made pistol and one revolver -- along with six cartridges from their possession.

CIK conducts raids in J&K

Srinagar: The Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) wing of Jammu and Kashmir Police Saturday conducted raids at multiple locations, including the district jail in Anantnag, in a terror-related case, officials said. The CIK along with local police carried out searches at several sites across the union territory as a part of an ongoing investigation, they said. In south Kashmir's Anantnag district, CIK teams reached the District Jail Mattan and searched various blocks and barracks, the officials added.

Minor killed in celebratory firing

Deoria (UP): An eight-year-old boy was killed after suffering bullet injuries during celebratory firing at a wedding function in Uttar Pradesh's Deoria, police said Saturday. The incident occurred in Garouna village December 9, when Abhinandan (8) alias Kanha went to watch fireworks along with his friends, Bhola and Abhishek, they said. Abhinandan was hit when some people opened celebratory firing during the wedding function, the police said.

Student found hanging in Una

Una (HP): A 17-year-old student was found hanging at his aunt's house in Himachal Pradesh's Una town, with police suspecting that he committed suicide after failing his exams. The victim has been identified as Pankaj, from Kalyana village of Hamirpur district. He was pursuing Bachelor in Technology from a private institute in Pandoga, they said. The incident occurred Friday night in ward number 10 of Baihali Mohalla, when the family members, including his parents, were having dinner, the police said.

SNIPPETS

Senior Congress leader E V K S Elangovan dies

Chennai: Senior Congress leader and former Union Minister E V K S Elangovan died due to age-related ailments at a private hospital here Saturday, the hospital said. He was 75. The legislator from Erode East constituency has not been keeping well for over a month. He was admitted to a hospital here November 11. "He passed away today despite the best efforts of the medical staff," the hospital said. TNCC president K Selvaperunthagai described the passing of Elangovan as "a huge loss". "He was an outspoken person and his death is an irreparable loss to his family and the Congress party, and to me personally," he said.

Goods train splits into two parts

Patna: A goods train split into two parts after its coupling broke near the Kharia-Pipra halt on the Bhalgalpur-Jamalpur in Bihar Saturday, affecting the traffic on the route. The incident occurred at 8.58 a.m., affecting trains' operation on both the up and down lines for several hours. After the train coupling broke, 10 coaches and the engine moved forward, leaving 20 coaches behind. Railway authorities rushed to the spot and took prompt action to resolve the situation. The 10 forward coaches were brought to Kalyanpur station, while the remaining 20 were transported to Sultanganj station to clear the tracks. Mohammad Aqil, a Railways Station Master at the Kharia-Pipra halt, confirmed the sequence of events.



Newly inducted officers celebrate after their Passing Out Parade at Indian Military Academy (IMA) in Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Strengthen measures to prevent drowning: WHO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 15: The World Health Organization (WHO) has called on countries in the South-East Asia region to strengthen measures to prevent drowning, which it says disproportionately affects children and vulnerable populations. According to WHO's first Global Status Report on Drowning Prevention, South-East Asia reported 83,000 drowning fatalities in 2021, accounting for 28 per cent of the global drowning burden.

This contributes substantially to the nearly 30 lives lost to drowning every hour globally. Nearly 43 per cent of drowning fatalities in the region involved children aged 14 years or younger, the report said. Drowning is the third leading cause of death for children aged 5-14 years and the fourth leading cause of death for children aged 1-4 years, the WHO report said. "To save lives and ensure equitable safety for all, expanding and scaling up proven drowning prevention interventions across the region is not just essential, but a moral imperative," said Saima Wazed, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia. Poverty, limited access to safe water, and inadequate infrastructure exacerbate drowning risks, particularly in low and middle-income countries, she said. Children face heightened vulnerabilities due to inadequate supervision, limited swimming skills and lack of water safety knowledge. For older children and adolescents, peer pressure, risk-taking behaviours and substance use further increase their risk, WHO said in a statement.



According to WHO's first Global Status Report on Drowning Prevention, South-East Asia reported 83,000 drowning fatalities in 2021, accounting for 28 per cent of the global drowning burden. This contributes substantially to the nearly 30 lives lost to drowning every hour globally.

Children with disabilities face additional challenges in recognising and responding to water hazards, WHO added. Non-fatal drowning incidents can lead to severe long-term neurological complications and disabilities that require prolonged care, the organisation said. The Regional Director noted that while most countries in the WHO South-East Asia Region have comprehensive drowning prevention strategies, much more needs to be done. Enacting laws mandating life jacket use, creating barriers around water hazards and implementing safe boating regulations have shown potential, though enforcement remains inconsistent in many countries. Regulations restricting alcohol consumption near public water bodies are lacking in many areas, she said. Community programs that teach water safety, swimming and rescue skills, provide supervised childcare, and integrate flood risk management strategies are recognized as critical components of drowning prevention, Wazed said. "Drowning prevention is fundamentally an issue of equity. By prioritising vulnerable populations, fostering innovative leadership, and embracing global collaboration, countries can significantly reduce drowning deaths. With sustained commitment and collective action, we can ensure that everyone, everywhere, can live safely around water," she said.

IndiGo plane makes emergency landing in Karachi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, Dec 14: A Jeddah-bound IndiGo plane was diverted to the Karachi airport Saturday due to a medical emergency on board and later flew back to Delhi. Sources in the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in Pakistan said the aircraft was in the Pakistani airspace when a male passenger fell seriously ill, following which the plane made an emergency landing at the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi. "There was a medical emergency on board IndiGo flight 6E 63, operating from Delhi to Jeddah," the airline said in a statement.

IndiGo said the captain diverted the flight to Karachi, where a doctor attended to the passenger upon arrival. "After completing the necessary formalities, the flight departed Karachi and returned to its origin to provide further assistance to the medical passenger," the airline said, adding, after the passenger was deboarded in Delhi, the flight departed for Jeddah. According to Geo News, the passenger was a 55-year-old Indian man. Sources in the CAA said the flight's pilot contacted the air traffic control at the Karachi airport after the passenger did not get better even after he was given oxygen. The air traffic control allowed the aircraft to land in Karachi on humanitarian grounds.





Climate change, the crisis... The threatening problem obliterates social barriers. Rich or poor, urban or rural. We must act together, or we perish together

6 INDIANS LURED INTO ILLEGAL JOBS IN MYANMAR RESCUED

Six Indian nationals, who were victims of a fake job scam in Myanmar's Myawaddy, have been rescued, the Indian embassy in Yangon said Saturday.



of the day quote

Actually, the tenure of MPCC (Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee) chief is of three years, and I have completed four years. I have earlier also said that I fulfilled my responsibilities properly, and it is an internal matter, not to be disclosed.

PM has not spoken one thing which is new, he has bored us. It took me decades back, I felt like I m sitting in that double period of Mathematics

Alongside developmental works, new welfare schemes will be introduced to benefit citizens and accelerate Haryana's progress in terms of development

PM Modi proposes 11 resolutions before Parl

The 11 resolutions proposed by Modi towards the end of his over 110-minute speech also included a call for an end to dynastic politics, promoting meritocracy over nepotism in governance and a pledge for having zero tolerance to corruption

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday proposed 11 resolutions which include upholding existing reservations for marginalised sections but strongly opposing any religion-based quota.



He said that collective efforts and commitment to constitutional values were essential for national progress. The first resolution asks every individual to perform their duties. "Be it individuals or the administration, everyone must adhere to their responsibilities," Modi said.

tage and legacy. Modi's sixth resolution called for an end to dynastic politics and promoting meritocracy over nepotism in governance. The Prime Minister highlighted the importance of respecting the Constitution in the seventh resolution and urged that the guiding document should not be misused for political gains.

The 11 resolutions proposed by Modi towards the end of his over 110-minute speech also included a call for an end to dynastic politics, promoting meritocracy over nepotism in governance and a pledge for having zero tolerance to corruption. The Prime Minister said these resolutions are aimed at shaping India's future.

POST OF THE DAY

> Gandhi chose jail > Nehru chose jail > Savarkar wrote mercy petitions "Savarkar had compromised with the British, he betrayed India" LoP Rahul Gandhi shared Indira Ji's views on traitor Savarkar

RAHUL VS SRIKANT SHINDE

Uproar in Lok Sabha over Savarkar remark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde Saturday invoked in the Lok Sabha a letter written by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi praising V D Savarkar, triggering heated exchanges between the treasury benches and Congress members.

the Constitution in praising Savarkar? We take pride in Savarkar ji and his contribution to the nation." The remarks led to an uproar with Rahul Gandhi standing up, seeking to respond. However, Shinde refused to yield, prompting Congress MPs to storm the Well of the House demanding that Rahul Gandhi be allowed to speak.

SHORT TAKES

Police constable in B'lore dies by suicide

Bangalore: A 33-year-old police head constable died by suicide in Bengaluru on Friday night, allegedly jumping in front of a train in Byappanahalli, police said Saturday.

Physically challenged woman burnt to death

Gurugram: A physically challenged woman was burnt to death during a violent clash between two groups in Laharwadi village of Haryana's Nuh district over the arrest of the accused in an eight-month-old murder case, police said Saturday.

Militant killed in gunfight

Imphal: A suspected militant was killed and six members of his gang were arrested following a gunfight with security forces in Manipur's Thoubal district Saturday, police said.



A President's Bodyguards shows his skills at the President's Bodyguard (PBG) Parade Ground (Polo Field) in New Delhi

Side effects of paracetamol affect heart, kidneys: Study

Some studies have provided evidence to contest the effectiveness of paracetamol in relieving pain while others have shown increased risks of gastrointestinal side effects, such as ulcers and bleeding, from prolonged use

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Paracetamol, a common over-the-counter medication, may increase the risk of gastrointestinal, heart- and kidney-related

complications among adults aged 65 and above, a new study has found. Taken commonly for treating mild-to-moderate fever, paracetamol is also the first drug recommended for treating osteoarthritis -- a chronic condition causing pain, stiffness and swelling in the joints due to wear-and-tear -- as it is considered effective, relatively safe and accessible.



found that paracetamol use was linked to a 24 per cent and 36 per cent increase in risk of peptic ulcer bleeding (bleeding due to ulcer in the digestive tract) and lower gastrointestinal bleeding, respectively. Taking the drug may also

are prescribed acetaminophen (paracetamol) repeatedly in the UK," the authors wrote in the study published in the journal Arthritis Care and Research. "Due to its perceived safety, paracetamol has long been recommended as the first line drug treatment for osteoarthritis by many treatment guidelines, especially in older people who are at higher risk of drug-related complications," said lead researcher Weiya Zhang from the University of Nottingham's School of Medicine.

of 4,02,478 (4.02 lakh) people of the same age who were never prescribed paracetamol repeatedly. Data from the Clinical Practice Research Datalink-Gold was analysed for the study. The participants were aged 65 and over (average age 75) and had been registered with a UK general practitioner for at least a year between 1998 and 2018.

BPSK PAPER LEAK

Nitish govt under fire



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Dec 14: The Nitish Kumar government in Bihar Saturday found itself under pressure, from adversaries and allies alike, to order a probe into allegations of question paper leak in an examination conducted by the state public service commission. The NDA government was also buffeted over the behaviour of an IAS officer, who had Friday slapped a protester at one of the examination centres in the state capital.

Students are slapped and beaten with sticks. But not a word comes from the Chief Minister's mouth." Notably, the BPSK has been denying any irregularities in the exams, in which close to five lakh candidates had appeared at more than 900 centres. The controversy arose when some candidates, at the Babu Pariksha Parisar in Patna, alleged that packets containing question papers had been unsealed long before being brought to examination halls.



Women and girls are facing progressive erasure from almost all walks of life in Afghanistan under Taliban rule
ROZA OTUNBAYEVA | UN SPECIAL ENVOY FOR AFGHANISTAN

TURKEY TO REOPEN SYRIAN EMBASSY
Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan says that Turkey's Embassy in Syria's capital of Damascus will reopen Saturday, for the first time since 2012



of the day quote

The global challenges ahead are formidable. But the G20 has the will, capacity and determination to address them
ENOCH GODONGWANA | FINANCE MINISTER, SOUTH AFRICA

We have not created and will not create any obstacles for the agency's (IAEA) inspections and access
MOHAMMAD ESLAMI | ATOMIC ENERGY ORGANIZATION HEAD, IRAN

We welcome Chinese investors and are determined to provide them with every possible support
ASIF ALI ZARDARI | PRESIDENT, PAKISTAN

South Korea's Yoon impeached

Yoon buckles under martial law backlash, becomes second conservative president in a row to be impeached in the country

Seoul, Dec 14: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol vowed Saturday to fight for his political future after he was impeached in a second vote by the opposition-led parliament over his short-lived attempt to impose martial law, a move that had shocked the nation. The Constitutional Court will decide whether to remove Yoon sometime in the next six months. If he is removed from office, a snap election will be called. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who was appointed by Yoon, became acting president while Yoon remains in office but with his presidential powers suspended halfway through his five-year term. "I will give all my strength and efforts to stabilise the government," Han told reporters after the vote. Later, he chaired a National Security Council meeting and urged the country to maintain a "watertight readiness posture" to ensure North Korea could not plan any provocations. The political crisis, which has led to the resignation or arrest of several senior defence and military officials, has raised concerns over the South's ability to deter nuclear-armed North Korea at a time when Pyongyang is expanding its arsenal and deepening ties with Russia. Yoon is the second conservative president in a row to be impeached in South Korea. Park Geun-hye was removed from office in 2017. Yoon survived a first impeachment vote last weekend, when his party largely boycotted the vote, depriving parliament of a quorum.



Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who was appointed by Yoon, became acting president while Yoon remains in office but with his presidential powers suspended halfway through his five-year term



AT LEAST 12 FROM YOON'S PARTY BACKED IMPEACHMENT
YOON FACES SEPARATE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

Considered a tough political survivor but increasingly isolated, he has been dogged by personal scandals and strife, an unyielding opposition and rifts within his own party. Protesters near parliament backing Yoon's impeachment leapt for joy, waving colourful LED sticks as music pumped out. By contrast, a rally of Yoon supporters emptied following the news. Opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung urged protesters near parliament to fight together so Yoon is removed swiftly. "You, the people, made it. You are writing a new history," he told the

number of lawmakers supporting impeachment was 204, with 85 against, three abstentions and eight invalid ballots. The political crisis has sparked disarray in the ruling party, with its chief Han Dong-hoon defying calls to resign after backing impeachment as "inevitable to normalise the situation".

Ukrainian drones strike Russia as Kyiv reels from consecutive strikes

Kyiv, Dec 14: Ukrainian drone strikes on southern Russia killed a 9-year-old boy and set fire to a major oil terminal, officials said Saturday, the day after Moscow launched a massive aerial attack on its neighbour that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said was one of the heaviest bombardments of the country's energy sector since Russia's full-scale invasion almost three years ago. Elsewhere in southern Russia, Ukrainian drones overnight hit a major oil terminal in the Oryol region, sparking a blaze, Ukraine's General Staff reported Saturday. Photos published by the General Staff and on Russian Telegram news channels showed huge plumes of smoke engulfing the facility, backlit by an orange glow. Oryol Governor Andrey Klychkov confirmed Saturday that a Ukrainian drone strike



set fire to a fuel depot there. In a separate Telegram post later that day, he said the blaze had been contained and that there were no casualties. Rolling electricity blackouts are common and widespread, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy charged Friday that Moscow is "terrorising millions of people" with such assaults. According to Ukraine's air force, Russia kept up its drone attacks Saturday, launching 132 of the munitions across Ukrainian territory. Fifty-eight drones were shot down and a further 72 veered off course, likely due to electronic jamming, according to the air force's online statement.

Georgia elects West critic as new President

EX-FOOTBALL PLAYER MIKHEIL KAVELASHVILI BECOMES GEORGIA'S PRESIDENT

Tbilisi, Dec 14: Georgian lawmakers elected Mikheil Kavelashvili, a hardline critic of the West, as president Saturday, setting him up to replace a pro-Western incumbent amid major protests against the government over a halt to the country's European Union accession talks last month. The ruling Georgian Dream party's move to freeze the EU accession process until 2028, abruptly halting a long-standing national goal that is written into the country's constitution, has provoked widespread anger in Georgia, where opinion polls show that seeking EU membership is overwhelmingly popular. Kavelashvili, a former professional soccer player, has strongly anti-Western, often



KAVELASHVILI IS A HARDLINE CRITIC OF WEST AND EU
COUNTRY IN CRISIS SINCE RULING PARTY FROZE EU ACCESSION TALKS
CURRENT PRO-EU PRESIDENT SAYS DOESN'T INTEND TO LEAVE POST

All opposition parties have boycotted parliament since an October election in which official results gave Georgian Dream almost 54% of the vote, but which the opposition says was fraudulent. Georgia for 200 years until 1991. Hundreds of protesters gathered in light snowfall outside parliament ahead of the presidential vote. Some played soccer in the street outside and waved red cards at the parliament building, a mocking reference to Kavelashvili's sporting career. Protester Vezi Kokhodzede-

scribed the vote as "treason" against what he said was Georgians' desire to integrate with the West. "Today's election represents the clear wish of the system to bring Georgia back to its Soviet roots," he said. Georgian presidents are picked by a college of electors composed of MPs and representatives of local government. Of 225 electors present, 224 voted for Kavelashvili, who was the only candidate nominated. Kavelashvili is a leader of People's Power, an anti-Western splinter group of the ruling party, and was a co-author of a law on "foreign agents" that requires organisations receiving more than 20% of their funding from overseas to register as agents of foreign influence, and imposes heavy fines for violations.

Shoot them down: Trump on mystery drone sightings

Washington, Dec 14: US President-elect Donald Trump has called for the "shooting down" of the mystery drones that have been appearing in various parts of the country. These drones were first spotted in New Jersey a few days ago and are now being seen in other areas as well. The federal government and the White House have so far maintained that these do not pose any national security threat and nor there is any evidence of a foreign hand in it. The appearance of the mystery drones, however, continues to be the subject of investigation. "Mystery Drone sightings all over the Country. Can this really be happening without our government's knowledge? I don't think so," Trump said Friday in a post on Truth Social, a social media platform owned by him. "Let the public know, and now. Otherwise, shoot them

down!!! DJT," he said with his personal signature at the end of the post. The White House Thursday said there was no evidence yet that the reported drone sightings pose a national security or a public safety threat or that they have a foreign nexus. The Department of Homeland Security and the FBI are investigating these sightings, working closely with state and local law enforcement to provide resources, using numerous detection methods to better understand their origin, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby told reporters. He added that "... upon review of available imagery, it appears that many of the reported sightings are actually manned aircraft that are being operated lawfully." "The United States Coast Guard is providing support to the State of New Jersey and has confirmed that there is no evidence of any foreign-based in-



volvement from coastal vessels. And, importantly, there are no reported or confirmed drone sightings in any restricted airspace," Kirby said. In a joint statement, the Department of Homeland Security and FBI also said that there was no evidence yet that the reported drone sightings pose a national security or a public safety threat or have a foreign nexus. "We are supporting local law enforcement in New Jersey with numerous detection methods but have not corroborated any of the reported visual sightings with electronic detection. To the contrary,

Trump vows to abolish daylight saving time. President-elect Donald Trump has said his Republican Party will "use its best efforts" to eliminate daylight saving time in the US as it is inconvenient and costly to the nation. In the United States, daylight saving time starts on the second Sunday in March and ends on the first Sunday in November. The time changes take place at 2:00 am local time. In a post on his social media site Truth Social Friday, Trump said, "The Republican Party will use its best efforts to eliminate Daylight Saving Time, which has a small but strong constituency, but shouldn't! Daylight Saving Time is inconvenient, and very costly to our Nation." The Republican Party will gain control over the two Chambers of the US Congress -- the House of Representatives and the Senate -- in January. Trump will be sworn in as the 47th President of the US January 20.

upon review of available imagery, it appears that many of the reported sightings are actually manned aircraft, operating lawfully. There are no reported or confirmed drone sightings in any restricted air space," the statement read. In a letter to the DHS, FBI and the Federal Aviation Administration, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senators Cory Booker and Andy Kim said that "since late November, communi-

Business



The suspension of the MFN clause by Switzerland and earlier issues with Australia underscore the need for India to adopt a more consistent and strategic approach to international taxation treaties
AJAY SRIVASTAVA | GTRI FOUNDER

PER CAPITA AVAILABILITY OF FRUITS, VEGETABLES UP

Per capita availability of fruits and vegetables in India increased by 7 kg and 12 kg, respectively, in the last decade, according to an SBI Research report. The report said India produces 227 kg of fruits and vegetables per person per year (the general recommendation for its intake is at least 146 kg per person annually). However, due to the inherent perishable nature of the produce, a significant quantity also perishes during harvest, storage, grading and transport.



of the day quote

We (businesses) have the capacity and the responsibility to define the vision for development and shape the India of tomorrow
KUMAR MANGALAM BIRLA | CHAIRMAN OF ADITYA BIRLA GROUP



How can you auction something that is shared? You can only auction something that is committed to a certain individual? So satellite phones, for example, you have to point your antenna, and that's when you get the signal, and it keeps shifting. Therefore, that spectrum is shared
JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA | UNION TELECOM MINISTER



Despite being only 3 years old, we were able to successfully close a full statutory audit by a Big 4 firm with no financial qualifications and a clean CARO
AADIT PALICHA | ZEPTO CO-FOUNDER



Headwinds challenge RBI's forex intervention

Mumbai, Dec 14: The Reserve Bank of India's efforts to slow the rupee's decline have been relentless but it's already-stretched strategy is now challenged by weak economic growth, tepid foreign inflows and a buoyant dollar's threat to Asian currencies, especially the Chinese yuan.

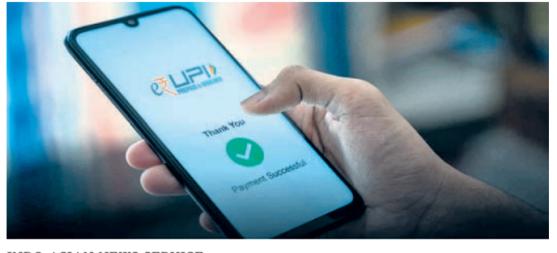


The dollar index has rallied more than 3% since Donald Trump won the US presidential election on Nov. 5. The rupee has declined just 0.8% in that time, making it the second-best among major Asian currencies, largely due to the RBI's intervention. This intervention has stretched across segments: buying and selling dollars in the onshore spot and forward markets, taking positions in local currency futures and in the non-deliverable forward (NDF) market. "The amount of intervention has been quite substantial ... We can say intervention is a little bit stretched but, at the same time, it is a call that the RBI must take," said B Prasanna, head of global markets at ICI-CI Bank. The strain is showing. For instance, in the NDF

market, the RBI's go-to strategy, the central bank's position has ballooned to levels that make it difficult to use as frequently. Moreover, India's forex reserves are at a five-month low after the RBI sold \$38 billion, per IDFC FIRST Bank's estimate, between October and the first week of December. Investors are taking notice. The RBI's forex policy and the rupee's future were key discussion points in a recent Asia investment tour, said Madhavi Arora, chief economist at Emkay Global Financial Services, which conducted the tour. "With continuing pressure

on the currency and policy defences arming up against the global tide, most investors believe that the RBI has stretched too far." **CHANGING LOCAL, GLOBAL CONDITIONS** The rupee hit an all-time low of 84.88 per dollar on Thursday. But for two years, it has been the least volatile Asian currency, barring the pegged Hong Kong dollar. However, that could change given local and global challenges. At home, economic growth hit a seven-quarter low recently, which led to foreign investors withdrawing from

UPI transactions surge to ₹223L-cr in Jan-Nov



New Delhi, Dec 14: The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has achieved 15,547 crore transactions worth ₹223 lakh crore from January to November this year, 'showcasing its transformative impact on financial transactions' in India, the Finance Ministry said Saturday.

The rapid adoption of UPI was possible due to affordable internet across the country. A 10 per cent increase in UPI transactions led to a 7 per cent rise in credit availability, reflecting how digital financial histories enabled lenders to assess borrowers better, the study states. The authors said fintech lenders scaled rapidly, increasing their loan volumes 77 times, far outpacing traditional banks in catering to smaller, underserved borrowers.

The Finance Ministry also said that UPI is now accepted in seven countries including France, UAE, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Bhutan and Nepal. The UPI system provides a cheaper and quicker alternative to the available channels of cross-border remittances. UPI has succeeded in increasing financial inclusion and promoting equitable economic growth by enabling underserved groups, including subprime and new-to-credit borrowers to access formal credit for the first time by IIM and ISB professors.

The study also highlights that despite the credit surge, default rates did not rise, showing that UPI-enabled digital transaction data helped lenders expand responsibly. In order to ensure greater financial inclusion, the RBI last week decided to permit small financial banks (SFBs) to also extend pre-sanctioned credit lines through the UPI.

The authors said the success of UPI can be replicated in other countries as well and India can play a leading role in helping them adopt the fintech system.

"Within a short span, UPI led to exponential penetration of digital payments across India and is used at all levels from street vendors to large shopping malls

Since its launch in 2016, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has transformed financial access in India, enabling 300 million individuals and 50 million merchants to perform seamless digital transactions, according to a study by IIM and ISB professors. By October 2023, 75 per cent of all retail digital payments in India were through UPI.

"Credit line on UPI has the potential to make available low-ticket, low-tenor products to 'new-to-credit' customers. SFBs leverage a high-tech, low-cost model to reach the last mile customer and can play an enabling role in expanding the reach of credit on UPI," the RBI said. "It is, therefore, proposed to permit SFBs to extend pre-sanctioned credit lines through the UPI. Necessary guidelines will be issued shortly," the RBI statement added.

FII buying reaches ₹ 22,765cr in Dec

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Dec 14: Foreign institutional investors' (FIIs) buying continued through Indian stock exchanges this month to reach ₹14,435 crore (till December 13) as economic growth stayed resilient.



The total buy figure from the FIIs - including the exchange buying and buying through the 'primary market and others category' - stood at ₹22,765 crore (till December 13), as per the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) data. FIIs turning buyers in December after relentless selling in October and November has contributed to the recovery in the market from the November lows, experts said Saturday. FII buying has triggered a rally in largecaps, particularly in banking and IT sectors. According to Vipul Bhowar, Senior Director-Listed Investments, Waterfield Advisors, the recent rally in the Indian

market has been driven by positive political developments, a recovery in corporate stocks, increased foreign investments - both in primary and secondary markets and broad sector participation. Historical data shows that the Nifty index has closed higher in 71 per cent of Decem-

ber since 2000, with significant gains noted in 2023 and 2020. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) enhanced liquidity by lowering the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR), likely boosting market sentiment. Additionally, consumer price index (CPI) inflation dropped to 5.48 per cent in November from 6.21 per cent in October, enhancing investor confidence and raising hopes for potential monetary policy easing by the RBI.

Buy on dips strategy working well

Mumbai: The surge in the Indian stock market Friday helped the Indian benchmark indices end the week on a positive note. A strong 2,000-point rebound from the lows suggests that the buy-on-dips strategy is working well in the market, experts said Saturday. "With inflation coming within the RBI's tolerance level and an expectation of further ease in food prices on account of seasonal corrections in vegetable prices, it could build up the expectation for ease in monetary policy in February," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. On the last trading session this week, Nifty witnessed a sharp recovery of more than 2 per cent from day's low, rebounding from a significant dip earlier in the session, to close with gains of 220 points at 24,768 (+0.9 per cent). Buying in FMCG, IT and banking stocks supported the recovery, even as broader market sentiment remained cautious. "The intraday sell-off in Indian equities followed weakness across Asian markets, which posted steep losses amid a stronger dollar, rising US Treasury yields and continued skepticism over China's economic revival," said Siddhartha Khemka from Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd. On Friday, Sensex was up 843.16 points or 1.04 per cent, at 82,133.12. During the session, BSE's benchmark made an intra-day high of 82,213 after recovering from a low of 80,082.

Going forward, easing monetary policy from central banks could help by lowering borrowing costs. Favourable conditions and positive investor sentiment have supported recent market movements. More domestic institutional and retail money are likely to move into the largecap banking segment. IT is another segment which is likely to do well and attract more FII buying, said experts, adding that this is a clear change in FII strategy in India and it can be argued that the stage of relentless FII selling is over.

Sebi mulls facilitating algo trading for retail investors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 14: Capital markets regulator Sebi Friday proposed facilitating the participation of retail investors in algorithmic trading (algo trading), which provides advantages of faster order execution and improved liquidity. The proposal, if implemented, is expected to fill the void for retail investors who want to trade using algos with adequate safeguards.

Z1 Apartments celebrates Winterfest 2024



Bhubaneswar: Z1 Apartments, one of the largest residential complexes with 1,200 apartments across two phases, celebrated the much-anticipated Winterfest 2024. This annual event, a vibrant celebration of sports, culture, and community spirit, spanned six weeks and culminated in a grand carnival December 14. The Winterfest showcased a diverse array of competitions, including dance, music, table tennis, lawn tennis, badminton, and fun-filled activities like sack races and lemon-and-spoon races. Events were thoughtfully organized across multiple age categories, welcoming everyone from toddlers to senior citizens. A special highlight was the enthusiastic participation of the complex's security and housekeeping staff, exemplifying the spirit of inclusivity and camaraderie. The carnival was based on "Alice in Wonderland" theme with the entire complex decked up like a wonderland. The opening ceremony was graced by Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo, who highlighted the significance of communities like Z1 Apartments in promoting social security and interpersonal connections amidst the rapid pace of urban life. Joining him were esteemed dignitaries former Chief Secretary Asit Kumar Tripathy and Priyadarshi Mishra, adding prestige to the event. Winterfest 2024 was a resounding success, leaving residents with cherished memories and strengthening the bonds of the Z1 community.

To rival SpaceX's Starship, ULA eyes Vulcan rocket upgrade

REUTERS

Orlando, Dec 14: Boeing and Lockheed Martin's joint rocket venture, United Launch Alliance (ULA), plans to upgrade a version of its Vulcan rocket to challenge SpaceX's Starship in the low Earth orbit satellite launch market, the company's CEO said. ULA wants to develop a Vulcan model tailored to the increasingly lucrative low Earth orbit (LEO) market, mainly due to SpaceX launching thousands of satellites there for its Starlink Internet service. "We have recently completed a big trade study for what we want to have to be competitive in a future LEO market," ULA's CEO Tory Bruno told Reuters on the sidelines of a military space conference in Orlando. "And we've selected a modification to Vulcan which gives

us significantly more mass to LEO and puts us in a competitive range." ULA's Vulcan rocket, powered by engines from Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin, made its first two launches this year and is designed primarily to meet the demands of Pentagon missions into various orbits. Among the options ULA drew up for an LEO-optimized version, Bruno said, were a "Vulcan Heavy," or three Vulcan core boosters strapped together. He also said there were "other Vulcan configurations that are pretty unique, that have propulsion in unusual places". Though SpaceX's Starship is primarily designed for crewed missions to the moon and Mars, the company plans to use it to accelerate its deployment of huge batches of Starlink satellites into low Earth orbit. That has put pressure on



SpaceX's rivals to match Starship's capabilities as other firms like Amazon scramble to build competing satellite networks, driving demand for big launchers. ULA expects to finish development of the variant by the time he believes Musk's

dicted. Musk has said he wants to roughly double the power of Starship and refine the rocket's ability to quickly return to land in giant mechanical arms, indicating SpaceX is anywhere between several months to over a year from flying LEO Starlink satellites. ULA has several Vulcan missions booked with Amazon to deploy its Kuiper internet satellites into space, making the rocket an important part of Amazon's strategy to challenge Starlink. Amazon has also booked launches with other rockets as part of a record 2022 multi-launch agreement. SpaceX has launched six Starship test flights to space from its Starbase rocket campus in south Texas, displaying its dramatic test-to-failure ethos involving successive upgrades and incremental testing

milestones before locking in a commercial-grade design. Other companies, including ULA, will not launch a new rocket until its design is finalized. ULA is aiming to fly eight Vulcan missions next year and 12 missions with Atlas V, Vulcan's retiring predecessor. Vulcan starts at a launch price of roughly \$110 million - slightly over the base price of a SpaceX Falcon 9 - and has a book order of roughly 70 missions including its Amazon missions, adding urgency to get the rocket flying routinely. ULA, formed in a 2006 merger of Boeing and Lockheed's space launch programs, has been up for sale for over a year, drawing interest from Sierra Nevada Corp's space unit Sierra Space and Bezos' Blue Origin, Reuters has previously reported. Bruno has declined to comment on acquisition talks.

RAIN PLAYS SPOILSPORT

Australian openers start well, reach 28/0 on rain-curtailed day one

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brisbane, Dec 14: Local hero Usman Khawaja and young Nathan McSweeney displayed sound defensive technique against Jasprit Bumrah but persistent rain played havoc with the opening day of the third Test, allowing only 13.2 overs of play in which Australia scored 28 for no loss against India, here Saturday.

The gloomy weather didn't allow any action after the rain-curtailed first session. The weather in Brisbane indicates a start-stop game throughout the next four days.

Khawaja (19 batting, 47 balls) and McSweeney (4 batting, 33 balls) traded aggression with caution but the senior left-hander still got a couple of boundaries when Mohammed Siraj pitched it short.

While India skipper Rohit Sharma would be happy that Australia didn't score way too many runs, his bowlers did not force the opposition openers to play more deliveries. A lot of deliveries were left from length.

Just when it seemed that Indian attack was getting into its groove, heavens opened up, putting brakes on the bowling momentum.

Bumrah (0/8 in 6 overs) bowled his least potent opening spell of the series so far.

Despite overcast conditions and enough bounce on offer, he didn't bowl too many wicket-taking deliveries in that six-over first spell while Siraj (0/13 in 4 overs) was guilty of



Kohli's new milestone



Star India batter Virat Kohli Saturday achieved yet another milestone in his illustrious career when he took the field against Australia on Day 1 of the 3rd Test at the Gabba in Brisbane. Kohli became only the second player to feature in 100 or more international games against Australia, joining the legendary Sachin Tendulkar in the elite list. In his 24-year-long career, Tendulkar played 110 matches against Australia. As far as Kohli's record against Australia is concerned, he has played 28 Tests, 49 ODIs and 23 T20Is, scoring 5326 runs in 117 innings at an average of 50.24 including 127 centuries and 27 half-centuries.

Full refund for spectators

Spectators who left the Gabba frustrated Saturday will have something to cheer about as they will receive full refunds from Cricket Australia (CA) after only 13.2 overs could be bowled on the opening day of the third Test. The fans, who made it to the venue, will benefit due to a rule that entitles them to get a full refund for tickets when less than 15 overs are bowled during a day's play. This means CA was just 10 balls away from potentially saving itself more than Australian 1 million in refunds. Cricket Australia said that 30,145 fans would receive full refunds since less than 15 overs were completed. The sport's governing body in the country has insurance to cover losses caused by bad weather.

occasionally pitching it short.

In case of Bumrah, he rightly pitched it up but there was very little hint of swing on offer due to high humidity and only on few occasions he was able to square up Khawaja while coming round the wicket.

The lines that they bowled, drifted towards the leg-side more often than not.

With not many probing questions asked, the first 25 minutes before the steady drizzle

stopped proceedings saw Australia reach 19 for no loss.

While McSweeney defended dourly, Khawaja did pull Siraj for a boundary before the break and added one more after play resumed.

Before the first break, even Bumrah pitched more deliveries back of length, allowing the batters to leave them easily, trusting the bounce of the surface.

Siraj was removed after a

three-over initial spell. It was Akash Deep (0/2 in 3.2 overs), who looked good first up, keeping the ball on the off-stump channel with his stock delivery that would dart in to put batters in uncomfortable positions.

During the hour's play, the highlight was how Khawaja dealt with Bumrah's first spell. The second rain break came just when Akash and Siraj had started pitching the ball further up, using the angles well.

'CROWN PRINCE OF CHESS' AICF chief Narang applauds Gukesh

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 14: The All-India Chess Federation (AICF) president Nitin Narang while congratulating D Gukesh on becoming the youngest-ever World Chess Champion has highlighted the role of the expert team he has assembled for helping him achieve success.

The 18-year-old Gukesh defeated China's Ding Liren in the 14th and final game of the 2024 World Chess Championship Match at Resort World Sentosa in Singapore Thursday to become the 18th World Champion in the history of the sport. He also became the second Indian after five-time World Champion Viswanathan Anand to win the title.

Gukesh broke the four-decade-old record of chess legend Garry Kasparov, who won the title in 1985 at the age of 22 years, 6 months, and 27 days.

On Saturday, AICF President Nitin Narang congratulated Gukesh on this achievement and said, "Gukesh's victory is not just a milestone in his career but also inscribes India's name in golden letters in the history of chess. Throughout the tournament, he displayed exceptional focus and patience, which is truly inspiring. Gukesh has emerged as a role model for the youth of today."

"After the 'King of Chess,' Viswanathan Anand, it would not be wrong to call Gukesh the 'Crown Prince of Chess.' Today, Gukesh has proven himself to be the Abhimanyu of chess,



In the true sense, with Gukesh's victory, the 2.0 chapter of chess in India has begun, one that will witness many new records being added. Early signs of this shift in global chess were evident at the beginning of 2024, as India's time was clearly approaching

NITIN NARANG | PRESIDENT, AICF

breaking through his opponent's defences with the right moves at the right time. In the truest sense, Gukesh has reaped the rewards of his ten years of hard work," Narang said in his note issued Saturday.

The AICF President gave credit to the strong team of experts Gukesh had assembled this year which helped him become the youngest winner of the Candidates Tournament and then the youngest-ever champion.

SHORT TAKES

Historic bronze in Tqball

New Delhi: Two Indian players recently made their way into the unique sport of Tqball and made a colossal mark in the sport while representing the country. Anas Baig and Declan Gonsalves recently took part in the 2024 Tqball World Championships and delivered over expectations as their performance wowed the fans. While the Indian team missed out on the gold race, Gonsalves and Baig clinched third place in the championship tournament and secured a medal for India in the doubles category. It is also the first-ever medal for the country in the game of Tqball.

Pak's pacer Amir retires

Karachi: Controversial Pakistan left-arm pacer Mohammad Amir bid adieu to international cricket Saturday, months after coming out of retirement to play in the T20 World Cup. Amir, who was banned from cricket for five years between 2010 and 2015 on spot-fixing charges and was briefly jailed for his crime, had retired from all forms of international cricket in 2020. However, he changed his mind and returned to play in T20 World Cup earlier this year.

Proteas bag T20 series

Centurion: South Africa won a bilateral Twenty20 series for the first time in more than two years when it chased down Pakistan's 206. Opener Reeza Hendricks' maiden T20 century, 117 off 63 balls, drove the Proteas to 210-3 with three balls to spare. Pakistan's 206-5 was braced by an equally brilliant unbeaten 98 off 57 by opener Saim Ayub, who was desperately unlucky not to notch his maiden T20 century. South Africa won the series 2-0 with a game to spare for its first T20 series victory since August 2022.

Eves defeat Japan to enter Junior Asia Cup hockey final

INDIA DEFEAT JAPAN 3-1, TO MEET CHINA IN WOMEN'S JUNIOR ASIA CUP HOCKEY FINAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Muscat, Dec 14: Defending champions India asserted their dominance with a 3-1 victory over Japan to secure a place in the final of the Women's Junior Asia Cup hockey tournament here Saturday.

Mumtaz Khan (4th), Sakshi Rana (5th), Deepika (13th) were on target in the first quarter, while Niko Maruyama scored a consolation goal for Japan in the 23rd minute.

It was a one-way traffic for the Jyoti Singh-led India in the opening quarter after Sunelita Toppo foiled Japan's drag-flick opportunity by making a quick run to intercept a threatening ball in the second minute of play.

India took the lead two minutes later by capitalising on a defensive error. A move from the right flank saw the Japanese defenders and goalkeeper advance to intercept the forwards, but the ball was quickly relayed to an unmarked Mumtaz Khan, who deftly pushed it into an empty goal.

A minute later Sakshi Rana was on target, scoring another field goal to put the defending champions 2-0 up. India's relentless attacks saw the midfield stitch another splendid move in the seventh minute but the forwards fumbled inside the circle.

India seemed to have learnt a lesson from their loss to Chi-



na in a group game, as they shifted gears quickly to launch counterattacks and catch the opponents off-guard. With two minutes remaining in the first quarter, India earned a penalty stroke, which Deepika converted to make it 3-0.

Japan were more resolute in the second quarter as they broke into the rival circle on a few occasions but were thwarted by a stout defence.

Japanese goalkeeper Saito Miaki made a brilliant save to deny India their fourth goal in the 22nd minute and then pulled off another superb rescue act to thwart the rivals' effort from a penalty corner.

The Japanese finally got their much-deserved opening goal on the counter to reduce the margin in the 23rd minute before com-

ing close to unnerving India at the fag end of the second quarter. However, India too continued to make frequent forays into the rival half, mostly from the right flank but the Japanese defence frustrated them with swift clearance as the teams went into half-time with the defending champions leading 3-1.

Rattled by Japan's fight-back in the second quarter, India were more cautious after the break, which saw their defence being tested in the 34th and 42nd minute.

In the other semifinal, China thrashed last edition's runners-up South Korea 4-1. Feng Qingmiao (6th), Wang Lihang (24th), Lei Jiajing (40th) and captain Tan Jizhuang (53rd) scored for China, while for Korea, Park Seoyeon pulled one back in the 40th minute.

Tanvi, Tharun enter Odisha Masters finals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Dec 14: India's Tanvi Sharma and Tharun Manneppalli kept alive their hopes of maiden Super 100 crowns, advancing to the women's and men's singles finals with contrasting victories at the Odisha Masters Super 100 badminton tournament here Saturday.

The 15-year-old Tanvi, who claimed the Bonn International title earlier this year, defeated compatriot Shriyanshi Valishetty 21-19, 21-19 in a hard-fought semifinal. She will face Chinese qualifier Cai Yan Yan, who recently won the Guwahati Masters title, in the final.

In the men's singles, Tharun, runner-up at the Senior National Championships, overcame, beat sixth seed Sathish Kumar Karunakaran 12-21, 21-19, 21-12 in another all-Indian semifinal. He will take on compatriot Rithvik Sanjeevi Satish Kumar, who dispatched eighth seed Thai player Panitchaphon Teer-



aratsakul 21-17, 21-14 in just 34 minutes, to secure his spot in the final.

Disappointment in doubles India's doubles pairs, however, had a disappointing day in the semifinals.

In the mixed doubles, second seeds Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde put up a valiant fight but narrowly lost to Singapore's sixth seeds Hee Yong Kai Terry and Jin Yu Jia 14-21, 21-18, 19-21.

In the women's doubles, the sixth-seeded duo of Gayatri



Rawat and Mansa Rawat fell to Japan's Nanako Hara and Riko Kiyose 17-21, 14-21.

Fourth seeds Ashwini Bhat and Shikha Gautam's impressive campaign also ended in a tough 7-21, 24-22, 17-21 loss to China's Keng Shu Liang and Wang Ting Ge. The men's doubles pair of Pruthvi Krishnamurthy Roy and Sai Pratheek endured a heartbreaking 21-16, 19-21, 20-22 defeat against Japan's Kakeru Kumagai and Hiroki Nishi in another closely contested semifinal.

ODISHA OPEN CHESS FESTIVAL FROM TODAY

BHUBANESWAR: The City is set to host the Odisha Open Chess Festival from December 15 to 22, uniting over 700 players from over 20 countries. With the participation of more than 70 International Masters and Grandmasters, this event promises to be a battleground of strategy and brilliance.

Organised by the All Odisha Chess Association (AOCA), the Odisha Open upholds the state's legacy as the sports capital of India. This landmark event

owes its success to Abinash Samal and the Empreo Group, who have been instrumental in elevating chess in the state. Their commitment extends beyond this tournament, with a vision to nurture chess at the grassroots level by promoting it in schools and colleges across Odisha. Through initiatives like the Odisha Open, the AOCA and its patrons are paving the way for a brighter future for chess in India.

Women in Blue face West Indies in T20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Navi Mumbai, Dec 14: Her poor leadership under constant scanner, a beleaguered Indian captain Harmanpreet Kaur will need to quickly pick up pieces from the Australia series debacle as hosts take on West Indies in the opening game of the three-match WT20I series starting here Sunday.

India have won each of their last eight T20Is against the West Indies in the shortest format since November 2019.

But to maintain this dominating run, India will have to dig deep from rapidly depleting reservoirs of both resources and confidence to keep the ship afloat.

It has not been a smooth ride for the Indian skipper whose questionable selection calls during the Australia ODI series left everyone wondering as to how long the national selectors will persist with her despite Smriti Mandhana well and truly ready to take over the mantle.

This is India's first T20 series after the inglorious T20 World Cup exit where the only consolation was a hard-earned win against Pakistan.

India after that won an ODI series against New Zealand at home and were blanked by Australia during the subsequent 50 over series Down Under.

Chopra's T-shirt inducted into WA's heritage collection

THE JAVELIN THROWER BECAME INDIA'S FIRST OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST IN ATHLETICS WHEN HE CLINCHED THE TOP PODIUM FINISH AT THE TOKYO GAMES IN 2021, HAS DONATED THE COMPETITION T-SHIRT HE WORE AT THE PARIS GAMES THIS YEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Monaco, Dec 14: Star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra is among 23 athletes whose competition artefacts have been inducted into the World Athletics Heritage Collection, currently on display in the online 3D platform of the Museum of World Athletics (MOWA).

Chopra, who became India's first Olympic gold medallist in athletics when he clinched the top podium finish at the Tokyo Games in 2021, has donated the competition t-shirt he wore at

the Paris Games this year.

With his second round throw of 89.45m, Chopra secured the silver medal in Paris behind Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who created an Olympic record with a 92.97m effort.

Besides Chopra, Ukraine's Yaroslava Mahuchikh, the World Athletics (WA) women's field event athlete of the year, and her fellow Paris Olympic medallist Thea LaFond are among the athletes whose competition artefacts have been inducted into the heritage collection.

WA president Sebastian Coe lauded the athletes for donat-

ing their competition gear and medals.

"Keeping our Olympic collection up to date, we are proud to be announcing donations from a trio of Paris 2024 medallists: Yaroslava Mahuchikh (high jump), Thea LaFond (triple jump) and Neeraj Chopra. Thank you to the athletes who have so kindly donated their competition clothing, shoes and even medals to our museum's collection in 2024," said Coe in a statement.

"This year we have received historic Olympic-winning items from two icons of the 1960s, Wyomia Tyus and Billy Mills, and

from 1980 Olympic 100m champion Allan Wells, plus the 2000 and 2008 Olympic heptathlon gold medallists, respectively Denise Lewis and Natalia Dobrynska. With world record setting shoes and singlets from Filbert Bayi (middle-distance runner), David Rudisha (middle-distance) and Devynne Charlton (hurdler) also among this year's inductions, it is worth reminding ourselves that there would be no collection, no Museum of World Athletics, without the athletes selflessly supporting our heritage programme. Thank you for your generosity."

