

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
Emotions always pose obstacles. When things go wrong, life seems dispirited. But Ganesha advises you to look at the positive side of things, like the food on the dining table or the clothes in your wardrobe, and you will thank God for granting you a blessed life.

TAURUS
This day, Ganesha sees you acting crabby and irritable. You'll be itching to pick up fights and quarrels, getting into arguments and confrontations. Act resolutely and firmly and keep your wild moods and snappiness in check. Later in the day, you will again become cheerful and carefree. This is a good day for sorting out difficulties and problems that could be coming in the way of a blissful married life.

GEMINI
You need to carefully weigh the pros and cons of the decisions you take today, as well as proceed on all matters with caution. You will attempt to dispose off matters casually today. You will worry more about your own interests in the later half of the day. You need to stop worrying about others and secure your own interests first, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You will decide to expose certain unreasonable conventions and traditions, and you will be able to do so successfully, predicts Ganesha. In the afternoon, you may incur the displeasure of your bosses.

LEO
Call it a day with a positive difference, but today, you are more keen and inclined towards entertainment and relaxation. Everybody needs a break from the routine, says Ganesha, so make the most of today. On a more personal note, you are required to make subtle moves as there are hints that you may want to give your love life a more definite turn, like a marriage.

VIRGO
You obviously provide all the basic necessities of life to your family, but today you will remain preoccupied with the thoughts of how to provide them some luxurious things too. At work, try to adopt a new line of thought. Ganesha says in the evening you may treat your dear ones to dinner at a luxurious restaurant.

LIBRA
Ganesha sure hopes that you packed your kit right and are ready to take on anything, as today promises to be an action-packed day. Most of this action might concentrate around your family members. Towards the afternoon, you may begin to feel weighed down by household responsibilities.

SCORPIO
Your stars are shining bright today. Relationships prove lucky for you as you are blessed to have great family and friends. Sort out differences if any and vote for harmony. In short, you are on a winning spree today and shall glorify the path you take up.

SAGITTARIUS
You may just strike the notes of your beloved's heart today. Your presence and presents will make them realise how much you do indeed love them. Expect a trip to posh showrooms and designer shops to buy them expensive gifts. But don't neglect work or your long-term goals, advises Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
Faced with an unrelenting boss? Give him that million-dollar smile you flash to woo others, it might just work today. The first half of the day will be good for those looking to start a new venture, says Ganesha. But don't expect miracles to happen; you will not achieve success overnight and certainly not if you don't have your actions well planned.

AQUARIUS
You will understand the importance of friends in your life, and you will go an extra mile to get back in touch with them. Your communication skills will help you get through the door at work, and everybody, even your competitors will be appreciate your talents. This skill will work wonders at home, as you will please your sweetheart with your eloquence, feels Ganesha.

PISCES
Today being a slightly risky day for, tread cautiously when it comes to financial dealings. Read the fine print and thoroughly thrash out the nitty-gritty's of any contracts you commit to. Any mistakes made now could come back later and extract a heavy price. There are also chances of conflict with your partner or spouse. Be on your guard, says Ganesha.



JEREMY ALLEN WHITE JOINS THE MANDALORIAN & GROGU

Jeremy Allen White, known for *The Bear*, has been cast in the upcoming *Star Wars* movie. The actor will portray Rotta the Hutt in *The Mandalorian & Grogu*. The movie, directed by Jon Favreau, will hit theatres in May, 2026

CHRIS EVANS SET TO RETURN IN AVENGERS: DOOMSDAY

Chris Evans is all set to make a comeback to the Marvel Cinematic Universe with *Avengers: Doomsday*, joining Robert Downey Jr. as Doctor Doom. Directed by the Russo Brothers, Joe and Anthony Russo, the film is slated for release May 1, 2026.



Taapsee slays in black

Mumbai: Looking every-inch like royalty, Taapsee Pannu gave a “Rani” twist with her black and gold outfit.

Taapsee took to Instagram, where she posted a string of pictures of herself dressed in a black and gold one shoulder dress. The actress completed her look with drop diamond earrings, dewy make-up and her hair was tied neatly into a bun.

“Giving a Rani like twist to the evening,” Taapsee captioned the post.

The actress mentioned about her popular character Rani from the film *Haseen Dillruba* franchise, where she played the role of Rani Kashyap.

Talking about *Haseen Dillruba*, a romantic thriller film directed by Vinil Mathew. It also stars Vikrant Massey and Harshvardhan Rane. The film premiered in July 2021. It follows a woman, who is suspected of killing her husband and narrates an interesting story about her marriage while investigating police officers looking for clues to arrest her.

The actress will next be seen in *Woh Ladki Hain Kahaan?* with actor Pratik Gandhi. The upcoming project is a comedy-drama that brings Taapsee and Pratik together for the first time.

She was last seen in *Khel Khel Mein* directed by Muddassar Aziz. Based on the 2016 Italian film *Perfect Strangers*.

Shweta's future goals

New Delhi: What's common between Ali Fazal, Vijay Varma and Vicky Kaushal? It's *Mirzapur* star Shweta Tripathi, who counts the three actors among her favourite co-stars with whom acting becomes a sport.

“My favourites are Ali Fazal, Vicky, Jitu, Vijay Varma and it's fun because acting is actually like playing a sport. Whatever you get, it's fun to do the batting or bowling,” she told in an interview.

Going forward, Tripathi said she doesn't want to restrict her career to a certain country or language.

“My goal is film festivals, I love it because during *Masaan*, when we went for the first time... (Hollywood stars like) Jake Gyllenhaal and Zoe Kazan were there... The energy there is so much fun. I want to travel the world with my stories. We feel like the perception of India is of one type, I want to change that.”

Tripathi, who is set to venture into production, said she one day hopes to do a film like *Jojo Rabbit*, director Taika Waititi's anti-hate satire.

Set against the backdrop of World War II, the 2019 film follows a young German boy called Jojo who finds out that his mother is hiding a Jewish girl in their home.



I'm a lone warrior: Kartik

Mumbai: Actor Kartik Aaryan, who has surprised audience with his amazing performances in *Chandu Champion* and *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*, recently shared the challenges in carving his own path to stardom. Despite his success, Kartik admitted that he 'won't get any support from the film industry.'

In an interview, the actor said, “I'm a lone warrior. This house that you see today — I bought it with my own money. I've fought like crazy to reach here. And it's not done yet—I know for a fact that I won't get any industry support for the road ahead.

And I've come to terms with the fact that despite delivering a monster hit in *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*, nobody will rally behind me. I still have to hustle for my next film.”

The Shehzada actor

went on to accept that there are many people who are waiting for him to fail, he added “Yes—and I feel everyone can sense that. There are some wonderful people I've met over my journey, but the main section—and it's a large section—I will never win over. And I don't have any desire to win them over. The only people I want to win over are my audience. Because they're the only ones supporting me. That's the only validation I need”.

Kartik will next be seen in *Pati Patni Aur Woh 2*, *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweetie 2* and *Aashiqui 3*.



How Khaike Paan Banaras Wala became a part of 'Don'

Satyen Kapu in supporting roles.

She wrote: “If you work in a team industry and are blessed with a bit of luck, you may get to play a small part in creating enduring creative and cultural magic.”

The actress said that the song was rejected for the 1973 film “*Banarasi Babu*” starring Dev Anand for being too “frivolous”.

“Rumour has it that ‘*Khaike Paan Banaraswala*’ wasn't originally meant to be included in *Don*. It was created for Dev Anand's *Banarasi Babu*, but had been rejected as too frivolous.”

She then shared that “*Don*” director Chandra Barot had completed his action thriller



starring Amitabh Bachchan in a double-role, but found that the second half of the film needed some relief from the intensity of the plot line.

“And so, long after the film had wrapped, the cast and crew arrived at Mehboob Studio to shoot a new video.”

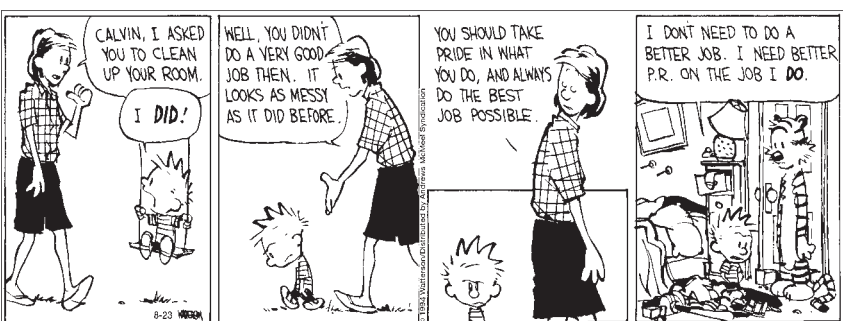
“With crackling, innuendo-laden lyrics, an irresistible beat, Kishore Kumar on vocals, and a spirited performance by Mr. Bachchan, ‘*Khaike Paan Banaraswala*’ emerged as a surprise hit.”

She added: “It took several days to shoot this number, and what I remember most acutely is the quantity of paan that Mr. Bachchan consumed and the sheer energy he brought to set.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBES

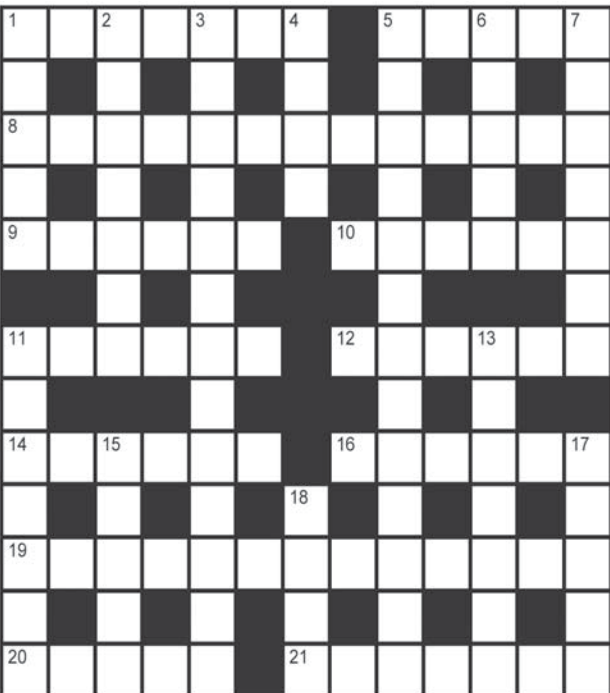


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Shortfall
- 5 Sherpa's home
- 8 Youth, maybe (6,7)
- 9 Drawing
- 10 Caerphilly, e.g.
- 11 Main course
- 12 Murder weapon, at times
- 14 Papeete locale

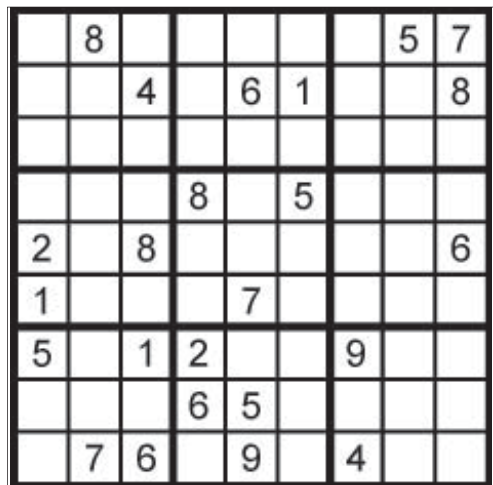
Down

- 16 Tree part
- 19 Plant food?
- 20 Some stadium features
- 21 Equestrian gear
- 1 Office stations
- 2 Surrender
- 3 Scrupulous

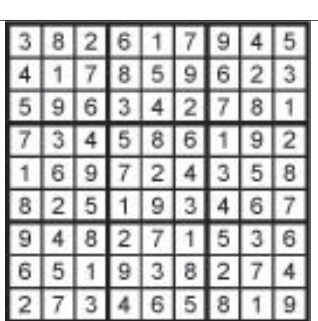
- 4 Meal in a shell
- 5 Vicinity
- 6 Sri Lanka export
- 7 Light source
- 11 Inveigled
- 13 Timepiece
- 15 Sheikh's bevy
- 17 Scoundrels
- 18 Bad day for Caesar

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

downtown

UTKARSH ODISHA - MAKE IN ODISHA CONCLAVE 2025

Singapore to be 1st country partner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam will visit Odisha in January, and his country is the first overseas partner of the state's investor summit 'Make in Odisha Conclave 2025'.

Simon Wong, the High Commissioner of Singapore in India, said this to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, after meeting him at state secretariat Lok Seva Bhawan here Tuesday, an official release said.

Singapore is one of the largest sources of FDI in the country. India too has a strong presence in Singapore through its companies in IT, banking and manufacturing.

With shared values of democracy, innovation and sustainable development, both nations are keen to strengthen ties for mutual growth and regional stability, the release said.

As Singapore and India are celebrating 60 years of diplomatic relationship, both na-



CM Mohan Charan Majhi receives Simon Wong, the High Commissioner of Singapore in India, at Lok Seva Bhawan, Tuesday

tions enjoy deep historical, cultural and economic ties. This relationship has now evolved into a strategic partnership encompassing areas like trade, defence, technology and cultural exchange. To commemorate this bilateral tie, the Singapore president is visiting India next month.

During his visit to that county in November, Majhi had requested the Singapore government to arrange a visit of the president to Odisha too.

Accepting the invitation of the CM, the president has decided to come to Odisha during his India visit, the release said.

Accepting the invitation of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam has decided to come to Odisha during his India visit in January

Wong said that Singapore would be the first country partner for 'Utkarsh Odisha- Make in Odisha Conclave 2025'.

Odisha is the only state he chose to visit next month and the highlight of his tour will be the state's potential in petrochemicals and green energy.

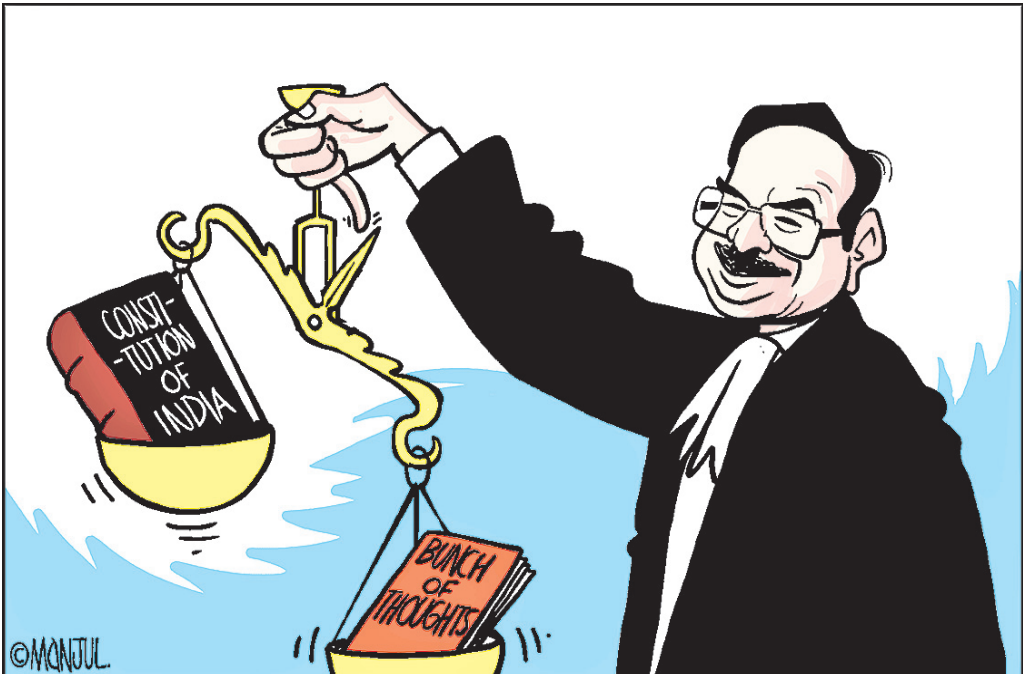
The CM said the relationship is now poised for the next level in various sectors such as petrochemicals, urban planning, tourism, renewable energy and skill development.

OVER-SEAS

Guests from various countries attend the International Beach and Ocean Sports Carnival which was inaugurated in Puri Tuesday



POLITICKLE by MANJUL



House din over 'non-payment' of salaries to Mission Shakti staffers



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The Assembly Tuesday witnessed a noisy scene as Opposition BJD and Congress members held protests inside the House over alleged non-payment of salaries to around 60,000 women supporting staffers under the 'Mission Shakti' scheme.

As soon as the Question Hour began at 10.30 am, BJD members trooped into the well of the House and shouted slogans, demanding justice for the women supporting staffers, who have been protesting outside the Assembly since Monday, alleging that they did not receive salary for the last six months.

The Opposition Congress also joined the BJD's protest and extended its support to the agitating women.

Leader of Opposition and former chief minister Naveen Patnaik, who was present in the House, alleged, "The BJP government is conspiring to

BJP government is conspiring to stop the salaries of the 'Mission Shakti' staffers. I strongly condemn this. There are more than 70 lakh women employees in the scheme

NAVEEN PATNAIK | LEADER OF OPPOSITION

The issue has been discussed in the Assembly. The state government will take appropriate decisions keeping in view the interest of women

PRAVATI PARIDA | DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

stop the salaries of the 'Mission Shakti' staffers. I strongly condemn this. There are more than 70 lakh women employees in the scheme."

Patnaik also said his party has all along supported the 'Mission Shakti' women and will continue to do so.

Deputy Chief Minister Pravat Parida, who is also in

charge of the Women and Child Welfare and Mission Shakti Department said the agitating women should not be misled by anyone.

"The issue has been discussed in the Assembly. The state government will take appropriate decisions keeping in view the interest of women," Parida said outside the Assembly.

Opposition chief whip Pramila Mallik, while leading the BJD MLAs in the protest inside the House, said, "These people (BJP) claim that they respect women. However, more than 50,000 women had to spend the night under the open sky in cold and rain demanding their remuneration from the government."

BJP members, however, defended the government and blamed the Opposition BJD for alleged non-payment of salaries to supporting staff of the 'Mission Shakti' scheme.

As the din continued in the well of the House, Speaker Surama Padhy said that she had not received the notice for a discussion through motion on the issue of non-payment of salaries to 60,000 'Mission Shakti' women supporting staff.

"You (Opposition) were allowed to speak on the subject Monday during Zero Hour. I request all of you to return to your seats and cooperate with me to run the House," the Speaker said.

Unable to run the House, Padhy adjourned the proceedings till 11.30 am.

Woman clerk held for accepting bribe

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The Vigilance department Tuesday arrested a junior woman clerk, a day after she was caught accepting a bribe of ₹20,000 at the office of the sub-register here, an official statement said.

Debjani Kar, a junior clerk in the office of the sub-registrar of Khandagiri has been placed under arrest by the Vigilance department and will be forwarded to the court, the statement said.

"She was arrested for demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹20,000 from a person for the execution of a registered sale deed (RSD) of subplot on," it said.

She was detained Monday and arrested Tuesday, the statement said. A case was registered against her.

The Vigilance department officials said that as per the trap plan, the complainant went to give the bribe money and the Vigilance officials caught her red-handed while accepting it in her office room.

The entire bribe money was recovered from Kar's possession and seized in the presence of witnesses. Following the trap, simultaneous searches were conducted at the woman's residence at Old Town and her office room. This apart, the anti-corruption Vigilance officials also recovered ₹15 lakh cash from the sub-registrar office.

The office staffers were being examined, and the source of huge cash was being verified, officials added.

Rally to protest 'atrocities' on Hindus in Bangladesh



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: A massive rally was held in Bhubaneswar Tuesday to protest the alleged atrocities on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh.

The rally, organised by Hindu Suraksha Manch (HSM), began at the Exhibition Ground and ended at Lower PMG with hundreds of people participating.

With placards and posters in their hands, the demonstrators raised slogans urging all Hindus across the world to come together for the protection of the minorities in Bangladesh.

"Following the political unrest, Hindus are being attacked every day in Bangladesh. Their houses and businesses are being set on fire and they need our support. So, we have organised this protest rally to express our solidarity and create aware-

People of Bangladesh should not forget that India helped them to get independence in 1971

JAYAKRUSHNA PRUSTY | HSM CONVENOR

ness among the Hindu people in Odisha," said HSM convenor Jayakrushna Prusty.

"Not only in Bhubaneswar, several such protests are being held in different districts of the state," he said.

Prusty said the people of Bangladesh should not forget that India helped them to get independence in 1971.

Following the rally, representatives of HSM submitted a memorandum addressed to President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UN Secretary-General António Guterres to Odisha Governor Raghubar Das, seeking protection of minority Hindus in Bangladesh.

'Metro rail project set to complete by 2027'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The state government has set a target to complete the Bhubaneswar Metro Rail Project by 2027, Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra told the Assembly Tuesday.

The minister said the Bhubaneswar Metro Rail Project will cover a length of 26 km, and there will be a total of 20 stations in the first phase.

According to Mahapatra, the first phase of metro rail project in the City will cover the distance from Bhubaneswar Airport to Trisulia Square. As many as 20 stations will be set up at prominent places like Bhubaneswar Airport, Capital Hospital, Bapuji Nagar, Bhubaneswar Railway Station, Ram Mandir, Vani Vihar, Acharya Vihar, Jayadev Vihar, Xavier, Rail Sadan, District Centre, Damana, Patia, KIIT, Nandan Vihar, Raghunathpur, Nandankanan, Baranga, Phulapokhari and Trisulia square.

While a grant of ₹210 crore was sanctioned for the project in 2023-24, another grant of ₹1,000 crore has been approved in 2024-25. A target has been set to complete the project by 2027, he said.

The ambitious development project aims to transform urban transport in Bhubaneswar, tackling traffic congestion and enhancing connectivity across key areas of the City. According to sources, the metro trains will run on railway tracks 13 metres above the ground level.



SEEKING SUPPORT: Members of Odisha Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy Association (ODMDA) stage a peaceful dharna at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, demanding effective steps from state and Central governments for treatment of the muscle wasting disease, and financial assistance to the affected families since there is no known cure for the disease. DMD disease is a rare degenerative disease which causes progressive muscle loss as the child grows up. The disease makes the child wheelchair bound as he/she attends the age of around 14 years

OP PHOTO

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The state has lost 857 elephants in the past 11 years, with electrocution being the key cause of unnatural death of the gentle giants, the Odisha Assembly was informed Tuesday.

Diseases, accidents, poaching and electrocution were some of the other reasons for elephant deaths in the state, Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia said in response to a query in the Assembly.

According to the statistics furnished by the minister, 149 elephants were electrocuted to death between 2014-15 and 2024-25 (till December 2) while poachers killed 30 elephants.

Diseases claimed the lives of the highest number of elephants (305) and natural reasons have been attributed as the cause of 229 elephant deaths.

The minister said that 29 elephants were killed after being hit by trains. Similarly, seven others died in road accidents and two by poisoning. The Forest and Environment department could not ascertain any reason behind the death of 90 jumbos. Further, 16 elephants died due to infighting, he said.



- Diseases claimed 305 elephants
- 229 jumbos died due to natural reasons
- 149 elephants perished due to electrocution
- Poachers killed 30 jumbos across the state

Ninety-three elephants died in 2018-19, the worst year in elephant deaths during the period. As many as 92 elephant deaths were reported in Odisha during 2022-23 whereas 54 pachyderms died in 2014-15, the lowest among these 11 years.

While 66 elephants died in the state during the financial year 2023-24, the figure is 67 till December 2 in the current financial year.

According to the latest elephant census conducted last month, 2,103 elephants were found in different forests of Odisha.

Man arrested for blackmailing woman

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The Nayapalli police Tuesday arrested a 33-year-old man for allegedly trying to extort money from a woman by threatening to make her intimate photos viral.

IIC Nayapalli, Satyaranjan Pradhan identified the accused as Santosh Kumar Sethi, a native of Ganjam, who works in Bhubaneswar. Pradhan said the woman met Sethi over a matrimonial site about a week ago, and after striking a rapport with him began communicating over phone calls and video chats. During their interactions, Sethi secretly recorded some intimate moments which he later used to extort the woman.

Police said Sethi started demanding ₹50,000 from the woman since the last four days by threatening her to make their intimate photos viral if she refused to budge. On Monday, he reportedly stalked the woman before confronting her when she was about to board an auto-rickshaw near Jaydev Vihar. When she protested, Sethi forcibly travelled with her up to the latter's residence, Pradhan added.

The woman filed a complaint with the Nayapalli police Tuesday, following which the cops arrested Sethi and booked him under Sections 308(2), 351(4), and 78(2) of the BNS Act. He was subsequently produced before a court for remand.

LAUNCH OF SHAKTI APPLICATION

‘Significant move towards combating gender violence’



Odisha now stands as the first state in India to harness blockchain technology in its efforts to improve support systems for survivors of GBV

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The launch of the Shakti Application marks a significant and progressive step toward combating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Odisha. Deputy Chief Minister Pravat

The initiative driven by the department of Women and Child Development (WCD), in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), leverages cutting-edge blockchain technology to deliver a trauma-informed, efficient and dignified support system for survivors.

Odisha now stands as the first state in India to harness blockchain technology in its efforts

guards the privacy of survivors but also promotes a more empathetic and respectful approach. Through the app, coordination between shelter homes, One Stop Centres, and both district and state officials is optimised, resulting in greater accountability and real-time monitoring. This interconnected network enhances the efficiency of responses, ensuring timely assistance and comprehensive care for survivors.

The App has already been piloted in five districts, where it received overwhelmingly positive feedback from survivors. Many users expressed that the app played a crucial role in restoring a sense of empowerment and dignity, as it simplified their interactions with support services and reduced the emotional toll of recounting their experiences multiple times.

The launch ceremony of Shakti also marked the conclusion of a powerful 16-day campaign against Gender-Based Violence, which spanned all 30 districts of the state. The campaign was characterised by its impactful and engaging activities, including street plays that educated and raised awareness about GBV.

It culminated in a symbolic gathering of 1,000 participants forming a Human Chain, an act that underscored Odisha’s collective dedication to ending violence against women and girls and supporting survivors in their path toward healing and justice.

to improve support systems for survivors of GBV.

The pioneering approach positions the state as a leader in adopting modern solutions for social challenges, redefining how services are delivered and managed in the realm of gender-based support.

Parida highlighted the government’s unwavering commitment to fostering a society that is free from violence and discrimination.

She stated, “As we prepare to scale this initiative statewide, we are not just enhancing processes—we are reimagining what it means to provide survivors with the dignity they deserve throughout their journey to recovery.”

The App has been developed with a primary focus on streamlining the support process for survivors. By employing blockchain, the app securely stores and manages survivor data, reducing the need for repeated recounting of traumatic experiences.

The feature not only safe-



EQUAL RIGHTS: Students take part in an awareness rally organised by the Bharat Scouts and Guides on the occasion of World Human Rights Day in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

MoU inked for Odisha Maritime Perspective Plan

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: The Directorate of Ports & Inland Water Transport signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Technology Centre for Ports, Waterways, and Coasts (NTCPWC), IIT Madras, Tuesday. The agreement focuses on preparing the Odisha Maritime Perspective Plan (OMPP).

The agreement was signed in the presence of Commerce and Transport department principal secretary Usha Padhee, who highlighted the significance of the initiative and encouraged active participation from all stakeholders during the kick-off meeting.

The meeting aimed to collect feedback and insights from var-



ious stakeholders, including representatives from government departments, transport and logistics sectors, maritime experts, port operators, and

Boat Owners’ Associations. The discussions focused on addressing grassroots-level challenges, concerns, and needs.

Dean of NTCPWC, IIT Ma-

dras Kantharaj Murali presented an outline of the proposed OMPP through a detailed presentation. Following the presentation, attendees were invited to share their perspectives and suggestions, which were documented by NTCPWC officials for further analysis.

To ensure comprehensive stakeholder input, feedback forms and presentation copies were distributed to all participants. Members were requested to submit their suggestions and insights to NTCPWC for incorporation into the final OMPP.

The initiative marks a significant step toward developing a sustainable maritime infrastructure in Odisha, addressing key logistical and transportation challenges.

Sainik School to organise 8th mini marathon, OBA meet

Bhubaneswar: Sainik School Bhubaneswar is going to organise the 8th Sainik School-OMC mini marathon December 15, Principal Colonel Balu Bharath announced here recently. Over 1,200 participants, including 600 cadets, students from Sahodaya and government schools, alumni, and their families, are expected to join the event. The marathon will feature categories for students from classes VI to VIII, IX to XII, a girls’ category, and the Old Boys’ Association of Sainik School (OBEANS). The senior category will cover a 10 km route starting and ending at the school’s Gandhi ground, passing through landmarks such as Mancheswar Road, OMFED, and Apollo Hospital. The juniors will run a shorter route covering Mancheswar Road, OMFED Square, and Gajapati Nagar. The event will be flagged off by the chief guest Commodore Mahesh Rahangdale, DDG of NCC Directorate Odisha, along with Colonel Bharath, Madhusudan Padhi, and event coordinator Amitabh Swain. Prizes will be distributed by the Rahangdale. Separately, the 53rd Annual Meet of the Old Boys’ Association (OBA) will take place December 22. Alumni from various sectors, including defense, civil services, and corporate industries, are expected to attend with their families. The 1999 batch will celebrate their Silver Jubilee, while the 1974 batch marks their Golden Jubilee.

MARKET WATCH			
INDEX	VARIATION		
SENSEX	81,510.05	▲	1.59
NIFTY	24,610.05	▼	8.95
DOLLAR	85.95	▲	0.12
EURO	89.58	▼	0.20
GOLD	₹78,134	▲	₹648
SILVER	₹95,350	▲	₹153

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	27.8°	26.8°
Min Temp	21.3°	19.5°
Humidity	93%	96
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST		
FOG/MIST in the morning and mainly clear sky later.		

‘Majority ignorant of human rights’

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Orissa High Court Chief Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh Tuesday said that majority of the people do not know about human rights and existence of institutions such as national and state human right commissions.

Singh was speaking at the Human Rights Day celebration programme organised by the Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) here Tuesday.

“Majority of the people don’t know what human rights are.



They are not at all aware that any of their rights has been violated. If the rights have been violated, they aren’t aware of the existence of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and OHRC,” he said.

Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan, in his address,

said, “Even after the completion of 75 years of independence, social stigma like untouchability and gender inequality exist. We have many temples where the low caste people are not allowed.”

Though several initiatives including the right to education

Double-decker electric buses soon in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Double-decker electric buses are likely to be introduced in the state soon as part of the housing and urban development department’s plan to revamp the City’s public transport scenario. “The buses will be introduced in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and in Puri initially,” Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra said Tuesday. “We have floated a tender to procure the double-decker electric buses. The vehicles will be



introduced on an experimental basis and based on the outcome, we will decide on expanding the service to other parts of the state,” Mahapatra added.

The minister stated that the double-decker buses will be environment-friendly since they will be electric vehicles

in design. “Initially, we are planning to run the buses from Bhubaneswar to Cuttack and to Puri,” the minister added.

While other cities have phased out such buses, the vehicle has recently been introduced with the EV design in Mumbai, Kolkata, Thiruvananthapuram and Nagpur.

Mahapatra reasoned that the double-decker buses can carry a larger number of passengers, thereby, reducing the number of vehicles on the roads. “This will further help reduce traffic congestion,” he said.

Odisha scales up rice fallow mgmt project

Bhubaneswar: The department of Agriculture and Farmers’ Empowerment signed an MoU with IIRI, ICRIASAT, ICARDA, MSSRF, and AFC India Ltd. to expand the Rice Fallow Management project. The initiative, launched in 2022-23, aims to utilize 16 lakh hectares of underused rice fallow land by cultivating pulses and oilseeds, targeting 4.55 lakh hectares this year. The project integrates bio-based inputs, IPM devices, and soil health improvement with dolomitic limestone for acidic areas. Monitoring includes geo-tagging and Aadhaar-linked farm registries. Deputy CM Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo highlighted the collaboration’s role in benefiting nearly 5 lakh farmers statewide.

Odisha to provide homestay options for visiting NRIs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: As Odisha is gearing up to host the three-day Pravasi Bharatiya Divas from January 8 to be attended by around 7,000 NRIs, the state government is making homestay arrangements for the visitors apart from hotel accommodations.

The homestay owners have been provided training in guest management and safety protocols.

“It is a big opportunity for the people of Odisha to host the NRIs. We will also make homestay arrangements for

them apart from hotel accommodation,” Deputy Chief Minister Pravat

Parida said. Odisha’s hospitality would be on the like of “Atithi Deva Bhabo” (Guest is God), she said.

In order to facilitate the visitors to book their accommodation, Parida said the Odisha Tourism department has blocked 200 hotels with more than 3,700 rooms in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Puri.

The families owning homestays, who would host the visiting NRIs, have been provided basic training in guest management and safety protocols, a

PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS

senior official said.

The aim is to provide the Indian diaspora with the experience of Odisha’s atmosphere as well as the culture and tradition in Odia homes, the official said.

This apart, in view of cyber frauds in hotel bookings, the state government has advised the delegates to book their accommodation through a dedicated website ‘pbdindia.gov.in.’

The state tourism department has shared the names and other details of hotels with the Ministry of Home Affairs for the

safety of delegates.

The department has also identified as many as 30 tourist destinations in Bhubaneswar, Puri, Konark, Chilika-Satapada and Raghurajpur crafts village where the NRIs may pay visits, the official said.

The PBD event began in 2003 and is being held in Odisha for the first time. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday reviewed the preparations for the programme.

Majhi said the cleanliness of Bhubaneswar should be of inter-

national standard. For this, he suggested that a special cleanliness campaign be conducted in the state capital.

All the roads in the City are being renovated, illuminated and decorated, while tourist places are being beautified.

According to a statement issued by the CMO, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is scheduled to attend the first day January 8, Prime Minister Narendra Modi January 9 and President Droupadi Murmu January 10.

The event will feature a Plenary Session on topics such as ‘Unraveling India’s Best Kept

Secret’ and ‘Odisha – the Land of Opportunities’.

During the PBD events, the state has planned as many as 10 festivals in Bhubaneswar in January. These are Raja Rani Music Festival (January 7-11), Muktaswar Dance Festival (January 7-11), International Odissi Dance Festival (January 7-11), Tribal Dance and Folk Art Festival (January 7-11), Adivasi Mela (Tribal Fair) (January 5-15), Chilika Bird Festival (January 6-12), Flower Show (January 7-11), Food Fest (January 8-10) and Night Flea Market (January 8-10).



Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar will host the grand finale of the software edition of Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2024 December 11 and 12, an official informed.

The event marks the seventh edition of the flagship programme organised by the Ministry of Education, Government of India.

Twenty-six teams from across the country, each comprising 5-6 members, will compete to develop innovative solutions for five critical problem statements. These include smart resource conservation in home appliances and software tools to track drug trafficking via social media platforms like Telegram, WhatsApp, and Instagram. The teams will be evaluated by experts from organisations such as NDRF, NCB, the Ministry of Education’s Innovation Cell, Godrej, and NALCO.

“IIT Bhubaneswar is excited to host the Smart India Hackathon 2024 as one of the 51 nodal centers in the country,” said institute director Shreepad Karmalkar.

By hosting the event, IIT Bhubaneswar reaffirms its commitment to promote collaboration among academia, industry, and government, while nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset,” he added.

IIT Bhubaneswar has undertaken significant initiatives, including a ₹130 crore Research and Entrepreneurship Park and the 100-CUBE startups programme, aiming to establish 100 startups worth ₹100 crore each by 2036. The institute also offers courses such as ‘Introduction to Research and Entrepreneurship’ for PhD and MS students and a minor degree in ‘Innovation and Product Development’ for B.Tech students.

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What is God after all? An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden.

SRI AUROBINDO

Listless INDIAlliance

D

ays after TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee voiced her discontent with the functioning of the INDIA bloc, indicating her intent to lead the alliance, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad Yadav today has asserted that the West Bengal Chief Minister should be allowed to lead the Opposition alliance. Yadav categorically stated that Banerjee should be allowed to lead the INDIA bloc, indicating the unacceptability of the present situation with the Congress and Rahul Gandhi as leading the pack. When reporters questioned about the Congress' reluctance to accept her as the leader of the Opposition coalition, Yadav bluntly responded, "The Congress' opposition will not make any difference. She should be allowed to lead the INDIA bloc."

In response to Yadav's remarks, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut suggested that his party is willing to consider the possibility of a leader from outside the Congress heading the INDIA bloc. "Still, if the INDIA bloc is to be strengthened again, everyone wishes to discuss (issues related to) leadership, who can give time to the alliance....(whether it could be) Mamata Banerjee, Uddhav Thackeray, Lalu Prasad, Sharad Pawar or Akhilesh Yadav," Raut said.

He mentioned that even Naveen Patnaik, the chief of the Biju Janata Dal, which has always collaborated with the BJP, could join INDIA although in political circles the acceptance for Patnaik is very low.

Earlier, Mamata Banerjee had expressed her confidence in managing both her duties as the leader of the Opposition front and her position as Chief Minister of West Bengal simultaneously. "I had formed the INDIA bloc, now it is up to those leading the front to manage it. If they can't run the show, what can I do? I would just say that everyone needs to be taken along," Banerjee had said in an interview to a Bengali news channel.

Last week, the Samajwadi Party (SP) announced its exit from the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra following a statement on 6 December from a Shiv Sena (UBT) leader praising the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The UBT faction now probably realises that it has lost the baton of Hindutva to the BJP in Maharashtra and therefore continuance under Rahul Gandhi's leadership can only result in further decimation of its Hindu party image.

The Congress leadership has utterly failed to retain faith of the masses. This has been happening even when people are desperately looking for an acceptable alternative. A sizeable percentage of fence sitters, often the class that is decisive during voting, had turned in favour of Rahul during his first padayatra, Bharat Jodo. Many known faces had openly joined his walk. That group started viewing him as a person with a mind of his own even when he was faltering and confusing. This was not limited to urban elites only but spread to rural parts of the country also. However, Rahul's immediate trip abroad and his speeches condemning India and the manner most systems were functioning in this country again pushed him to the corner of ridicule. People laughed that Sam could easily waylay him without his understanding. Such inabilities demonstrate how Rahul Gandhi has been on a Snake & Ladder board forever. He goes up two flights and comes down four of them.

A gamble to change leadership and bring in a new, strong and non compromising face might be the secret key the INDIAlliance has been looking for since inception.

FOCUS

ECONOMY

NEED FOR MORE FAIR PAY

At some point the issue of fair compensation is not only important for sustaining purchasing power and consumer spending growth, but also one of equity and justice

The Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India, Anantha Nageswaran, while speaking to corporate leaders at an industry chamber event, cautioned that employee compensation growth was poor while India Inc was enjoying a record profit growth. After COVID, the share of post-tax profit of companies listed on the stock exchange has risen to 5.2% of GDP, which is a figure only seen during the boom times of 2007-08. This is the highest ratio in the last 15 years. For Nifty 500 companies, this ratio is 4.8%. It has risen quite steeply in the past three years alone. At the same time employee compensation share has been coming down. Employment growth in the corporate or formal sector has been poor, and within the employed category, wage or salary growth is nothing compared to the growth in profits. As per a report from Motilal Oswal Financial Services, the growth in profit of Nifty-500 companies over 2020 to 2024 was 34.5% per year, whereas the GDP was growing only at 10.1%.

By comparison the growth in salaries was not even commensurate with the inflation rate. Economists Amit Basole and Zico Dasgupta report that from the third quarter of 2021-22 to the second quarter of 2023-24 the average real GDP growth rate was 6.7% whereas regular wages stagnated (minus 0.07% growth). Their findings are based on the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data published by the government every three months. This PLFS data will soon be available on monthly basis.

The divergence in growth rate of GDP and wages was evident even before the pandemic. For instance, in the 11 quarters from 2017-18 till just before COVID, GDP was growing at 4.8%, but regular wages growth rate was a mere 0.21%. Basole and Dasgupta point out that from 2017 till

2024 regular wages, together with earnings of self-employed persons, growth is just 1%. A recent report from Citibank says that for the first three quarters of 2024 the growth in inflation adjusted wage cost for listed Indian companies has remained below 2%, as against a ten-year average of 4.4%. Thus, it is half of long-term growth.

Thus, the CEA's caution to leaders of corporate India is based on a longer-term phenomenon of declining share of wage and salary income as compared to profit share. The CEA was exhorting industry leaders to do their share to ensure the growth boom was shared more equitably.

The CEA's cautionary comments can be read alongside the surprising GDP growth data for the second quarter of this year. At 5.4% it was much lower than expectations. Some of the slowdown is being attributed to slower capital spending growth by the government due to elections. But surely the bigger contributor is slowing down of consumer spending, especially in urban areas. Prominent FMCG companies like Nestle, Hindustan Lever and others reported stagnant or falling sales during the July to September quarter. Of course, urban consumers might be shifting to other less

expensive brands, or reducing quantities purchased and also discretionary spending. But the FMCG company fortunes are a bellwether indicator of urban spending. It is clear that the urban consumer is facing adverse macro factors, with inflation eating into purchasing power, and wage stagnation keeping income growth limited.

The implication of all this is that aggregate GDP growth, expected to revive to above 6.5% by next year, and continuing robust growth of company profits must somehow become more inclusive. In the classical textbook analysis, we look at the share of labour and capital in the growing national income. If both shares keep pace with national income growth that is good. But a declining share of labour income has adverse consequences for consumer spending, and also income inequality. One could argue that the same workers could also own company shares via mutual funds and their savings. But then dividend income is still a minuscule part of household income for most workers. So, wage and salary income is their main source.

There can be no diktat that India Inc should increase the compensation share to its workers. Besides it is re-

lated to the larger issue of the changing pattern of employment itself. There has been an increase in contract workers and also gig workers (who cannot be even considered employees). The strong emergence of Artificial Intelligence means many companies and businesses are probably downsizing and resorting to more automation. At the same time India Inc often complains about the acute shortage of skilled and semi-skilled workers. The share of the workforce engaged in agriculture has actually increased during the pandemic phase, thanks to reverse migration and industrial downsizing. The share of workers in industry has stagnated for far too long. And so have wages. As per a report of WorkIndia, more than 57% of blue-collar jobs in India pay less than Rs 20,000 a month. That is probably justified because of low average productivity. We are thus caught in a cycle of low productivity, low skills, low pay and low employment. Which causes industrial and services growth to be more capital intensive, which in turn increases the skill shortage, and the weird coexistence of high unemployment and scarcity of skilled manpower.

At some point the issue of fair compensation is not only important for sustaining purchasing power and consumer spending growth, but also one of equity and justice. The medium-term solution is extensive government support for skilling via on-the-job training and providing incentives to employers, large scale internships, student loans and relaxing the onerous burden of labour laws which have thwarted growth in employment. The CEA is to be applauded for bringing the issue of fair compensation to the forefront.

The writer is a noted Pune-based economist.

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WISDOM CORNER

“God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. Yet his shadow still looms. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives; who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves?”

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

“The only objects of practical reason are therefore those of good and evil. For by the former is meant an object necessarily desired according to a principle of reason; by the latter one necessarily shunned, also according to a principle of reason.

IMMANUEL KANT

“The discovery of truth is prevented more effectively, not by the false appearance things present and which mislead into error, not directly by weakness of the reasoning powers, but by preconceived opinion, by prejudice.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1936:** Abdication of King Edward VIII. Edward VIII, failing to win acceptance for his desire to marry American divorcée Wallis Warfield Simpson, became the only British sovereign to voluntarily resign the crown, his abdication formally approved this day in 1936.
- **1941:** Adolf Hitler declared that Germany was at war with the United States following the Japanese attacks on the U.S., British, and Dutch positions in the Pacific and in East Asia.
- **1946:** UNICEF—a United Nations program devoted to improving the health, nutrition, education, and general welfare of children—was established.
- **1972:** Apollo 17 astronauts Eugene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt became the last humans to walk on the Moon.
- **1978:** Nearly \$6 million in cash and jewels was stolen from the air cargo building of the German airline Lufthansa at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City; at the time, the Lufthansa heist, as it became known, was the largest-ever cash theft in the United States.
- **1981:** American boxer Muhammad Ali fought his last professional bout, losing to Trevor Berbick in a decision.
- **1997:** Kyoto Protocol adopted. The Protocol is a part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, an international treaty that calls for the restriction of greenhouse gasses by the signatories. The United States signed the treaty but did not ratify it.
- **1998:** The Judiciary Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives recommended three articles of impeachment against President Bill Clinton, to which would be added a fourth article the following day, for actions taken in connection with his affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

IN JEST THIS

Eating chocolate may reduce diabetes risk

YOU DON'T WANT TO TURN INTO A CHOCOHOLIC. JUST A FEW PIECES EACH DAY ARE ENOUGH TO DERIVE ANY HEALTH BENEFITS

When my wife and I invite friends for dinner, they often show up bearing small gifts. The most common gifts are wine and chocolate. I really appreciate these gifts, because they show how much our friends care about our health.

Are wine and chocolate really good for you? It depends on which scientist manages to bamboozle you.

Well, they're not really trying to deceive you — they just happen to come up with contradictory results from their research studies. According to one group of scientists, a glass of wine each day will make you healthier. According to another group, a glass of wine will make your doctor wealthier.

In general, however, the health risks associated with drinking alcohol greatly outweigh any benefits, especially since many people are unable to control themselves. Even if drinking a small glass of wine may offer minimal benefits, these benefits quickly disap-

pear if you can't stop drinking. You are better off drinking a glass of carrot juice, because in the history of the world, there have been only a few cases of carrot juice addiction. And all of them involved rabbits.

Moderation is also advisable when it comes to chocolate. You don't want to turn into a chocoholic. Just a few pieces each day are enough to derive any health benefits. One of these benefits, according to a new study from Harvard University, is diabetes prevention.

The study, published in The BMJ, a medical journal, suggests that consuming dark chocolate may reduce your risk of getting Type 2 diabetes by 21 per cent. As you're probably aware, Indians and other South Asians have a higher risk for Type 2 diabetes than other ethnic groups. Diabetes runs in my family and I've been diagnosed as pre-diabetic, so the Harvard study makes me wonder why my doctor hasn't prescribed more chocolate for me. Unfortunately, I

prefer milk chocolate to dark chocolate.

"Our findings suggest that not all chocolate is created equal," said the study's lead author Binkai Liu. "For anyone who loves chocolate, this is a reminder that making small choices, like choosing dark chocolate over milk chocolate, can make a positive difference to their health."

To conduct their study, the researchers looked at health data collected over 30-plus years from 192,000 adult participants. They found that people who consumed at least five servings of dark chocolate per week showed a 21 per cent lower risk of Type 2 diabetes. People who consumed milk chocolate did not get the same benefit. Instead, they just got fat. (Weight gain was connected to increased consumption of milk chocolate, but not dark chocolate.)

"We were surprised by the clear split between dark and milk chocolate's impact on diabetes risk and long-term weight management," said

the study's co-author Qi Sun. "Even though dark and milk chocolate have similar levels of calories and saturated fat, it appears that the rich polyphenols in dark chocolate might offset the effects of saturated fat and sugar on weight gain and diabetes."

The participants in the study were mostly white, so the results may not apply to all races. Indeed, if white people benefit from eating dark chocolate, perhaps dark people can benefit from eating white chocolate. (Now you know why I'm not a scientist.)

It's worth noting that previous studies have shown a correlation (not causation) between eating dark chocolate and a reduced risk for cardiovascular disease. Chocolate consumption has also been linked to lower blood pressure and improved blood cholesterol.

So if you happen to be coming to my house for dinner, please don't bring wine. Bring chocolate instead — the darker, the better.

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

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Phase of uncertainty

Sir, The manner in which Islamic rebels conquered Syria's capital Damascus and forced President Bashar al-Assad to flee the country is not only surprising, but it may also mark the start of a new era of uncertainty for West Asia as a whole. The excitement with which Syrians welcomed the opposition soldiers demonstrates that Assad has become even more unpopular. His disfavoured stemmed from his brutal governance. Syria has been dealing with insecurity and upheaval for nearly 13 years. Iran has suffered a significant setback with the seizure of Syria by rebel forces. It is doubtful that Iran will sit in peace after the demise of the administration it sponsored in Syria. Even if the rebels win Syria without massive violence, the chances of durable peace are slim because Turkey wants to administer the country its way. Although India's economic ties with Syria have not grown significantly, both countries have joined forces in the battle against terror. Not only that, Assad has always supported India over the Kashmir issue. It remains to be seen what kind and how much Syria's posture will alter considering the new circumstances. Indian-Turkish relations have recently improved. While Turkey's stand on Kashmir has softened, India has not attempted to block Turkey's membership into BRICS.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

Political gimmick

Sir, By invoking Article 67(B) of the Constitution, the Opposition INDIA bloc is planning to table a no-confidence motion against Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, the main reason being dissatisfaction with his handling of Upper House proceedings. The Opposition has accused him of being partisan, interrupting their speeches, not allowing debate opportunities and showing favouritism towards the ruling party. The Opposition claims that for this they have the support of 70 MPs from Congress, TMC, AAP, SP, and other bloc members. It has to be noted that this comes amid rising voices of discontent within the INDIA bloc over Rahul Gandhi's leadership. When the alliance itself needs immediate remedy for its disunity the no-confidence motion is nothing but a gimmick to divert the attention of the public.

M Pradyu, KANNUR

FAMILY IN PERIL

Joicy awaits word on kin in Russia's war zone



Stranded somewhere in a war-torn region of Ukraine now under Russian control, Binil and his relative Jain TK lost their mobile phones and other valuables, further compounding their hardships, and have been seeking help from authorities for their return

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thrissur (Kerala), Dec 10: Binil TB, an electrician from Thrissur, left for Russia seven months ago, hoping to secure a better job and higher wages while his wife was expecting their first child. Sadly, he couldn't share the joy of his son's birth four months ago.

Stranded somewhere in a war-torn region of Ukraine now under Russian control, Binil and his relative Jain TK lost their mobile phones and other valuables, further compounding their hardships, and have been seeking help from authorities for their return, according to relatives.

Joicy John, a resident of Kurancheri near Wadakkanchery in Thrissur district, and wife of Binil, has been knocking on the doors of the authorities in an attempt to bring them back home.

A mother to a four-month-old baby boy, Joicy has been overwhelmed with anxiety after receiving Binil's last audio message Monday.

In the message, he revealed that Russian authorities had ordered him and his cousin-in-law, Jain, to report to the war

Joicy has approached the state government, Union Minister and Thrissur MP Suresh Gopi, all other MPs from the state and the Indian Embassy in Moscow, to ensure the early release of her husband and relative from the war zone

front. Her worries have deepened with reports that Binil is currently in an area under relentless airstrikes.

Joicy has approached the state government, Union Minister and Thrissur MP Suresh Gopi, all other MPs from the state and the Indian Embassy in Moscow, to ensure the early release of her husband and relative from the war zone.

"The embassy officials have said they are awaiting communication from the Russian authorities," Joicy said, expressing frustration over the month-long wait.

She added that the last message from Binil mentioned they had been instructed to move to the war front.

"I have lost all peace of mind as it has been since seven months they had left," Joicy, a nurse at a private medical college in Thrissur, currently on maternity leave, told PTI.

Binil (32) and Jain (27) are ITI mechanical diploma holders and had gone to Russia April 4, hoping to work as electricians, and plumbers in Russia.

However, upon arrival, their Indian passports were confiscated and subsequently they were deployed to the war zone as part of the Russian Military Support Service, Joicy said.

Initially, Binil and his relative were promised a monthly salary of ₹2 lakh in Russia, but they have not received any payment so far.

In June, during a camp relocation, Binil lost his luggage and mobile phone, cutting off contact with his family for two months. It was only in the last week of August that he managed to call home using Wi-Fi at a camp and update them on his situation.

"They lost their ATM cards and other important documents. It's unclear if they are receiving any salary, but they haven't been able to send a single rupee home so far," said Joicy, who is now caring for their newborn baby and Binil's elderly parents.

204 projects face actions under GRAP

Authorities took action against 775 illegal dumping sites, sealed 259 diesel generators, and addressed more than 24,000 complaints during the peak implementation period

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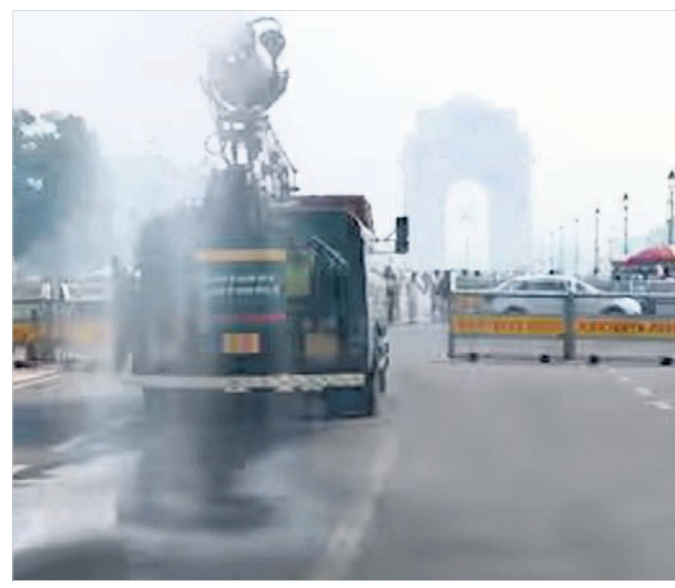
New Delhi, Dec 10: A total of 260 sites were flagged for dust violations, 204 faced Environmental Clearance action, and 35 received closure orders under the Graded Response Action Plan to combat Delhi's hazardous air quality, officials said Tuesday.

Authorities took action against 775 illegal dumping sites, sealed 259 diesel generators, and addressed more than 24,000 complaints during the peak implementation period, they said.

In their ongoing efforts to combat severe pollution levels, Delhi's environmental bodies have enforced stringent measures under various stages of the GRAP.

According to official data, in the construction and demolition (C&D) sector, 6,741 sites (=500 sqm) were inspected for compliance with dust mitigation norms, of which 260

DELHI POLLUTION



were found non-compliant and flagged. Environmental Clearance was imposed on 204 projects (=500 sqm), while 35 projects were issued closure orders, officials said.

Additionally, 974 inspections were carried out to identify illegal dumping sites, resulting in 775 actions taken against illegal dumpers. Furthermore, 31 challans were issued for violations related to municipal solid waste burning, and 246 complaints of open burning were addressed, the data revealed, they said.

Delhi's air quality reached alarming levels November 17, with the Air Quality Index

(AQI) touching 450, entering the severe-plus category for the first time this year.

In response, the Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region (CAQM) imposed Stage IV restrictions - the strictest level of action - under the GRAP.

These Stage IV restrictions came into effect on the morning of November 18, when AQI levels reached a hazardous 494, marking the city's second-worst air quality in six years.

From October 16 to December 7, significant measures were taken under the Road Dust Management initiative.

A total of 18,217 anti-smog guns were deployed to suppress dust particles, 13,163 water sprinklers were utilised to curb dust re-suspension on roads, and 4,416 mechanical road sweeping machines were operated extensively.

Additionally, 1,35,350 km of roads were mechanically swept to reduce particulate matter the data revealed.

In the industrial sector, 88 industrial units were physically inspected under GRAP Stage IV guidelines.

Compliance monitoring of Diesel Generator (DG) sets led to the inspections of 1,748 DG sets, with 259 of them sealed for violating environmental regulations.

In the hotel and restaurant sector, 570 inspections were conducted to ensure compliance with fuel type usage regulations, with 36 violations recorded.

The data also highlighted that 24,367 complaints were registered across various platforms, including the 311 App and Green Delhi App.

Of these, 5,839 complaints were successfully resolved, showcasing an active grievance redressal mechanism.

Additionally, 52 linear construction projects violating air pollution norms were identified and flagged, while 44 heaters were distributed to economically weaker sections to provide community support during the cold season, it added.



Police personnel help a devotee climbing the steps of the Sabarimala temple, in Pathanamthitta district, Kerala, Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024.

PTI Photo

Over 250 bird species spotted during annual winter count

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: The annual winter birdcount has highlighted the rich avian diversity of Delhi-NCR, recording over 254 bird species in a single day, including rare sightings like the Little Bunting, Eurasian Griffon, and Slender-billed Gull, organisers said Monday.

Organised by more than 15 teams of experienced birders, the Delhi Winter Birdcount 2024 emphasised the importance of preserving diverse habitats amid urbanisation.

According to the organisers, this year's count surpassed previous years' figures, when

the number of species typically ranged between 230 and 250.

Despite a delayed onset of winter impacting population sizes, the diversity of birdlife remains comparable or even better than in previous years.

Rare sightings added excitement to the event, with the Little Bunting getting recorded for the first time in the region. Other notable species included vagrant birds like the Eurasian Griffon and Slender-billed Gull, along with rare winter visitors such as the Jack Snipe, Greater Spotted Eagle, and Baillon's Crake.



Despite a delayed onset of winter impacting population sizes, the diversity of birdlife remains comparable or even better than in previous years

From tragedy to triumph, Shruti embarks on a new journey

Shruti lost nine of her relatives, including her parents and sibling, in the June 30 landslides in Chooralmala and her fiancé in a road accident later

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Wayanad (Kerala), Dec 10: Shruti, who lost her entire family in the Wayanad landslide disaster and later her fiancé in a road accident, began a new chapter of hope Monday by joining government service.

The state cabinet recently decided to provide a government job to the young woman, who had endured back-to-back tragedies with the loss of her loved ones.

As promised, she joined the Revenue Department as a clerk in the mountainous district.



Local political leaders accompanied Shruti to her designated office as she started her career.

Speaking to reporters later, she expressed heartfelt gratitude to the government and everyone who supported her during her difficult times.

"I am not naming anyone specifically. Everyone supported me thoroughly. I am sincerely thankful," Shruti said. She also mentioned that she

would surely continue her job despite facing health issues following the recent road accident in which she and her fiancé, Jensen, were involved.

Jensen (27), who had selflessly stood by Shruti after she lost her entire family in the devastating landslides, succumbed to his injuries in September.

Tragedy had struck Shruti July 30 when her family of nine, including her parents and sister, were killed in the landslides that devastated Chooralmala and Mundakkai villages in the Meppadi panchayat.

Jensen was her only support during those tragic times, to whom Shruti had been engaged June 2 after a 10-year-long courtship.

She also lost approximately ₹4 lakh in cash, around 15 sovereigns of gold, and her newly built home, which was washed away in the landslides that claimed over 200 lives.

Before starting her new role, Revenue Minister K Rajan called Shruti to extend his best wishes for her new assignment.

Later, in a Facebook post, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan reaffirmed the LDF government's commitment to supporting disaster victims and guiding them toward a hopeful future.

Shruti, who lost her loved ones in the Chooralmala-Mundakkai landslide disaster, joined the Revenue Department as an officer today, fulfilling the promise made to her by the government, the Chief Minister said.

The CM recalled the tragic loss of nine members of Shruti's family, including her parents and sister, in the landslide, and the subsequent death of her fiancé, Jensen, in an accident.

"The government had assured her that she would not be left alone. Today, that promise has been fulfilled as Shruti begins her new role," Vijayan stated in his Facebook post.

Delhi govt accepts DTC workers' demands

Chief Minister Atishi promised to hike salaries of Delhi Transport Corporation drivers and conductors, with a periodic revision in their dearness allowance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 10: Delhi Chief Minister Atishi announced Monday that all Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) drivers will be trained to operate electric buses as part of the city's plan to transition its entire bus fleet to electric vehicles.

She also assured that senior drivers, particularly assistant ticket inspectors, would be given priority for employment in the new electric bus fleet.

Addressing a press conference, Atishi stated that the Delhi government had agreed to several key demands made by DTC workers, who had recently gone on strike to protest their working conditions.

"DTC bus services play a crucial role in Delhi's transportation system. There are 4,500 contractual drivers and 17,850 contractual conductors in DTC. Recently, they went on strike.



An online form will be created so that all drivers can provide their details, and an online list will be released to make the process more transparent. The new policy aims to ensure that workers are assigned to depots nearer to their homes

ATISHI | CM, DELHI

We listened to their demands, which are absolutely justified. I want to thank them for ending the strike and responding to our appeal after two days of protests. We are working on addressing their demands," she said.

One of the primary issues raised by the workers was the transfer of female DTC employees

stationed at the Sarojini Nagar Pink Bus Depot.

Atishi said that the government had resolved this issue by transferring the workers back to their original depots, addressing a major point of contention that led to the strike. Another significant concern was the workers' request for postings closer to

their homes. Atishi explained that the Delhi government had introduced a new policy aimed at rationalising duty stations for drivers and conductors. "An online form will be created so that all drivers can provide their details, and an online list will be released to make the process more transparent," she said.

The new policy aims to ensure that workers are assigned to depots nearer to their homes, she added.

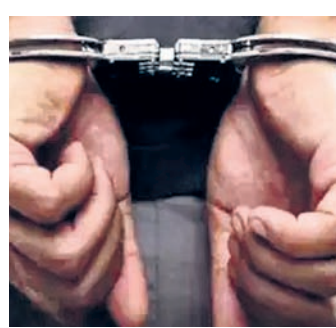
In response to the workers' demand for improved compensation, the Delhi government has given in-principle approval for a proposal to increase the salaries of contractual drivers and conductors, the CM said.

Kejriwal woos Delhi's auto drivers ahead of polls

New Delhi: In a bid to bolster grassroots support in the run-up to the Delhi Assembly polls, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal Tuesday announced five guarantees for the city's autorickshaw drivers, including a ₹10 lakh life insurance scheme. His other promises include ₹1 lakh assistance for the wedding of a daughter, ₹2,500 uniform allowance twice a year on Holi and Diwali, and free coaching for auto drivers' children to prepare for competitive exams.

Kejriwal made the announcement after breaking bread with the family members of auto driver Navneet in the Kondli constituency. He was accompanied by his wife Sunita Kejriwal. Sharing photos of the meeting on X, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said, "Arvind Kejriwal, the brother of Delhi's auto drivers, and his wife Sunita Kejriwal today visited the house of an auto driver brother, met his family and had food with them."

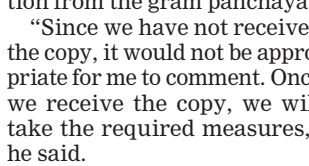
Emphasising AAP's commitment to the welfare of auto-rickshaw drivers, Kejriwal unveiled five guarantees that would be implemented if the party is re-elected to power. "I am announcing five guarantees for all auto-rickshaw drivers: Life insurance of up to ₹10 lakh, accident insurance of up to ₹5 lakh, ₹1 lakh assistance for the wedding of a daughter, ₹2,500 uniform allowance twice a year on Holi and Diwali, and free coaching for children to prepare for competitive exams."



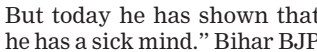
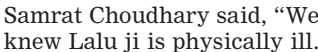
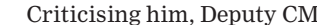
He made his Parliamentary debut in 1968 as a 'Socialist' MP and became a member of the fourth Lok Sabha. Krishna was elected to the fifth Lok Sabha too but preferred to return to state politics in 1972 where he was elected to the Legislative Council and inducted as Minister for Commerce, Industries and Parliamentary Affairs, a charge he held between 1972 and 1977.



The BJP and JDU leaders



The BJP and JDU leaders



The CM is all set to embark on the 'Mahila Samvad Yatra' from December 15 to review the progress of the government's 7-Resolves programme and feel the pulse of the people through interaction with women with an eye on next year's assembly polls.

of the day

quote

Our presidency (in the European Union) will be, among others, co-responsible for the shape of the political landscape, what will the situation look like probably during the negotiations that, perhaps — there are still question marks here — will begin in the winter of this year

DONALD TUSK | PM, POLAND

The national plan is not an empty promise but a genuine commitment to decisively tackle corruption. Corruption has undermined institutions, drained resources, and eroded public trust

DANIEL NOBOA | PRESIDENT, ECUADOR

The world can change drastically in a week. No one could predict the collapse of the Assad regime in that way

LLOYD AUSTIN | DEFENCE SECRETARY, US

SHORT TAKES

Trump picks Dhillon as AAG

Washington: US President-elect Donald Trump has nominated Indian-American Harmeet K Dhillon as Assistant Attorney General (AAG) for Civil Rights at the Department of Justice. “I am pleased to nominate Harmeet K Dhillon as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the US Department of Justice,” Trump announced Monday on Truth Social, a social media platform owned by him. Dhillon, a Sikh, is a graduate of Dartmouth College and the University of Virginia Law School, and has clerked in the US Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Pak’s ex-ISI chief indicted

Islamabad: In an unprecedented move, Pakistan’s former spymaster Lt Gen (retd.) Faiz Hameed has been indicted on multiple charges, including engaging in political activities, violating the Official Secrets Act, and misusing authority and government resources, the army said Tuesday. According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the military’s media wing, the process of Field General Court Martial (FGCM) was initiated against Hameed August 12, 2024. The former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief was charged under provisions of the Pakistan Army Act and “in first place Lt Gen Faiz Hameed (Retd) has been formally arraigned on charges of engaging in political activities, violations of Official Secret Act detrimental to safety and interest of the state, misuse of authority & government resources and causing wrongful loss to a person(s).”

Russia moves to delist Taliban as terrorist

Moscow: The lower house of the Russian parliament gave initial approval Tuesday to a long-discussed bill that would set the stage for Moscow to remove the designation of the Taliban in Afghanistan as a terrorist group. Under the bill passed by the State Duma in the first of three required readings, the official terrorist designation of an organisation could be suspended temporarily by a court. The legislation also needs to be approved by the upper house and signed by President Vladimir Putin to become law. The Taliban were put on Russia’s list of terrorist organisations in 2003, and any contact with such groups is punishable under Russian law. At the same time, Taliban delegations attended various forums hosted by Moscow.

Netanyahu testifies in corruption trial

It is the first time a sitting Israeli prime minister takes the stand as a criminal defendant, an embarrassing milestone for a leader who has tried to cultivate an image as a sophisticated and respected statesman

REUTERS

Tel Aviv, Dec 10: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took the witness stand for the first time Tuesday in his long-running corruption trial, saying he was being hounded for his hawkish security policies.

Netanyahu, 75, is Israel’s first sitting prime minister to be charged with a crime. He is testifying at the same time Israel is engaged in a war in Gaza and facing possible new threats posed by regional turmoil, including in Syria.

Last week judges ruled that Netanyahu, indicted in 2019, must testify three times a week, forcing the longtime Israeli leader to juggle between the courtroom and the war room at Israel’s Defence Ministry, minutes away from the courthouse.

The leader of the right-wing Likud party, Netanyahu assailed the Israeli media for what he called its leftist stance and accused journalists of having hounded him for years because his policies did not align with a push for a Palestinian state.

“I have been waiting for eight years for this moment to tell the truth,” Netanyahu told the three-judge court. “But I am also a prime minister. I am leading the country through a seven-front war. And I think the two can be done in parallel.”

Prosecutors accuse Netanyahu of granting regulatory favours worth around 1.8 billion shekels (about \$500 million) to

Netanyahu denies charges he sought favourable news coverage

Trial highlights divisions in Israeli public and politics

I have been waiting for eight years for this moment to tell the truth. But I am also a prime minister. I am leading the country through a seven-front war. And I think the two can be done in parallel

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | PM, ISRAEL

Bezeq Telecom Israel (BEZQ, TA) in return for positive coverage of himself and his wife Sara on a news website controlled by the company’s former chairman.

He is also accused of negotiating a deal with the owner of Israel’s Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper for better coverage in return for legislation to slow the growth of a rival paper.

Netanyahu denies the allegations against him and has pleaded not guilty. He stood rather than sat in the witness box throughout his morning testimony.

In lengthy replies, he portrayed himself as a staunch defender of Israel’s security, withstanding pressures from international powers and a hostile domestic media.

TRIAL IN UNDERGROUND COURTROOM

Netanyahu smiled confidently when he entered the Tel Aviv District Court around 10 a.m. (0800 GMT). The trial was moved from Jerusalem for undisclosed security reasons and convened in an underground courtroom.

Before Netanyahu took the stand, his lawyer Amit Hadad laid out for the judges what

Israeli warplanes pound Syria

Damascus: Israel carried out a wave of heavy airstrikes across Syria as its troops advanced deeper into the country, a Syrian Opposition war monitor said Tuesday. Israel denied its forces were advancing toward Damascus after they pushed into a buffer zone inside Syria following the overthrow of President Bashar Assad. Associated Press reporters in the capital heard heavy airstrikes overnight and into Tuesday on the city and its suburbs. Photographs circulating online showed destroyed missile launchers, helicopters and warplanes. There was no immediate comment from the insurgent groups — led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS — that have taken control of much of the country. Their lightning advance brought an end to the Assad family’s half-century rule after nearly 14 years of civil war. There are concerns over what comes next.

the defence maintains are fundamental flaws in the investigation. Prosecutors, Hadad said, “weren’t investigating a crime, they were going after a person.”

A few dozen protesters gathered outside the courthouse, some of them supporters and others demanding he do more to negotiate the release of some 100 hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza.

Xi rebuffs Trump’s threat over tariffs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Dec 10: Gearing up for Trump 2.0 era, Chinese President Xi Jinping Tuesday cautioned there will be no winner in a tariff or tech wars between China and the US and vowed that Beijing would firmly safeguard its interests.

“Tariff wars, trade wars and technology wars run counter to historical trends and economic laws, and there will be no winners,” Xi said while meeting the heads of 10 major international organisations, including the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organisation (WTO) here.

During the meeting, Xi stressed on China’s principles for engaging with the US, “China will always insist on focusing on its own affairs and resolutely safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests. Meanwhile, China’s determination to promote high-level opening up will not change,” he said, according to

the official media reports here.

Xi’s comments came in the backdrop of US President-elect Donald Trump’s remarks in an NBC interview that he “got along very well” with Chinese President Xi Jinping and that the two leaders had “communication as recently as this week.”

China did not confirm the conversations between Xi and Trump, who is set to take over power January 20.

During his election campaign, Trump had threatened to impose 60 per cent on Chinese exports to the US and also warned of imposing 10 per cent more tariffs if Beijing fails to curb fentanyl, the drug 50 times more potent than heroin and regarded as the root cause for addiction in the US.

China announced an investigation into US chipmaker Nvidia over suspected violations of the country’s anti-monopoly law Monday. The investigation is widely seen as retaliation for Washington’s latest curbs on the Chinese chip sector.



I will fight for Serbia and serve only my Serbian people and all other citizens of Serbia, I will never serve foreigners, those who seek to defeat, humiliate, and destroy Serbia

ALEKSANDAR VUCIC | PRESIDENT, SERBIA

SRI LANKA PREZ DISSANAYAKE TO VISIT INDIA FROM DEC 15-17

Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayake will undertake a two-day visit to India from December 15, in his first overseas visit after assuming office, it was announced Tuesday



France begins military withdrawal from Chad



REUTERS

Paris, Dec 10: France has started the withdrawal of its military from Chad with the departure of two warplanes that were based in the capital N’Djamena, the French army said, two weeks after Chad said it was ending its defence cooperation pact with Paris.

In a surprise move, the government of Chad - an ally of the West in the fight against Islamist militants in the region - ended the defence cooperation pact Nov. 28.

Terms and conditions of the withdrawal and whether any French troops will remain in the central African country altogether have yet to be agreed, but Tuesday the first Mirage warplanes returned to their base in eastern France.

“It marks the beginning of the return of French equipment stationed in N’Djamena,” Army spokesperson Colonel Guillaume Vernet said after two Mirage fighter jets left Chad.

France has already pulled its soldiers out of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger following military coups in those West African countries and spreading anti-French sentiment.

The departure from Chad will end decades of French military presence in the Sahel region and ends direct French military operations against Islamist militants there.

France still has about 1,000 troops in Chad. Vernet said a calendar to drawdown its operations would still take several weeks for the two countries to finalise.

There were no indications Paris received advance notice of Chad’s decision to end its defence cooperation although a French envoy to President Emmanuel Macron delivered a report last month containing proposals on how France could reduce its military presence in Chad, Gabon and Ivory Coast.

Rebel-backed figure takes charge as Syria’s interim PM



Mohammed al-Bashir, a figure little known across most of Syria who previously ran an administration in a small pocket of the northwest controlled by rebels would lead the interim authority until March 1

REUTERS

Damascus, Dec 10: - Syria’s new interim leader announced Tuesday he was taking charge of the country as caretaker prime minister with the backing of the former rebels who toppled President Bashar al-Assad three days ago.

In a brief address on state television, Mohammed al-Bashir, a figure little known across most of Syria who previously ran an administration in a small pocket of the northwest controlled by rebels, said he would lead the interim authority until March 1.

“Today we held a cabinet meeting that included a team from the Salvation government that was working in Idlib and its vicinity, and the government of the ousted regime,” he said. “The meeting was under the headline of transferring the files and institutions to caretake the government.”

In the Syrian capital, banks reopened for the first time since

Assad’s overthrow. Shops were also reopening, traffic returned to the roads, construction workers were back fixing a roundabout in the Damascus city centre and street cleaners were out sweeping the streets.

There was a notable decrease in the number of armed men on the streets. Two sources close to the rebels said their command had ordered fighters to withdraw from cities, and for police and internal security forces affiliated with the main rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Shams (HTS) to deploy there.

The steps towards normalisation came despite intense airstrikes from Israel targeting bases of the Syrian army, whose forces had melted away in the face of the lightning rebel advance that ousted Assad.

Israel, which has sent forces across the border into a demilitarised zone inside Syria, acknowledged on Tuesday that troops had also taken up some positions beyond the buffer zone, though it denied they were advancing towards Damascus. It mounted airstrikes on bases of the now dissolved Syrian army.

NEW LEADER HAS LITTLE PROFILE

The new interim Syrian leader has little political profile beyond Idlib province, the small, largely rural region of the northwest where rebels had maintained an administration during the long years that Syria’s civil war front lines were frozen.



Firefighters battle the Franklin Fire in Malibu, Calif., Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

Yoon ordered to drag out MPs: Officer

REUTERS

Seoul, Dec 10: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol gave an order to “drag out” lawmakers from parliament after he declared martial law Dec. 3, an army commander said Tuesday amid concerns of a power vacuum with Yoon’s office saying it had “no official position” on who was running the country.

Yoon is now the subject of criminal investigations on insurrection charges. He has apologised for the failed attempt to impose martial law but has not accepted growing calls for him to step down, even from some members of his own party.

Yoon said Saturday he was



entrusting his legal and political fate in the hands of his ruling People Power Party (PPP). The party said Tuesday that it was discussing Yoon’s potential resignation as early as February and holding a snap election in

Army commander says Yoon ordered to ‘drag out’ lawmakers

Yoon subject of criminal investigations, travel ban

Botched martial law attempt triggered political crisis

Opposition says impeachment the only way forward

April or May.

Yoon’s surprise martial law declaration stunned the country and plunged Asia’s fourth-largest economy and a major US ally in the region into a constitutional crisis, sending shockwaves through diplomatic and economic fronts.

Yoon’s office, when asked

by Reuters who was running South Korea, said it had “no official position to offer” but referred to past statements by the foreign and defence ministries.

The defence ministry spokesman said Monday Yoon was still commander in chief and the foreign ministry spokesman said state affairs including foreign affairs “were being conducted under a process laid out in the Constitution and the law.”

Kwak Jong-geun, the commander of the Army Special Warfare Command, told a parliament committee that he had received multiple telephone calls from Yoon as the events unfolded overnight after the martial law declaration.

Crunch time for Gukesh

INDIAN CHALLENGER BANKING ON RESOLVE TO OUTWIT CHINESE WORLD CHAMPION



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, Dec 10: A handy lead has slipped through his grip but Indian Grandmaster (GM) D Gukesh will rely on his steely resolve to bounce back when he takes on enigmatic defending champion Ding Liren in the 13th game of the World Chess Championship that has been quite a roller-coaster ride for the players. The 18-year-old Gukesh, who

is the youngest challenger to the title, and the 32-year-old defending champion from China have been locked in an intriguing battle in which both have held leads for not too long. They will resume the battle Wednesday after a day of rest.

The scores are currently tied at 6-6 with the first to reach 7.5 assured of the coveted crown.

After squandering away a full point lead with just three

I have missed out on a lot of chances, hopefully I can utilise those that come my way in the remaining games

D GUKESH

games to go, the 12th round loss was heart-breaking for the young Indian and many experts believe that he will go for an aggressive approach in his

last game with white pieces under classical time control.

With just two games to go, the championship match is heading towards an exciting finish. Both players are tied on six points each.

"This game is a bit of a disappointment. Luckily I have a rest day tomorrow (Tuesday), I will just try to play good games," Gukesh had said after losing the 12th game Monday. "Obviously it is not a pleasant

experience to lose," he added.

It won't be off the mark to say that nerves are likely to play a crucial role in the final two games.

If the scores are still tied in the USD 2.5 million championship, tie-break games of shorter duration will be played to determine the winner. Liren has a distinct advantage over Gukesh in games played in lesser time duration.

To regain composure is the name of the game here and Gukesh has shown resolve in the past. Liren, on the other hand, was in a similar situation in the last World Championship match against Ian Nepomniachtchi that he won, rallying as many as three times before eventually clinching the tie-breaker.

Liren's precision was simply immaculate in the 12th game. The Chinese took advantage of the situation right from the word go to earn high praise from many in the elite chess circles.

Five-time World Champion across formats, Viswanathan Anand, called it a 'very impressive game' while Liren himself said, 'it was the best game that I have played in recent times'.

While the mind games will go on in the last two games and a potential tie-breaker, American Hikaru Nakamura and World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen feel that the balance had tilted slightly in Liren's favour.

"Ding did not have to calculate a single line in this whole game (12th), he is being able to play the game based on positional understanding where he is very good," said Carlsen on his new *YouTube* channel.

Batters eye form in Brisbane game

Debate rages as to whether Indian skipper Rohit Sharma should open the innings or not

AGENCIES

Adelaide, Dec 10: Reeling from their humiliating 10-wicket defeat in the pink ball Test, the under-fire Indian batters, led by Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, turned their attention to red ball preparations with an intensive net session here Tuesday.

In the build-up to the third Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy (BGT) there has been intense debate as to whether Rohit should go back to the opening position. However, if the net session was any indication, it appears that Rohit will continue to bat in the middle-order. It was Yashasvi Jaiswal and KL Rahul who batted first, followed by Kohli, Rishabh Pant and Rohit. The likes of Harbhajan Singh, Sunil Gavaskar and Ravi Shastri have said that Rohit's best spot is at the top of the order. However, Kapil Dev has stated that Rohit would be better off in the middle.

"It's time to look ahead. Preparations for the Brisbane Test starts right here in Adelaide," the BCCI posted on 'X', sharing a video of Team India's practice. Rohit has been struggling with poor form. He has just scored just 142 runs with only one fifty (52) in his last 12 innings. He batted for a long time in the nets aiming to regain his rhythm.

Kohli, who ended his 16-month century drought with a hundred in Perth, also failed in here. The



Rohit Sharma will have to find some form with the bat for his and India's sake

PTI PHOTO

First day MCG tickets sold out

Melbourne: Tickets for the opening day of the fourth Test of the between India and Australia at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) have sold out, highlighting the public's strong interest in the prestigious Border-Gavaskar Trophy. The Test will begin here December 26. "All available public tickets for Day 1 of the NRMA Insurance Boxing Day Test have been sold," Cricket Australia posted on their 'X' account Tuesday. "There will be a possible final release of a small number of public tickets December 24 for non-members to get their seats," the CA added. The pink ball Test in Adelaide drew a crowd of 1,35,012 across three days, setting a record turnout during a five-day game featuring the two sides.

star Indian batter looked full of intent as had a watchful start to his net session before slowly finding his flow. Rahul looked more subdued, focusing more on his defence, while Pant played a few pick up shots.

SHORT TAKES

Afghan extends Trot's contract

New Delhi: Jonathan Trott will continue as Afghanistan's head coach for another year after the country's cricket board extended Tuesday his contract through 2025. The announcement comes a few months ahead of next year's Champions Trophy, where Afghanistan will make their maiden appearance. The 43-year-old former England batter has been Afghanistan's head coach since July 2022, and under his guidance, the team have made impressive strides in international cricket. Under Trott, the team achieved significant milestones, including reaching their first-ever T20 World Cup semifinal this year with stunning victories over Australia and New Zealand.

Record entries for shooting nationals

New Delhi: A record 13,522 shooters are set to participate in the 67th National Shooting Championship Competition (NSCC), starting here Thursday with the shotgun events. While the shotgun (December 11, 2024-January 19, 2025) and pistol (December 13, 2024-January 5, 2025) competitions will be held at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range here, Bhopal's MP State Shooting Academy ranges will hold the rifle nationals from December 15 to 31. A total of 837 shotgun shooters across skeet, trap and double trap events will be competing in five classifications. Rifle competition has seen the maximum entries with 7,013 participants while the pistol nationals will have 5,672 competitors vying for the honours.

Guardiola's last

New Delhi: Pep Guardiola, who signed a new contract with Manchester City in November, has stated that his time in there will be his last managerial stint as a club head coach. "I want to leave it and go and play golf but I can't. A time will come when I feel it's enough and I'll definitely stop then. I'm not going to manage another club. I'm not talking about the long-term future but what I'm not going to do is leave Manchester City now and go to another country to do the same thing," said Guardiola on Desmontadito's *YouTube* channel. The Catalan's new deal means he will spend more than a decade as City manager.

Sushree scripts easy win for Odisha eves

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: A brilliant all-round performance by Sushree Divyadarshini (102 n o and four wickets) helped Odisha defeat Kerala by four wickets in a match of the BCCI Senior Women's ODI Trophy at the Gujarat College Ground in Ahmedabad, Tuesday.

After being put in Kerala were bowled out for 198 in 44.4 overs. Odisha, then riding on Sushree's knock reached the target and scored 202 for six in 45.1 overs. This was Odisha's second victory on the trot having defeated minnows Arunchal Pradesh in their last encounter.

The Kerala batters found the going tough against Odisha bowlers who maintained a steady line and length. T Shani (72, 96b, 11x4) was the top-scorer for Kerala. However, she failed to force the pace and consumed too many deliveries. Drishya (31, 59b, 2x4, 2x6) was the other Kerala batter to offer some resistance. However, overall they failed to accelerate and could not put up a challenging total.

Sushree (4/28) was the pick of the Odisha bowlers. The off-spinner bowled stump-to-stump to induce errors from the Kerala batters. She was well-supported by pacer



Sushree Divyadarshini poses with the women of the match award

OP PHOTO

D Janaki Reddy (3/28) who picked up wickets at crucial intervals.

When Odisha batted it was all Sushree (102 n o, 100b, 12x4). She batted in an aggressive manner and her drives on both sides of the wicket were a treat to watch. Even though Odisha lost some early wickets, Sushree stood firm at one end ensuring the Odisha did not fall behind in the required run rate. Janaki also played a useful knock of 28 runs in 48 balls with two boundaries to ensure a comfortable victory for her side.

Sabalenka bags best player award

ASSOCIATED PRESS

St Petersburg (Florida), Dec 10: Aryna Sabalenka received the WTA 'Player of the Year Award' for the first time here Monday after winning two Grand Slam titles and finishing 2024 at No. 1 in the rankings.

In other results of voting by tennis media, Emma Navarro was honoured as 'Most Improved Player', Paula Badosa was named 'Comeback Player', Lulu Sun was 'Newcomer of the Year', and Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini were picked as the 'Doubles Team of the Year'.

Sabalenka, a 26-year-old from Belarus, won the Australian Open in January and the US Open in September, along with two other titles this season, going 56-14 with nearly \$10 million in prize money. She overtook Iga Swiatek for the top ranking in October.

"It certainly is a great moment for me," Sabalenka said after the ceremony. "This will be just the motivation for me to work harder for next year and win more titles," the Belarusian added.

Badosa sat out the last half of 2023 with a back injury but the 27-year-old Spaniard was back near the top of the sport this year, climbing to No. 12 in the rankings, winning a title in Washington and equalling her best result at a Grand Slam tournament by getting to the US Open quarterfinals.

OFC ready for EB challenge

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Odisha FC (OFC) will look to maintain their unbeaten four-game streak when they take 11th-placed East Bengal (EB) in their ISL game at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan Stadium here Thursday.

This will be the second times the two teams will be meeting this season with Odisha FC narrowly winning the first encounter 2-1. However, since then much water has flown through both the Ganges and the Mahanadi. East Bengal, who were languishing at the bottom of the 13-team table have climbed two slots registering two wins on the trot. They will be a hard nut to crack on home soil.

OFC are in solid form, currently sitting fifth in the ISL table with 16 points from 11 matches. Under the leadership of head coach Sergio Lobera, the team have shown consistency in both attack and defense.

Addressing the media ahead of the game, Lobera emphasized it is important to win matches to build up momentum. "Winning is always important. The next game is always the most crucial, as each one presents an opportunity for three points. This competition is highly competitive, and even a single point can be significant. So



OFC head coach Sergio Lobera and Jerry Lalrinzuala at the media conference

OP PHOTO

we have to utilise this opportunity in our quest to finish in the top six at the end of the group matches," Lobera stated.

Lobera however, is wary about East Bengal's potential and expects a tough match. "In the last couple of games, East Bengal have shown good form, they have been playing well lately. Hence it will certainly be a tough game,

but if we play to our potential, we can certainly get three points," asserted the coach.

First team player Jerry Lalrinzuala also had the same opinion. "It will be a tough match as they have strong attacking players, both Indian and foreign. As defenders, we must stay focused and contain them," he stated.

Odisha ride on Pyari's strikes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Dec 10: Odisha defeated Maharashtra 2-0 in a match of the 29th Senior Women's National Football Championships-2024 played Tuesday at the Ramkrishna Mission Ashram ground in Narinpur, Chhattisgarh. Captain Pyari Xaxa got both the goals for Odisha.

Pyari put Odisha in the lead in added on time of the first half (45+2) and then doubled the tally in the 54th minute of the game. Odisha were the dominant side in the match and controlled proceedings all through. Had the players been more opportunistic in front of the opposition goal they could have easily won by a bigger margin.

The Odisha defenders were solid throughout and never allowed the opposition forwards to pose any threat.