

# THE ASIAN AGE

LONDON THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER 2024



## CITY | 2

**Sisodia not to report to police twice a week: SC relaxes bail conditions**



## WORLD | 6

**Toppling of Syria's Assad was result of US & Israel's plot, says Iran's Khamenei**

## DELHI AGE | 11

**Megan Fox, Machine Gun Kelly break up weeks after revealing pregnancy news**



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## WINDOWS



Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas during the Red Sea Film Festival in Jeddah on Wednesday. — AFP

## New RBI gov: Need to stay alert, agile to meet challenges

**Mumbai:** New RBI governor Sanjay Malhotra on Wednesday said the Central bank will maintain continuity and stability in policy matters, but emphasised on the need to remain “alert and agile” in the wake of the current global economic and political environment. Earlier in the day, he took charge as the 26th governor of the Reserve Bank, replacing Shaktikanta Das. “As we have to be conscious of the fact that we do maintain continuity and stability, we cannot be stuck to it, and we have to be alert and agile to meet challenges,” Mr Malhotra said in his first interaction as RBI governor with the media. **Full report on Page 7**

## 38 killed in Israeli strikes across Gaza

**Cairo:** Israeli air attacks across the Gaza Strip killed at least 38 Palestinians on Wednesday, most of them in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya on the northern edge of the enclave. The Beit Lahiya strike killed at least 22 people, including women and children. — Reuters **Full report on Page 6**

## Naxals kill BJP neta in C'garh's Bijapur

**Raipur:** A BJP leader was abducted and then killed by Maoists in Bijapur district under south Bastar in Chhattisgarh, the police said on Wednesday. Mando Ram Kodium was abducted from his village Somnapalli by a group of armed Maoists late on Tuesday. **Full report on Page 4**

## COUNTERPOINT



**A no-confidence motion against the Vice-President? But I have no confidence in our allies!**



## ■ LS passes Railways Bill ■ RS fails to function amid chaos ■ Expunge ‘offensive’ barbs: Rahul to Birla ■ ‘Let LS work’

# Din over no-trust against V-P, Soros issue stalls Parliament

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

After days of logjam, the Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the Railways (Amendment) Bill 2024 and held discussions on the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill 2024. The Rajya Sabha, however, was adjourned without transacting any business amid uproar by the Treasury and the Opposition benches over the no-trust notice against the House Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and the US billionaire George Soros issue. The TMC blamed both the BJP and the Congress over the repeated adjournments in Parliament. The Congress on Wednesday said it wants both the Houses to function. It called on the government not to run away



Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi with other MPs during a protest over Adani row and others issues in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

▶ **THE CONGRESS** said it wants both the Houses to function. It called on the govt not to run away from debates

from debates on various issues and to answer them on the floors of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. Lok Sabha Leader of the

Opposition Rahul Gandhi met Speaker Om Birla seeking expunction of remarks linking him, his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and his mother Sonia Gandhi with Mr Soros. “I had a meeting with the Speaker and I told him

■ **Turn to Page 4**  
■ **Railways Amendment Bill passed in Lok Sabha: Page 3**

## Tamil poet Bharati's works continue to inspire us: PM

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Releasing the compendium of complete works of great Tamil poet and freedom fighter Subramania Bharati, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that India has always regarded words as more than a medium of expression, highlighting their limitless power. Mr Modi hailed Subramania Bharati's contributions, saying his thoughts and intellectual brilliance continue to inspire people even today. Speaking after releasing the compendium of com-



plete works of the Tamil poet, the Prime Minister said, “Today was a great opportunity for India's culture and literature, memories of India's freedom struggle and for the pride of Tamil Nadu. The grand culmination of the publication of the works of Mahakavi Subrahmanya Bharati was done today.”

The Prime Minister lauded the extraordinary and tireless work of six decades for the compilation of *Kaala Varisaiyil Bharathiyar Padaippugal* in 21 volumes.

Referring to the concept of “*Shabda Brahma*” from Indian philosophy, the Prime Minister said that India has always regarded words as more than a medium of expression, highlighting their limitless power.

“The words of the sages and thinkers reflect the essence of their contemplations, experiences and spiritual practices, making it our responsibility

■ **Turn to Page 4**

## Srinagar-Jammu ‘darbar move’ will resume: Omar

YUSUF JAMEEL  
SRINAGAR, DEC. 11

Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday reiterated that the “darbar move”, the bi-annual shifting of the government between Srinagar and Jammu, J&K's summer and winter capitals, will be restored soon as Jammu's uniqueness will not be allowed to diminish.

This move was started by visionary Dogra ruler Maharaja Ranbir Singh for strategic and climatic reasons. It also acted as a bridge between the dissimilar

ethnicities of the twin regions over the past nearly 150 years, and boost Jammu's businesses as tens of thousands of government employees and others shift to the city from the Kashmir Valley along with their families for the winter.

Jammu, scraping the low-lying Himalayan foothills, would turn into the seat of government when Srinagar was snowbound and freezing. The “darbar move” will bring the government back to Srinagar for the summer months in May. **■ More on Page 4**

## No tieup with Cong in Delhi: Kejriwal

■ ‘AAP to fight polls alone’ ■ Congress strong, will win: Yadav

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday once again ruled out the possibility of an alliance with the Congress for the Delhi Assembly polls, amid reports that the two parties could be jointly contesting the state elections due early next year. The Delhi Congress unit also reiterated the party's plan to contest the impending state polls alone.

In a post on X, Mr Kejriwal said the AAP will be fighting the election on its own strength in Delhi. “There is no possibility of any alliance with the Congress,” the former

▶ **DEVELOPMENTS** were seen as the Congress and AAP making their moves cautiously in view of the upcoming Delhi polls so that the options remain open, sources said

Delhi chief minister said. His reaction comes amid media reports that the two parties were likely to have a tieup for the 70-member Delhi Assembly polls due in February.

Earlier this month also, Mr Kejriwal had ruled out the possibility of the alliance between the AAP and the Congress for the Delhi elections.

The latest buzz over the



Arvind Kejriwal

alliance between the two INDIA bloc partners was fuelled by the cancellation of the Congress’ “Nyay Chaupal” event scheduled on Wednesday in which party leader Rahul Gandhi was to participate.

The event was to be held as the culmination of the “Nyay Yatra” taken out by the Delhi Congress ahead of the Assembly polls. Also, Mr Kejriwal had on

Tuesday met NCP chief Sharad Pawar amid the rising demand in the INDIA bloc to appoint West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee as head of the political grouping currently chaired by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. However, neither Mr Kejriwal nor the AAP has so far commented on the discussions in the meeting.

These developments were seen as the Congress and AAP making their moves cautiously in view of the upcoming Delhi polls so that the future options remain open, sources said.

Meanwhile, sounding confident of the Congress’ **■ Turn to Page 4**



People pay tribute as the mortal remains of former Karnataka chief minister and ex-Union minister S.M. Krishna are being taken to his hometown in Bengaluru on Wednesday. He was cremated with full state honours. **■ Report on Page 3** — PTI

## Delhi records coldest day at 4.9°C; AQI is ‘moderate’

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Delhi on Wednesday recorded the lowest minimum temperature of this winter season so far, with the mercury dropping sharply to 4.9 degrees Celsius, compared to 8 degrees Celsius the previous day. “The minimum temperature of 4.9 degrees Celsius reported over Safdarjung is the lowest minimum of this winter season,” the India meteorological department said.

The lowest ever minimum temperature over the station was 0.0 degrees Celsius on 27th December 1930.

Meanwhile, AQI remained in the “moderate” category on Wednesday, even as the readings were closer to the “poor” range. The city's AQI stood at 199 at 4 pm as per the Central Pollution Control Board.

■ **More on Page 2**

## Fadnavis to drop 30% of Shinde Cabinet mantris

*Meets Shah to finalise berths*

SONU SHRIVASTAVA  
with bureau inputs  
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, DEC. 11



Devendra Fadnavis

▶ **UPON REACHING** the national capital on Wednesday, Devendra Fadnavis called on President Droupadi Murmu and vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar

Almost a week has elapsed since the formation of the BJP-led government in Maharashtra; still, the Cabinet expansion is yet to be finalised. Amid the continuing discussion over the portfolio allocations in Maharashtra, chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and his deputy Ajit Pawar are visiting New Delhi to meet the BJP's top leadership to finalise the names of the Cabinet ministers.

Upon reaching the national capital on Wednesday, Mr Fadnavis called on President Droupadi Murmu and vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar. Earlier in the day, the Maharashtra CM, along with BJP state unit chief Chandrasekhar Bawankule, met Union ministers Nitin Gadkari and Rajnath Singh.

## Centre must act, protect minorities in B'desh: Didi

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, DEC. 11

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday urged the Centre to act to save the Hindus facing religious persecution in Bangladesh and help those willing to come back here.

The Trinamul Congress supremo also conveyed her gratitude to the Opposition leaders who have backed her as the leader of INDIA bloc.

Ms Banerjee said, “We want protection for minorities in Bangladesh. The Central government should act. It must also bring back those who want to return to India.”

On the support she got from the Opposition leaders after expressing her intent a week ago to head the anti-BJP forum, Ms Banerjee said, “I am grateful to all the leaders who have honoured me. I wish good health to all of them. May they be well, may their party be well. May India be well.”

In Kolkata, her party leader Kunal Ghosh, meanwhile, claimed, “Ms Banerjee has made it clear that she is not interested in any ‘chair’ in Delhi. She is interested in building an alternative platform that can defeat the BJP.” **■ More on Page 3**

## SHORT TAKES

## BJP city unit chief meets auto drivers

**New Delhi:** The race to win over the auto drivers in the city ahead of the Assembly polls intensified on Wednesday with Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva sipping tea with them at Nizamuddin, a day after AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal promised various sops for them. Earlier Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav too met the auto drivers in order to woo them. The auto drivers have joined hands with the BJP to transform Delhi and they are not going to be fooled by Mr Kejriwal's "empty promises", said Mr Sachdeva after an interaction with the auto drivers at the Nizamuddin Railway Station prepaid booth. "In 2014, Kejriwal made ten promises to the auto drivers. However, neither were those promises fulfilled nor any efforts made by his government towards it," he claimed.



Virendra Sachdeva

## Man nabbed over girlfriend's suicide

**Noida:** A man was arrested on Wednesday in connection with the alleged suicide of an 18-year-old girl, with whom he had been in a live-in relationship, in Surajpur area of Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar, an officer said. The victim's uncle, Durga Dutt Singh, filed a complaint about the incident on Tuesday at the Surajpur police station. He alleged that his niece, Anjali Singh, was mentally harassed by her live-in partner, Satish alias Santosh, which led to her committing suicide. According to Surajpur police station in-charge inspector Vinod Kumar Singh, Anjali, a resident of Ballia, was studying BBA in Noida, while Satish worked at a company. On December 2, the victim committed suicide by hanging herself from a fan in her house in Surajpur, he said. — PTI

## 540 touts arrested outside IGI this year

**New Delhi:** The Delhi police arrested 540 touts involved in duping passengers outside Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport this year, officials said on Wednesday. The number of arrests this year has more than doubled, compared to the 264 arrests made last year, according to the data provided by the police. "The accused were involved in coercing, misguiding, or enticing passengers to use unauthorised services such as taxis, accommodation, or shopping. This practice not only tarnishes the reputation of the airport and the nation but also compromises passenger safety," said deputy commissioner of police (IGI) Usha Rangnani. She also mentioned that the police had seized 254 vehicles used in the commission of these crimes, compared to 96 vehicles in 2023.

## 'OVER 11% DIP IN STREET CRIMES IN 2024 IN CITY'

**New Delhi:** The national capital has reported a more than 11 per cent decline in heinous and street crimes, including murder and rape, this year as compared to last year, according to the data. In 2023, till November 30, the city reported 11,207 cases of murder, rape, robbery, and snatching. The number has gone down to 9,902 during the corresponding period this year. According to data, the total number of robbery cases reported in Delhi from January to November 2023 was 1,514. The figure decreased slightly in 2024, with 1,408 reported cases during the same period — a reduction of around 7 per cent. Rape cases in Delhi decreased by nearly 3 per cent, from 1,976 in 2023 to 1,919 in 2024, the data showed. Murder cases in Delhi have experienced a marginal reduction of 0.8 per cent, from 461 cases in 2023 to 457 cases this year. The data showed that 30 per cent of the murders were attributed to sudden provocations or trivial issues, 22 per cent were due to enmity, 12 per cent were because of family disputes, 10 per cent were due to illicit relations, 8 per cent were committed by criminals, 4 per cent were unidentified bodies, and 6 per cent were due to "other reasons". — PTI

■ Similar conditions for next 2 days ■ Air quality 'moderate'

## Coldwave hits Delhi, Dec touches 4.9°C in 14 years

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Chilly winds on Wednesday marked the arrival of cold wave conditions in the national capital as Delhi recorded a low of 4.9°C, the Indian meteorological department (IMD) said. The minimum temperatures in early December have been recorded below 5°C for the first time in 14 years, it said.

According to data, the lowest minimum temperature during this period was recorded on December 6, 1987, at 4.1°C.

The IMD has issued a yellow alert, warning of similar cold wave conditions for the next two days.

The night-time temperature was recorded at 4.9°C on Wednesday. 4.7 notches below the normal. On Tuesday, it was 8°C.

According to the data, in December 2023 and 2022, there were no cold wave days. However, November 2020 saw cold wave conditions with the minimum temperature plunging to 7.5°C.

A cold wave occurs when the minimum temperature departures from the normal day temperature by 4.5 to 6.4°C. If the negative departure exceeds 6.4°C, it is classified as a 'severe cold wave'.

The IMD has attributed the current sharp temperature drop to surface



A nomadic shepherd from Rajasthan leads his herd of sheep during a cold winter morning in Gurgaon on Wednesday.

winds blowing from the northwest at 8-10 kmph.

The absence of significant western disturbances and strong surface winds during the day (10-20 kmph) are expected to keep minimum temperatures in the range of 4-6°C for the next three to four days.

Cold wave conditions are expected to prevail in Delhi between December 11 and 13.

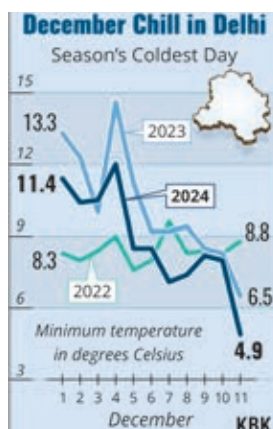
On Wednesday, the city recorded a high of 23°C, 1.8 notches below the normal with the humidity

fluctuating between 64 and 39 per cent.

A breezy day with wind blowing at a speed of 16 kmph along with a clear sky is expected on Thursday. Smog or mist is likely to appear in the evening or night.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) at 4 pm was 199 (moderate), according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Forecast suggests AQI to remain 'poor' in the capital for the next two days.



## AAP delegation meets EC, gives 'voter deletion proof'

AVINASH PRABHAKAR  
JHA  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Days after the ruling Aam Aadmi Party raised the issues of mass voter deletion and accused the BJP of orchestrating large-scale deletions of voters' names from the electoral rolls in the national capital, an AAP delegation led by Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday met the Election Commission (EC) to address the issues ahead of the upcoming Assembly election early next year.

After the meeting with EC, Mr Kejriwal alleged that the BJP was orchestrating a conspiracy to remove voters, mostly from marginalised communities, including dalits, Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Poorvanchalis, from the electoral roll.

"We have submitted 3,000 pages of evidence showing how the BJP is conspiring to delete voters' names on a mass scale," he claimed.

The former chief minister said the EC provided several assurances, including that no large-scale deletions would occur without proper verification.

He also mentioned that in cases of voter deletions, a field inquiry will be conducted by the booth level officer (BLO), accompanied by representatives from various political parties.

Mr Kejriwal said that if any individual applies to



AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal with Delhi chief minister Atishi and party leaders Raghav Chadha, Sanjay Singh and others in New Delhi on Wednesday.

— PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

delete more than five voters' names, the concerned sub-divisional magistrate will carry out a field inquiry.

The EC also assured AAP of strict action against those filing questionable deletion requests, he said.

The delegation included Delhi chief minister Atishi, Rajya Sabha MPs Sanjay Singh and Raghav Chadha, and party leader Jasmine Shah.

Earlier in the day, senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia also accused the BJP of submitting bulk applications to remove voters' names from the electoral rolls in seven constituencies fearing defeat in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Addressing a press conference with Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha, Mr Sisodia claimed, "Since the BJP is unable to stop Arvind Kejriwal and

unable to defeat him in elections, it is trying to win by other means."

"This is a concerning issue which exposes how 22,000 voters are being deleted — a potential conspiracy orchestrated by the BJP. The fact that the Election Commission is considering these applications is even more dangerous. The BJP may have felt that they would lose in this constituency and don't have enough supporters there which is why they are engaging in this voter deletion strategy," Mr Sisodia added.

Listing the names of the seven constituencies and providing details of the "fraudulent" applications received, Mr Chadha said, "We found that people connected with the party have submitted the maximum number of applications for voter deletion."

## SC relaxes Sisodia bail terms over reporting to police

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

In a relief to former Delhi deputy chief minister AAP leader Manish Sisodia, the Supreme Court on Wednesday relaxed the bail conditions which required him to report to the investigating officer twice a week in the corruption and money laundering cases related to the Delhi excise policy.

Easing Mr Sisodia's bail conditions, a bench of Justices B.R. Gawai and K.V. Viswanathan dubbed them unnecessary and said, "The petitioner shall regularly attend the trial."

The apex court on November 22 agreed to hear Mr Sisodia's pleas for relaxation in his bail conditions and issued notices to the CBI and the ED seeking their responses.

On August 9, the top court granted him bail in both cases linked to the alleged 2021-22 Delhi excise policy case, saying a 17-month long incarceration without trial deprived him of his right to a speedy trial.

The apex court, however, imposed conditions, including his reporting to the investigating officer every Monday and Thursday between 10 and 11 am.

During the hearing on November 22, Mr Sisodia's counsel argued



Manish Sisodia

that the AAP leader had appeared before the investigating officers 60 times.

Mr Sisodia was arrested by both the CBI and the ED in the corruption and money laundering cases, respectively, linked to the excise "scam".

The AAP leader was arrested by the CBI on February 26, 2023, for alleged irregularities in the formulation and implementation of the now scrapped Delhi excise policy 2021-22.

On March 9, 2023, the ED arrested him in the money laundering case linked to the CBI FIR relating to the corruption case. He resigned from the Delhi Cabinet on February 28, 2023.

In its August 9 verdict granting bail to Mr Sisodia in both the cases, the apex court said it was high time that trial courts and the high courts recognised the principle, "bail is rule and jail is exception".

## BJP plans massive OBC outreach in Delhi

SHASHI BHUSHAN  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

The Delhi BJP state unit has planned a mass outreach programme for the sizable OBC (other backward class) community and will reach out to them sub-caste-wise to maximise voter turnout and support during the impending Assembly polls in the national capital.

Modelled on the party's Maharashtra campaign style spearheaded by Devendra Fadnavis during the recently concluded Assembly polls there, the BJP will hold compact public meetings compris-

ing 150-200 voters in different constituencies of specific caste within the OBC category.

Mr Fadnavis had held over 100 meetings with the OBC community leaders in one month over lunch or dinner before the election and heard their concerns and promised to address them at the earliest.

The saffron party will also hold mass congregations of different sub-castes to garner support amongst them.

There is an estimated 60 per cent OBC electorate base in the national capital.

## SC gives bail to 2 accused in Waqf Board laundering case

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted bail to two men arrested in connection with the Delhi Waqf Board money laundering case, taking note of their prolonged incarceration and dim possibility that the trial will commence soon.

A bench comprising Justices Abhay S. Oka and Augustine George Masih observed that the accused Zeeshan Haider and Daud Nasir were in jail since their arrest on November 11, 2023, in the case and even the charges had not been framed against them yet.

The apex court said: "Appellants have been in custody for approximately one year and one month. Charges have not been framed in the complaint filed under the PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act). In the complaint, 29 witnesses have been cited, and about 50 documents are being relied upon which run into more than 4,000 pages."

"The trial is not likely to commence soon as even charges have not been framed. Therefore, in the facts of the case and in view of the undertakings furnished by the appellants and what is held in paragraphs...of the judgement of this court in the case of Senthil Balaji...the appellants

have to be enlarged on bail," the top court said.

The bench subsequently directed the men to be produced before the special court within a week to complete the bail formalities and to be released on bail on appropriate terms and conditions, which include abiding by the undertakings filed in the top court.

The bench said the appellants' undertakings of December 6 and December 9, 2024, filed before it would be part of the record, and its compliance would be a bail condition.

AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan, the former chairperson of Delhi Waqf Board, was the main accused in the case

Delhi BJP OBC wing president Sunil Yadav told this newspaper that around 50 meetings and a similar number of 'sammelan' (conferences) of all the backward communities residing in the city will be held starting from December 11.

"In the first meeting today (December 11), Union minister S.P. Singh Bhagel held a meeting with community leaders of Pal/Bhagel in the city. Starting today, we will reach out to all the backward communities of the city in the coming days," Mr Yadav said, adding that the senior OBC leader of

the party will address the meeting.

Mr Yadav informed that apart from these meetings and sammelan, the Delhi BJP OBC wing will also hold a large meeting of professional and influential people of the communities and another meeting of women professionals.

During these planned meetings and sammelan, Mr Yadav said that the BJP OBC leaders will explain the works of the Narendra Modi government for the communities like giving constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes and passing the

127th Constitution Amendment that allowed states and Union Territories to prepare their own list of backward classes.

"We will explain to the community members how the other political parties have cheated them and treated them only as vote banks. It is the Modi government which worked for their welfare," Mr Yadav added.

After these meetings and sammelan, the Delhi BJP OBC wing has also planned over 500 community-specific meetings at the Assembly and ward level across the city.

## 4 nabbed in Metro cable theft, gang targeted Blue Line

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Four people, who were part of a dozen-member gang that used to steal the signalling cables of the Delhi Metro, were arrested by the police.

According to the police, it has dismantled the notorious gang that was responsible for stealing signalling cables from the Delhi Metro network, specifically targeting the Blue Line, between Noida Electronic City and Dwarka.

"The gang's operations disrupted Metro services and caused considerable inconvenience to commuters," joint commissioner of police (Transport Range) Vijay Singh said.

The arrested accused have been identified as Rashid Malik (26), a repeat offender who was previously involved in three theft cases; Shahrukh Malik (29); Ramzan (32); and Junaid alias Bhura (32).

The police said the theft came to light at 5.00 am on December 5, when the section engineer of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's (DMRC) signalling department reported abnormal signalling circuit alarms in the control room.

"Upon investigation, it was discovered that a 140-metre-long signalling cable was severed between the Moti Nagar and Kirti Nagar Metro stations. This critical cable transmits data to track circuits, helping monitor the locations of trains," Mr Singh said.

Subsequently, a case was registered at the Raja Garden Metro police sta-

tion under relevant penal provisions and the Delhi Metro Railways (Operation and Maintenance) Act.

"A team was formed under the supervision of G. Ram Gopal Naik (DCP, Metro) and further investigation was taken up. The team traced the gang's activities and launched targeted raids. These efforts led to the arrest of Shahrukh Malik and later, three of his associates were also nabbed," the officer said, adding that they have identified the remaining seven gang members — Masoom, Faisal, Islam, Nadeem, Siddhu, Teli, and Sarfaraz.

The police said the rest of the accused are absconding and raids are on to nab them. Sharing the gang's modus operandi, the JCP said Rashid Malik, Faisal, Masoom, and Junaid were the mastermind behind the entire operation.

The JCP said the Metro unit of the Delhi police has so far solved 22 theft cases out of 44 and arrested 53 people.

Services on Delhi Metro's Blue Line were disrupted for around six hours on December 5 due to the theft of 140 metres of signalling cable between the Moti Nagar and Kirti Nagar stations, causing significant inconvenience to commuters.

SHORT TAKES

Krishna cremated with state honours

**Mandya, Karnataka:** Ex-chief minister of Karnataka and former external affairs minister S.M. Krishna was cremated on Wednesday with full state honours in his ancestral village Somanahalli in this district. The 92-year-old veteran politician, who had also served as the Maharashtra governor, died at his residence in Bengaluru on Tuesday after prolonged illness. Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, his deputy and Krishna's relative D.K. Shivakumar, Central and state ministers, several MLAs, MPs, Opposition BJP and JDS leaders and top government officials in the state were present during the final rites. Along with them, the pontiff of the Adi Chunchanagiri Math Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji also paid respect. Krishna's wife Premma, daughters Malavika and Shambhavi too paid their homage. — *PTI*

Working on space activities bill: Govt

**New Delhi:** The government is working on a new law to govern the space sector, which has witnessed reforms over the past four years with private players making a mark in building and launching satellites, Union minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday. Mr Singh said India's maiden human space-flight programme — Gaganyaan — was also progressing well and the first uncrewed mission was expected to be launched early next year. "We are working on that," the minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office told a press conference here in response to a question on the timeline for the space activities bill, which would grant statutory cover to the reforms in the sector. Mr Singh said the government had announced space sector reforms in 2020 with the aim to increase India's share in the global space economy. "Indian Space Policy was released in April 2023 as an overarching, composite and dynamic framework to implement the space reform vision approved by the Cabinet," he said. — *PTI*

MODI TO LAUNCH INVESTORS' MEET IN MP, SAYS CM

AGE CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, DEC. 11

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given his consent to inaugurate the Global Investors Summit, scheduled to be held in Bhopal in February 2025. This was informed by chief minister Mohan Yadav to his ministerial colleagues at a Cabinet meeting, held here late on Tuesday evening. The state government expects to woo huge foreign investments for Madhya Pradesh at the summit. Mr Yadav met the PM in Parliament on Tuesday. Briefing the reporters after the Cabinet meeting, deputy chief minister Rajendra Shukla said that the date for laying foundation for the ambitious Ken-Betwa Link Project is yet to be decided. Mr Modi may lay the foundation for the project. As many as ten districts in the state will be benefitted by the project. The districts to be benefitted by the river linking project are Chhatrapur, Panna, Tikamgarh, Niwari, Sheopur, Damoh, Datia, Raisen, Vidisha and Sagar. The project will irrigate over 8.1 lakh hectares in Bundelkhand region of the state and another 2.5 lakh hectares in Uttar Pradesh.



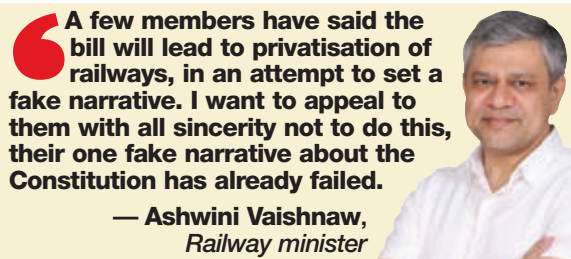
Mohan Yadav

Bill to give govt power to determine Railway Board composition  
LS passes Railway Amendment Bill; no privatisation: Vaishnaw

SANJAY KAW NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed a bill to amend railway laws, with the government insisting that it would not lead to the national carrier's privatisation. The bill was passed five months after it was introduced on the floor of the House.

Responding to a debate on the Railway Amendment Bill, railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in the Lower House that a fake narrative was set afloat that the amendment would privatise Railways. "Their (opposition) fake narrative on the Constitution has failed... Now this will also fall flat," he asserted.



A few members have said the bill will lead to privatisation of railways, in an attempt to set a fake narrative. I want to appeal to them with all sincerity not to do this, their one fake narrative about the Constitution has already failed.

— Ashwini Vaishnaw, Railway minister

The bill was passed by a voice-vote after debate, which could not be held earlier due to frequent disruptions of House proceedings during the last week.

"A few members have said the bill will lead to privatisation of railways, in an attempt to set a fake narrative. I want to appeal to them with all sincerity not to do this, their one

fake narrative about the Constitution has already failed," Mr Vaishnaw said.

The Railways (Amendment) Bill 2024, which seeks to enhance the functioning and independence of the Railway Board, was introduced in the Lok Sabha during the previous Parliament session. All the provisions in the erstwhile colonial-era Indian Railway Board Act,

1905 are proposed to be incorporated in the Railways Act, 1989 through this bill. It is intended to simplify the legal framework and reduce the need to refer to two laws.

The bill was amended to add provisions granting the Central government authority to determine the composition of Railway Board, including the number of members, their qualifications, experience, and terms of service. It is aimed at enhancing the overall functioning and independence of the board.

The bill proposes to establish an independent regulator to oversee tariffs, safety and participation of the private sector in the Indian Railways.



Police personnel conduct a security drill in Chikkamagaluru district in Karnataka on Wednesday to maintain law and order in view of the VHP and the Bajrang Dal's "Dattamala Abhiyan". — *PTI*

Violence erupts as replica of Constitution is damaged

Situation brought under control, 1 person held: Police

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, DEC. 11

Violent protests broke out in Parbhani city of Maharashtra after a replica of the Constitution held by the statue of B.R. Ambedkar was allegedly vandalised. The incident sparked widespread outrage, with protesters engaged in stone pelting and torching vehicles, which prompted police to issue prohibitory orders, banning the gathering of five or more persons in public places.

According to police, an unidentified person on Tuesday had damaged a replica of the Constitution held by the statue of B.R. Ambedkar outside Parbhani railway station.

A "bandh" was called by the locals in the Vasmat area of the city, during which the violence erupted. A mob of unidentified



A structure set on fire during protests that continued for the second day over alleged vandalising of a replica of the Constitution in Parbhani, Maharashtra, on Wednesday. — *PTI*

people threw stones and damaged vehicles. Hundreds of protesters gathered outside the collector's office and some of them rushed inside and damaged furniture and window panes.

Parbhani police said that tear gas shells were fired to control the crowd. A large number of police forces were deployed to

control the unruly crowd.

The situation was brought under control with the deployment of additional forces after two and a half hours. One person was detained by the police after the violence.

Parbhani's district magistrate (DM) Raghunath Gawade, said one of the accused has been detained.

Didi urges Centre to act, save minorities in strife-hit B'desh

Thanks Opp. leaders for backing her as INDIA bloc chief

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, DEC. 11



Mamata Banerjee

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday sought the Centre to act to save the Hindus facing religious persecution in Bangladesh and help those willing to come back here.

Bangladesh's minority Hindus, who constitute about 8 per cent of the 170 million population, have faced attacks in 50-odd districts since the fall of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government on August 5.

The Trinamul Congress supremo also conveyed her gratitude to the Opposition leaders who have backed her as the leader of INDIA bloc. She was speaking to the media during a visit to Digha in East Midnapore.

The CM said, "We want protection for minorities in Bangladesh. The Central government should act. It must also bring back those who want to return to India."

On the support she got from the Opposition leaders after expressing her intent a week ago to head the anti-BJP forum, Ms Banerjee said, "I am grateful to all the leaders who have honoured me. I wish good health to all of them. May they be well, may their party be well. May India be well."

In Kolkata, her party leader Kunal Ghosh meanwhile claimed, "Ms

Banerjee has made it clear that she is not interested in any 'chair' in Delhi. She is interested in building an alternative platform which can defeat the BJP. Within the INDIA bloc, in West Bengal we have defeated the BJP, under the leadership of Hemant Soren in Jharkhand, JMM defeated BJP."

Lashing out at the Congress, he added, "In states like Haryana and Maharashtra, where the main responsibility to defeat BJP was on Congress, they failed. So, this is why senior leaders of INDIA alliance are suggesting Mamata Banerjee's name as the face of the INDIA bloc. Congress should conduct a self-analysis about why they failed in Haryana, Maharashtra and Lok Sabha elections."

BJP, Cong forcing adjournments, says Trinamul's Kalyan

**New Delhi, Dec. 11:** Trinamul Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee on Wednesday blamed both the BJP and the Opposition Congress over the repeated adjournments in Parliament, alleging that "they stop House proceedings whenever they want".



Kalyan Banerjee

Talking to reporters outside Parliament, the Lok Sabha MP from West Bengal's Serampore said these parties forced adjournments, due to which others do not get the opportunity to raise their issues.

"The House functions as per the wishes of the Congress and BJP.. Congress and BJP should decide if they want to run the House or not," he told reporters. "They get more opportunities in the House and we don't get anything. They shut the House whenever they want," the MP said. "If the BJP does not want to allow the House to function, Nishikant Dubey will raise an issue.

The same is the case with the Congress. They pick one issue and the House is adjourned. What about other parties? Our business is not happening," he said.

BJP MP Manoj Tiwari, however, blamed the Opposition for disrupting the House. "The Trinamul Congress always obstructs the session while the BJP always wants discussion. Every time before adjourning the House, Lok Sabha Speaker asks six-seven times if members want to run the House. The Opposition is running away from the House," he claimed.

LS proceedings on Wednesday were disrupted and the House was adjourned till 2 pm amid a government and Opposition face-off. — *PTI*

'Apps like Signal, Telegram key challenge to curb radicalisation'

**New Delhi, Dec. 11:** The use of secured messaging applications like Signal, Telegram, Viber and the dark Web besides end-to-end encrypted WhatsApp by radical elements to connect with like-minded individuals is proving to be a "major challenge" for security agencies to counter online radicalisation, government said on Wednesday.

Replying to a question in the Rajya Sabha, min-

ister of state for home affairs Nityanand Rai said as the extensive use of cyber technology is the main tool for propagating radical ideology, cyberspace is being monitored ceaselessly.

The minister said apart from state police, the NIA is investigating 67 cases relating to online radicalisation. In these cases, 325 accused have been arrested and 336 chargesheeted. — *PTI*

UN officials meet Rohingyas in Jammu

Seek details of disconnection of water & power supplies, other issues

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, DEC. 11

A two-member team of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) met Rohingya Muslims and some locals at a slum in Jammu on Wednesday to seek details of the difficulties they are facing as a result of a major drive launched by the police and district administration against what they alleged are illegal immigrants and the landlords

renting out their properties to them without providing information to police as per the order of the district magistrate.

Tomoko Fukumura, a senior protection officer at the UNHCR, along with protection associate Ragini Trakroo Zutushi met the Rohingyas and others living in shanty dwellings in the Kiryani Talab area of Jammu's Narwal quarter.

The sources said that the head of the team was returning to Delhi on

Wednesday evening as their bid to meet some police officials failed.

Last week, Rohingyas living on three plots of land at Narwal had claimed that their power and water supply were snapped despite being registered with the UNHCR. Subsequently, the local administration issued formal orders to snap the facility also to 409 Rohingya families in the Channi Himmat, Sunjuwan and Narwal areas of Jammu. Earlier

on November 25, SSP South Jammu Ajay Sharma had said that eighteen FIRs were registered during a drive against landlords renting out properties to Rohingyas and other illegal immigrants without informing police as mandated by the district magistrate's orders.

On December 7, J&K Jal Shakti minister Javed Ahmed Rana, however, said the water supply would not be snapped to the slums.



The carcass of a blue whale that washed ashore at Pamban beach is being removed in Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu, on Wednesday. — *PTI*

Odisha waves off over ₹4K-cr power dues for 14 industries

AGE CORRESPONDENT BHUBANESWAR, DEC. 11

The Odisha government has waived electricity dues amounting to ₹4,097.67 crore for 14 industries under various schemes over the past decade, deputy chief minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo informed the Assembly on Wednesday.

In a written reply to Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati, Mr Deo, who oversees the

energy department, said the exemptions began in the financial year 2015-16 under policies like the Industrial Policy Resolution (IPR) and the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Policy.

The largest exemption of ₹3,599.88 crore was granted to Vedanta Ltd, Jharsuguda, under the SEZ Policy-2015.

Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL), Paradip, received ₹314.03 crore in waivers, while Jindal

Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL), Angul, was exempted from paying ₹103.16 crore.

Additionally, ₹1,324.83 crore in pending electricity dues from 36 industries were waived under the One-Time Settlement Scheme, 2022.

Major beneficiaries included Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) with ₹550.12 crore, IMFA Ltd, Choudwar, with ₹440.12 crore, and Nalco with ₹203.91 crore.

SC notice to temple over move to discontinue ritual

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to examine a plea against the Kerala high court order in favour of the administration of the Guruvayur Sri Krishna temple in the state which decided to discontinue the ancient ritual of "Udayasthamana Pooja" on Ekadashi.

A bench of Justices J.K. Maheshwari and Rajesh Bindal issued the notice to the Guruvayur Devaswom Managing Committee, Kerala government and oth-

ers on the plea against the December 7 high court order.

The top court, however, said the chart of daily pooja displayed on the temple's website should not be altered. "We cannot intervene now. We will issue notice to the other side. Prima facie we are satisfied," the bench said.

Udayasthamana Pooja refers to the various rituals conducted in temples throughout the day from sunrise (udaya) to sunset (asthamana).

The temple administration recently decided not to

conduct the ritual on Ekadashi, citing difficulties over crowd management and the desire to allow more devotees time for darshan.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by P.C. Harry and other members of the family with priestly rights in the shrine, contending that "Ekadashi" was the most important festival of the temple, and while it was an admitted fact that the age-old udayasthamana pooja was being conducted since 1972 on ekadasi day, in reality it was being performed from even before.

List steps for appointment of panel for temples, SC tells TN

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Tamil Nadu government to file an affidavit on its proposed actions over the appointment of the "Arangavalar Committee" (trustee committee) for all Hindu temples in the state.

A bench comprising Justices M.M. Sundresh and

Aravind Kumar asked the Tamil Nadu government counsel, "File an affidavit as to what you (state government) propose to do."

The SC order came after the state government submitted that it had sought applications for appointment of trustee committees from 31,000 temples and such panels were appointed in over 7,500 temples only.



SHORT TAKES

Out on bail, youth kills Odisha woman

Bhubaneswar: A shocking incident has emerged from Odisha's Sundargarh district, where a youth killed a young woman, dismembered her body and disposed of the parts in different locations. According to Jharsuguda superintendent of police Smit Parmar, the accused committed the crime fearing the victim's testimony in court, which he believed would lead to his conviction and a harsh prison sentence. The accused, identified as Kunu Kisan, was released on bail three months ago. He had previously been jailed following allegations of sexual assault filed by the victim's mother.

Fadnavis to drop 30% of Shinde Cabinet ministers

Continued from Page 1 cent of ministers in the Eknath Shinde-led government will not be repeated in Mr Fadnavis's government. All three parties -- the BJP, the Shiv Sena and the NCP -- have finalised the power-sharing formula. According to sources, the Shiv Sena will get 11 to 12 Cabinet berths, the NCP will get 10 berths and the remaining 23 will remain with the BJP. The Cabinet, however, is not going to be expanded to its full strength yet. Maharashtra BJP chief on Tuesday met the Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde at his residence to discuss the power-sharing formula. The sources said that the BJP is insisting on deciding the names of the Cabinet ministers from the Shiv Sena quota. However, it has caused unrest within the Shiv Sena, forcing Mr Shinde to drop his plan to visit New Delhi along with Mr Pawar and Mr Fadnavis. A senior BJP leader, requesting anonymity, said that the three leaders will meet the BJP central leadership for the final approval of the power-sharing formula and confirmation of the names of the ministers in the new government.

Kejriwal: No tieup with Cong in Delhi

Continued from Page 1 prospects in the upcoming polls, the Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav said that the party will contest the upcoming Assembly elections alone, as it is in a strong position to win the elections and come back to power. He stated categorically that Congress will not have any tie-up with the "corrupt" Arvind Kejriwal party for the Assembly polls, as Congress had to pay a heavy price for aligning with the AAP for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The AAP and the Congress fought the Lok Sabha elections in Delhi together earlier this year but lost all seven seats to the BJP. They, however, failed to reach a seat-sharing agreement ahead of the Haryana polls in October despite several rounds of talks.

Tamil poet Bharati's works continue to inspire us: PM

Continued from Page 1 to preserve them for future generations," Mr Modi said. The Prime Minister noted that the tradition of compiling significant works remains relevant today and said that the writings of Maharishi Vyasa, systematically preserved in the Puranas, still resonate. Citing a few examples, Mr Modi said that the complete works of Swami Vivekananda, Babasaheb Ambedkar's writings and speeches and Deen Dayal Upadhyay have greatly contributed to society and academia. Noting that efforts are going on to translate the *Thirukkural* into multiple languages, which will exemplify India's dedication to preserving and promoting its literary heritage, Mr Modi said that he got an opportunity to release the *Thirukkural* in Tok Pisin during the visit to Papua New Guinea and its Gujarati translation at his official residence. Lauding Subramania Bharati as a great thinker who worked with an eye on the needs of the country, the Prime Minister said that he worked in every direction that the country needed at that time. "Bharathiyar was not just the heritage of Tamil Nadu and the Tamil language, but a thinker whose every breath was dedicated to the service of Maa Bharati," he said. Underlining that the government worked continuously with

Future of world will be driven by knowledge, innovation

Bringing in reforms to remove barriers in path of youth: Modi

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that youth have the responsibility of building a developed India while the government was committed to providing every needful resource at the right time. Virtually interacting with innovators during the grand finale of the "Smart India Hackathon" (SIH), the Prime Minister said that the government is introducing reforms to remove roadblocks in the path of the country's youth. India's strength is its innovative youth and technology power. We have introduced a new National Education Policy to nurture a scientific mindset. The government is remov-

'Raj Kapoor's 100th birthday golden era for Indian cinema'

New Delhi, Dec. 11: Raj Kapoor's centenary year marks a golden era for Indian cinema, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said while suggesting that his family should take the legacy of showman forward by making a documentary on his international "soft power". Mr Modi met Raj Kapoor's grandchildren and other members of the family, including daughter Reema Jain and daughter-in-law Neetu Kapoor, on Tuesday evening ahead of the filmmaker's 100th birth anniversary on December 14. "Raj Kapoor's 100th birthday is an important milestone of India cinema's golden journey. It began with 1947's 'Neel Kamal' and we are on course to 2047. It is such a contribution to the country when we look back at this journey of 100 years," the PM said. "In the diplomatic world, we talk a lot about soft power. And at a time when this phrase didn't even exist, Raj Kapoor sahab established India's soft power all over the world. It was his big service to India," he added. The PM then suggested that the family should capture the global impact of Raj Kapoor and his films through visual format. Recalling the power of Raj Kapoor's movies, he narrated an incident about former PM Atal Behari Vajpayee and his deputy LK Advani.

— PTI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with noted scholar Seeni Viswanathan (second right) releases a compendium of complete works of great Tamil poet Subramania Bharati on his birth anniversary in New Delhi.

— PTI

ing roadblocks in the path of the country's youth by introducing reforms," Mr Modi said while addressing more than 1,300 student teams via video conferencing. He asserted that the

future of the world will be driven by knowledge and innovation and youngsters were India's hope and aspiration in changing situations. "Their perspective, thinking and energy are different," Mr

Modi said.

Stressing that everyone's aim was the same, the Prime Minister underscored that India should become the most innovative, progressive and prosperous country in the world. He pointed out that the world was acknowledging that India's strength was its youth power.

He further noted that since the inception of the SIH, about 14 lakh students had participated, formed two lakh teams and worked on about 3,000 problems. Mr Modi mentioned that more than 6,400 institutions were associated with it while hundreds of new startups were born because of the hackathon.

Mr Modi said that more than 7,000 ideas were submitted by students in 2017.



Nepalese Army Chief Gen. Ashok Raj Sigdel during inspection of a guard of honour at South Block in New Delhi on Wednesday.

— PTI

150-yr-old practice stopped by L-G admin

Won't allow Jammu's uniqueness to shrink, darbar move to be back

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, DEC. 11

J&K chief minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday reiterated that the "darbar move", the bi-annual shifting of the government between Srinagar and Jammu, J&K's summer and winter capitals, will be restored soon as Jammu's uniqueness will not be allowed to diminish. The practice of "darbar move" was started by visionary Dogra ruler Maharaja Ranbir Singh for strategic and climatic reasons. Over the past 150 years, it acted as a bridge between the dissimilar ethnicities of the twin regions, boosting Jammu's businesses as tens of thousands of government employees and other workforce shift to the city from the Kashmir Valley along with their



Omar Abdullah

would turn into the seat of government when Srinagar was snowbound and freezing. The "darbar move" will bring the government back to Srinagar for summer months in May.

However, following the Centre's revoking J&K's special status and splitting it up into two Union territories, lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha consigned the 150-year-old practice to oblivion. In June 2021, he, while announcing to discard the practice, claimed that apart from other difficul-

ties it devours ₹200 crores from the state exchequer every year. He also claimed that the administration's complete transition to e-office made it irrelevant and that now both the Jammu and Srinagar secretariats can function normally for 12 months.

While speaking at an event on Tuesday, Mr Abdullah said, "The hallmark of Jammu city was the darbar move. For six months, people from Srinagar would work here, creating a lively environment. It fostered interaction between people from both sides of the mountains, whether at Wave Mall, Residency Road or Gole Market." He said that his government will resume the darbar move in the future as "unfortunately, time constraints prevented us from doing so this time".

Naxals kill BJP activist; 3rd saffron neta slain in a week

Maoist shot dead, 2 jawans hurt in C'garh encounter

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY RAIPUR, DEC. 11

A BJP leader was abducted and then killed by Maoists in Bijapur district under south Bastar in Chhattisgarh, the police said on Wednesday. Mando Ram Kodium was abducted from his village of Somnapalli by a group of armed Maoists late Tuesday.

His body was found near the village on Wednesday, the police said.

Maoists brutally killed him by slitting his throat, the police said.

The Indravati National Park area committee of the outlawed CPI(Maoist) has claimed responsibility for his killing.

A leaflet found near his body said that he was given the death punishment for spying for the

THE BJP leader was abducted from his village of Somnapalli by a group of armed Maoists

A LEAFLET found near the body of the BJP leader said that he was given the death punishment for spying for the police

police. This was the third killing of a BJP leader in the Bijapur district in the last week.

Two ex-sarpanches belonging to the BJP were earlier killed by Maoists in two separate incidents.

In another incident, two jawans were injured and a Maoist was gunned down in an encounter in Bijapur district on Wednesday.

The encounter took place in the Munga forest under the Gangaloor area at around 11 am, a senior

police officer of Bastar said.

Acting on intelligence inputs on the presence of senior Maoist leaders such as divisional committee member Dinesh Modium, Maoists' company No. 2 commander Bella and the local militia platoon commander Kamlu along with around 40 Naxals in the forest, a security team of district reserve guard was sent to the area to launch a search operation, the police officer said.

The Maoists ambushed the security party leading to an encounter between them.

The body of a Naxal along with a nine mm pistol and explosives was recovered at the encounter site.

Two jawans suffered minor injuries and are out of danger now, the police said.

Threat to cheetahs as poachers enter Kuno

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, DEC. 11

Suspected poachers entered the Kuno National Park in Sheopur district in Madhya Pradesh a couple of days ago, posing a threat to cheetahs, official sources said on Wednesday.

They, however, fled the area after noticing the patrolling party in the forest, they added.

Local villagers spotted a group of poachers in the periphery of the park. They opened fire after noticing a patrolling party in the forest before fleeing the area, sources said.

"The incident might have occurred in the periphery areas of the national park. The patrolling party heard the sound of firing," Kuno field director Uttam

Kumar Sharma told this newspaper.

He, however, ruled out any threat to cheetahs, saying that poachers are chased away by patrolling parties whenever they try to enter the buffer zone of the reserve.

The Kuno park is guarded by a 200-strong forest staff, he added.

Another senior forest officer, requesting anonymity, said that in the case of Kuno, we cannot say that cheetahs are the target of the poachers.

Notably, two male cheetahs — Agni and Vayu — were released into the wild in Kuno on December 4. The remaining 22 cheetahs, including 12 cubs, await their release into the wild in phases.

The remaining 22 cheetahs have been left in the large enclosures in semi-wild condition since August last year.

75 Indians evacuated from Syria amid political turmoil

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Following the political instability and turmoil in Syria after the ouster of President Bashar al-Assad, India announced shortly after midnight on Wednesday that it had evacuated 75 of its nationals, including 44 pilgrims from J&K. All of them crossed over to Lebanon and will return to India by commercial flights.

"The Indian government evacuated 75 nationals from Syria, following recent developments in that country. The evacuees included 44 'zairreen'

from J&K who were stranded at Saïda Zainab. All Indians have safely crossed over to Lebanon and will return by available commercial flights," New Delhi said. The evacuation, coordinated by our embassies in Damascus and Beirut, was put into effect following our assessment of the security situation and requests from Indian nationals in Syria, the MEA said.

"India accords the highest priority to the safety and security of Indians abroad. Indians remaining in Syria are advised to stay in touch with the Indian embassy," it added.

Din over V-P, Soros issues stalls Parl

Continued from Page 1 that our party is saying that derogatory comments against me should be expunged. The Speaker said he will examine them. They (the BJP) continue to make all kinds of baseless allegations, but we have decided that we want the House to function. Whatever provocation they do, we will allow them. But we will try and run the House. We would want that somehow the House functions. We want there to be a debate and discussion. We want there to be a debate on the Constitution on December 13," Mr Gandhi later told mediapersons.

Congress deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi wrote a letter to Mr Birla urging him to examine the party's complaint against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey's "defamatory remarks" against Mr Gandhi and remove them from the record. He also said the Congress party is keen to participate in the legislative business.

During the Zero Hour on Wednesday, Mr Gogoi taunted the government for neglecting Manipur and diverting the nation's attention by talking about Mr Soros. Later in the day, the Lok

Sabha passed a bill to amend railway laws. Responding to a debate on the Railway (Amendment) Bill, railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that a fake narrative was set afloat that the amendment will privatise railways.

"A few members have said the bill will lead to the privatisation of railways, in an attempt to set a fake narrative. I want to appeal to them with all sincerity not to do this, their one fake narrative about the Constitution has already failed," Mr Vaishnaw said, adding that the amendment will not lead to the privatisation of the national carrier.

In the evening, during the discussion on the Disaster Management Bill, Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and TMC leader Kalyan Banerjee got engaged in a verbal duel after the latter commented on the minister's look and family background, forcing adjournment for the day.

The Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day on Wednesday as the Opposition and the Treasury benches traded charges over the impeachment notice against the House Chairman and

vice-president.

Soon after the Upper House reassembled at noon following the day's first adjournment, Leader of the House J.P. Nadda accused the Congress of standing with Mr Soros in seeking to destabilise the country and demanded a discussion.

Mr Nadda condemned the Congress for the Opposition's no-confidence notice against Mr Dhankhar, saying it was an attempt by the Opposition to divert attention from the "ties between the top Congress leadership and Mr Soros". He called for the debate on the issue as it "concerns the country's sovereignty and internal and external security".

Union parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju said the Opposition must respect the presiding officers and if the Congress attacks the dignity of the V-P, the Treasury benches will protect it.

"You stand with forces who are against the country. Notice has been given against the Chairman...it is difficult to find such a Chairman. He has always talked of the welfare of the poor and protected the Constitution. We will not allow the drama of

notice to succeed. What is the relationship between Mr Soros and the Congress party? This should be revealed... This Congress should apologise to the nation," Mr Rijiju said. He also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, in a "Gandhiringiri" of sorts, the Opposition MPs greeted the BJP MPs in Parliament premises with the tricolours and red roses, asking them to ensure that the Houses function and all issues, including the Adani matter, are discussed.

Ms Vadra, along with the MPs from the Congress, DMK, JMM and the Left parties, among others, stood in front of the Makar Dwar steps in the Parliament complex, with most of them carrying small tricolour cards and red roses.

Many MPs also carried placards reading "Don't let the country be sold". This comes a day after MPs carried dark blue "jholas" with caricatures of the Prime Minister and industrialist Gautam Adani printed on one side and "Modi-Adani Bhai-Bhai" written on the obverse.

THE ASIAN AGE

12 DECEMBER 2024

Top court must pull up errant high court judge

That the Supreme Court of India has taken note of the reports of a hate speech given by Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of the Allahabad high court, that it has called for its details and particulars from the high court and that the matter is under consideration of the apex court must bring immense relief to those who believe in the Constitution and the ideals it propounds.

A sitting judge commenting on the desirability of the introduction of uniform civil code in the country needs to cause no consternation in anyone's mind but if he thinks it can be camouflage for spewing venom on a section of the citizens following a particular religion, then it is an issue for all the right-thinking people. And he did not stop at that, but suggested that the "country would function as per the wishes of the majority". He "explained" that "the law, in fact, works according to the majority... Only what benefits the welfare and happiness of the majority will be accepted."

It does not require a lecture to be given by a member of one of India's oldest constitutional courts to decipher the basics of representative democracy. But the learned judge's utterances, suggestive of the pre-eminence of the majoritarian ideas in the running of the country, are contrary to the basic principles of the Constitution, constitutionalism and every idea they seek to promote. That he aired his narrative of democratic governance at a meeting of an organisation affiliated to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the cantankerous group that advocates violent Hindutva, obviates an interpretation of his intentions.

This country was born into streams of blood spilled from a million innocent human beings among whom were Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Still the Constitution founded this country on the principles of equality and secularism. Every article in the Constitution, starting from the first, is an assurance the people of this country have accepted and given to themselves that they respect the rights of the individual and cannot be subservient to the might of the state. And, too, there is no place for crass majoritarianism.

This country, unlike the honourable judge would believe and want others to believe, does not function as per the wishes of the majority; it runs on the tenets of the Constitution. True, we have representative democracy and those who get the majority sit in legislatures and make laws and run the country; but to interpret it as a way to impose the wishes of the majority on the minority is puerile, uninformed and downright silly. And when it comes from a high court judge, it triggers the suspicion on the way members of the higher judiciary have imbibed the spirit of the Constitution, constitutional morality and constitutional governance. An early intervention and an intense tutorial by the Supreme Court on the basic principles of democratic governance and constitutional values for this judge, and those of his ilk, are an immediate necessity.

How 'brain rot' got 'manifested'

It's only words, and words are all I have to take your heart away,' sang the BeeGees in a romantic hit. The enduring power and influence of words is probably never more manifest than in love though the Bard might contest that as he said, "Words are easy like the wind." And yet there is no contesting that words are the foundation of sharing knowledge, which is particularly important considering the world is at a stage when everything is being driven by knowledge, most of all in the form of artificial intelligence.

It is that time of the year when lexicographers are busy analysing the use of words that best capture the social trends and events of the last 11 months. And naturally enough, "polarisation" came up trumps, pardon the pun, in the Merriam Webster dictionary in election year when about two billion if the world's people voted, but none more polarised by the politics of division and hate than the Americans. They chose Donald Trump whose reign is certain to coin more words to feature as "word of the year" in time to come.

TikTok may be banned in India and faces one in the USA too, but its effect on social trends is an undeniable facet of modern life. A word mentioned on it sarcastically by a transwoman became the dictionary.com pick — "demure", as in "so demure, so mindful" that became a talking point. Everyone, from US President Biden who used it to describe his signing off on student debt to brand-conscious celebrities, liping it to indicate they are in clover.

"Demure", along with Cambridge's "manifest" as in "to manifest" in the sense of "to imagine achieving something you want, in the belief doing so will make it more likely to happen", comprised the happy part of the year's word hunt. And then came the warning of where the world is going in this hyper connected world of the "www" as Oxford's 19th century word "brain-rot" serves to remind everyone of the dangers of deterioration of one's mental or intellectual state owing to overconsumption of trivial content, especially on social media.

The concept of word of the year is German and around 30 years old, but Australian Macquarie "enshittification" could claim originality that encapsulates the thoughts of many that institutions, great and small, are going towards the unmentionable, as are goods and services, especially online platform driven by the profit motive. Well, the good, the bad and the ugly of the "word" as the ultimate tool of communication is out there for the year.

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KAUSHIK MITTER

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Subhani



Will Trump's tariff threats trigger a wider trade war?



Abhijit Bhattacharyya

Long before he enters the White House on January 20, 2025, US President-elect Donald Trump has already created global tremors over his plans to implement a "Universal Baseline Tariff" on imports after assuming office. Mr Trump has signalled that he's a man in a hurry, but his repeated harping on plans to "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) is an acknowledgment that the United States is no longer "great". To do so, he has identified tariffs as the first effective "baby-step" to deter those he believes are inflicting damage on US global trade, with the deficit soaring to unacceptable levels. Mr Trump feels he has no choice but to fix the imbalance in US trade and markets.

What is a tariff? In short, it's a tax imposed by governments on imported goods. All nations must collect taxes for revenue generation for their projects and programmes. In legal terms, it's "a schedule or system of duties imposed by a government on imported or exported goods"; but in the United States, tariffs are imposed only on imported goods. That said, Mr Trump's acute feeling is that the US was "robbed" by some of his own countrymen in the past and the Communist Party of China (CPC) dictator, who together pumped up the trade deficit to an unacceptable level of hundreds of billions of dollars. Mr Trump has vowed to bring American industry back to its glory days and curb the entry of cheaper foreign goods, damaging his country's production line and people's consumption habits.

Mr Trump campaigned to impose stiff duties on some identified adversarial elements like China. He wants

to impose an across-the-board 25 per cent tariffs on all imports from Canada and Mexico, and an extra 10 per cent on all Chinese goods. Mr Trump has rung the bell for a fresh US-China conflict, beyond the usual combat zone of physical violence. How ironic can things turn from friend to foe?

Over two decades ago, soon after the launch of the US "global war on terror" following the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on America, China entered the World Trade Organisation on December 11, 2001. Thus, as the US started spending dollars to crush "terror", China slyly entered the terror-struck psyche of the US backyard in its quest for dollar revenues. The US got bogged down in the quagmire of the terror war for two decades, while China filled the vacuum to enter the world trade system and got a virtual free pass away from the American gaze.

Today, however, a closer look at Mr Trump's talk on future tariffs on a bigger canvas reveals a rather complicated scenario. 'The World Bank 2022 data shows that the percentage of customs and other duties in America's total revenue collection was only 3.241 per cent. It was \$80 billion in 2022 and \$97 billion in 2023. In comparison, the individual income-tax share stood at 45.3 per cent; followed by social insurance tax 21.9 per cent, consumption tax 15.7 per cent, property tax 10.6 per cent and corporate tax 6.5 per cent. In this situation, will Mr Trump be able to hike the share of tariffs on imported goods to double figure percentage and maintain the balance between economic growth and a possible slowdown due to the reduced compulsive consumption demand for cheap Chinese goods

The worst-case scenario could be 'anti-dumping' tariffs or duties designed to prevent foreign businesses from artificially lowering prices and gaining unfair advantages outside their bona fide market

with which millions of Americans have got used to over three decades?

These figures show that tariffs/import duties haven't been a priority for the laissez-faire economics of US capitalism as the primary source of state revenues. This despite the fact that the first US treasury secretary, Alexander Hamilton, was firm on "using tariffs to develop nascent industries" with an escape route at his October 2024 Chicago rally: "There are no tariffs... All you have to do is build your plant in the US and you don't have any tariffs". No wonder Mr Trump trumpets himself as a deal-maker! He appears to be throwing carrots to foreign companies to "invest directly in the US to gain tariff-free access to its consumer markets".

One may wonder at this small window amid Mr Trump's tariff threats. Could it be an indication of a possible change of mind, or something else? In my view, tariffs can't be a one-step solution for the American economy. Tariffs are an indirect tax, not a direct tax like income-tax. History shows that while a developed economy depends more on direct taxes than tariffs, it is the opposite for less developed or weak economies. The US, being a developed nation, must weigh all the pros and cons before imposing indiscriminate tariffs on foreign or imported goods. If it is to "protect" domestic manufacturers against foreign competition, as Mr Trump claims,

it will also lead to "retaliatory" tariffs by those under pressure to make trade concessions. That will not help American exports.

The worst-case scenario, however, could be "anti-dumping" tariffs or duties designed to prevent foreign business from artificially lowering their prices and gaining unfair advantages outside their bona fide market. On several occasions, incidentally, India has introduced anti-dumping duties, and the latest could be on the cheap and inferior Chinese steel which is swamping India's domestic markets and damaging indigenous steel producers.

Where will then Mr Trump's potential tariff imposition act, as a combination of "protective", "preferential" and "anti-dumping duties", lead to MAGA? Will Donald Trump's MAGA, like Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), be the two rivals' respective strategic tools to strengthen their own positions, or will they continue to try to destroy the opponent? Only time will tell. But for now, it's the internal economy and polity of the United States and the external power play of the People's Republic of China which will reach out far and wide to influence small, weak, but strategically located countries.

Nothing can be said for sure in the few weeks left before Mr Trump takes charge of the US government, except to expect the unexpected and await unpredictable outcomes. But one thing is certain. Making deals with China or the 27-nation European Union cannot have a uniform formula. There have to be different tariffs with varying terms for different terrains, and that is unlikely to be easier said than done for either the US or its perceived rivals, competitors or partners. A mini trade war could be a prelude to a mega one.

The writer is a former chief commissioner of customs who has served in Hyderabad and then New Delhi

LETTERS

MALHOTRA'S JOB

Shaktikanta Das' time at the helm was marked by reasoned steady policy-making and deft crisis management as he not only steered the economy through the turbulent Covid crisis but also foresaw its recovery especially in the financial sector. Das also had an uncanny knack for ensuring a harmonious relationship between Mint street and North Block. Sanjay Malhotra is now entrusted with the arduous task of navigating India through geopolitical headwinds and uncertain global times. Besides interest rates, Mr Malhotra will also have to deal with a range of issues including the fluctuating dollar exchange rate and financial market volatility. He has his task cut out.

Vijay Singh Adhikari Nainital, Uttarakhand

IMPEACH HIM!

IT IS TRULY unbecoming of Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, sitting judge of Allahabad high court, to attend an event organised by VHP and praise the work of the RSS. But what is shocking is that he has even gone on record to say that India would be run as per the wishes of the majority community. He has further ascertained that the uniform civil code will be implemented at any cost. How can such a communal person be allowed to continue as the judge of a high court? He stands thoroughly exposed. Proceedings must be initiated to impeach him for his venom-soaked agenda.

Tharcus S. Fernando Chennai

INDIA IS RIGHT

THE INDIA bloc's move to remove the Vice-President, though belated, is welcome. Rajya Sabha chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar has been blatantly partisan favouring the BJP members and the government while neglecting Opposition members. The chairman of the House, who must rise above petty party politics to be a no-party man, is found to be a BJP acolyte. In the process he has thrown away the high tradition of impartiality the chair has displayed. He should introspect and correct his course.

Sankar Paul Chakdaha, West Bengal

Skand Tayal



The consequences for South Korea's Prez after 6-hour martial law drama

South Korea and the world witnessed a train of unimaginable political events on December 3-4, 2024, which left them bewildered and confused. South Korean President Yoon Suk-Yeol's sudden and surprising imposition of martial law in the late evening of December 3 was not supported by his party or the Cabinet. The President perhaps consulted only his defence minister before taking such a momentous step. The Army chief followed his command as the Army units were initially deployed and surrounded the National Assembly.

After swift action by the National Assembly, that unanimously rejecting the imposition of martial law by a vote of 190 out of the total 300, President Yoon withdrew his ill-considered move after a six-hour drama.

The leader of President Yoon's Peoples Power Party apologised to the public in a formal statement and called for the country's defence minister, Kim Yong-Hyun, to be dismissed. Defence minister Kim chose to resign on Dec. 4 itself, and took full responsibility for the events of the previous day. He was subsequently arrested for treason on Dec. 8. Three senior commanders involved in the martial law operations were suspended.

The South Korean constitution does permit the imposition of martial law in case of threats to national security, but this needs the approval of a majority in the National Assembly. Unfortunately, the Army chief had obeyed the unconstitutional order of the President and deployed forces in Seoul

surrounding the National Assembly. However, the brave National Assembly members rushed to the legislature in the night, defying the security cordon, and passed the unanimous motion against martial law with all 190 members present voting against it. This reportedly included 18 members of the President's own party.

It is to the South Korean media's credit that it totally ignored the martial law decree of restrictions on its reporting and gave full coverage to the unfolding events at the National Assembly. Also, thousands of ordinary citizens gathered outside the National Assembly during the night itself demanding the revocation of martial law. While declaring martial law, President Yoon said the Opposition's actions were "clear anti-state behaviour aimed at inciting rebellion" and claimed their actions had "paralysed state affairs and turned the National Assembly in a den of criminals".

In the face of unified defiance by National Assembly members, the media and citizens, President Yoon retracted and reversed his decision of imposing martial law within six hours. One can reasonably assume that the commander of the 28,000-strong US military forces in South Korea may have given some sane advice to both the President and the local Army commanders.

Since emerging from the brutal Japanese colonial rule in 1945, the Korean Peninsula has had a turbulent history. After long and painful mass protests by students and workers, South Korea eventually saw the dawn of real democracy in 1986. The people

of South Korea are just not prepared to go back to the bad old days of 1950-86 and give up their hard-earned civil liberties and democratic rights.

To prevent any ambitious leader to again usurp power, South Korea's constitution has a clear division of power. The President is directly elected but only for one five-year term. After his election, with a slim majority of less than one per cent in 2022, President Yoon's PPP lost heavily in the April 2024 elections to the National Assembly. At present, 192 of the 300 seats are with the combined Opposition led by the main rival, the Democratic Party.

With its control over the National Assembly, the Opposition had demanded major changes in the President's budget proposals and also did not approve several of his important appointments. This concerted Opposition led to a deadlock in major decision-making and perhaps the patience of President Yoon snapped, resulting in his taking the drastic and unilateral decision of imposing martial law.

President Yoon's political career seems to be over. The National Assembly has already commenced impeachment proceedings against him, which requires a two-thirds majority, or 200 of its 300 members. On December 7, 105 members of the PPP united to oppose the motion for impeachment and it was not passed.

The PPP is trying to find ways to curb the President's executive powers but his continuation in office with effective power exercised by Prime Minister Han Duck-soo. The PPP wants to avoid the

removal of President Yoon as a fresh presidential election is bound to return the opposition Democratic Party candidate.

Also, both the South Korean police and the prosecutor's office have booked President Yoon as a suspect on charges of treason, mutiny and abuse of power. The law permits the President's arrest and a ban has been imposed on his overseas travel. South Korean society has evolved since 1980s as a democratic polity with strong civil society institutions. Students, trade unions, religious congregations and scores of well-funded NGOs are independent of the government and command a considerable following. Opinion polls indicate that over 70 per cent of citizens are in favour of President Yoon's immediate removal from office.

Regrettably, after the establishment of real democracy in the late 1980s the "politics of vendetta" is being pursued in South Korea. Successive Presidents have been either sentenced to prison terms after completing their term or impeached.

The US has expressed its "grave concern" on the developments and welcomed the lifting of martial law. Other friends of South Korea, including India, watched the events with disbelief but refrained from making any comment. All heaved a sigh of relief as the events did not lead to any violence. The situation will now hopefully be dealt with under the provisions of South Korea's Constitution.

The writer is a retired diplomat and has served as India's ambassador to South Korea

## SHORT TAKES

## WHO: MALARIA MORTALITY AT PRE-COVID LEVEL

Geneva, Dec. 11: Malaria mortality has fallen back to levels seen before Covid-19, the WHO said on Wednesday, but called for faster progress against the disease that killed nearly some 5.97,000 people last year.

In a new report, the World Health Organisation estimated that there were 263 million cases of malaria worldwide in 2023 — 11 million more than a year earlier — while the death toll remained relatively stable.

In terms of mortality, “we have come back to pre-pandemic numbers”, WHO’s Arnaud Le Menach said.

## KAZAKHSTAN MULLS NEW TIME ZONE CHANGE

Almaty, Dec. 11: Kazakhstan on Wednesday signalled that it could reverse a controversial change in time zone, a rare concession to public anger in the tightly controlled Central Asian nation.

Kazakhstan in March moved to five hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), forcing most regions of the vast nation — which spans 3,000 km east to west — to turn their clocks back one hour.

The move prompted uproar from citizens who said it disrupted their biological rhythm and frustration has not subsided.

## NEPAL-INDIA MEET TO PROMOTE MAHA KUMBH

Kathmandu, Dec. 11: The first Nepal-India Tourism Meet was held here to promote Maha Kumbh 2025 and strengthen tourism connections between the two neighbours, with officials underscoring the need to leverage the sector’s potential.

The event was jointly organised on Tuesday by the Nepal Tourism Board and the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu.

It focused on promoting Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh and creating business-to-business (B2B) connections to foster the implementation of circuit tourism between Nepal and India.

## \$10 MN OFFERED BY U.S. FOR CHINESE HACKER

Washington, Dec. 11: The United States offered a \$10 million reward on Tuesday for information leading to the arrest of a Chinese man and co-conspirators wanted for hacking computer firewalls.

Guan Tianfeng, 30, is believed to be living in China’s Sichuan province, according to the state department. An indictment charging Guan with conspiracy to commit computer fraud and conspiracy to commit wire fraud was unsealed on Tuesday. The treasury department said that it had imposed sanctions on the company Guan worked for.

## GOOGLE UNVEILS LATEST AI MODEL, GEMINI 2.0

San Francisco, Dec. 11: Google on Wednesday announced the launch of Gemini 2.0, its most advanced artificial intelligence model to date, as the world’s tech giants race to take the lead in the fast developing technology.

CEO Sundar Pichai said the new model would be marking what the company calls “a new agentic era” in AI development, with AI models designed to understand and make decisions about the world around you.

“Gemini 2.0 is about making information much more useful,” Pichai said.

## REBELS CONTROL BORDER REGION OF MYANMAR

Bangkok, Dec. 11: A Myanmar ethnic armed group has claimed complete control of a key region along the Bangladesh border, piling further pressure on the junta battling opponents elsewhere across the country. Fighting has rocked western Rakhine state since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked security forces in November last year.

AA fighters have seized swathes of territory in the state that is home to China and India-backed port projects and all but cut off state capital Sittwe.



Israeli tanks manoeuvre next to the security fence near the so-called Alpha Line that separates the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights from Syria, on Wednesday. — AP

## 38 Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza

Cairo, Dec. 11: Israeli air attacks across the Gaza Strip killed at least 38 Palestinians on Wednesday, most of them in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya on the northern edge of the enclave, medics said.

The Beit Lahiya strike killed at least 22 people, including women and children, health officials said. Relatives listed the names of the dead on social media.

More than 30 people were living in the multi-storey building before it was struck, and several family members remained missing as rescue operations continued through the morning, the Palestinian Wafa news agency said.

The Israeli military told Reuters it had carried out a strike targeting Hamas militants near the Kamal Adwan Hospital, which is located between Beit Lahiya and Jabalia, towns on the northern fringe of Gaza under Israeli siege

## BIBI AIDE ON TRIAL IN CASE TROUBLING PM

Jerusalem, Dec. 11: As the corruption trial of Benjamin Netanyahu resumed this week, Israel was gripped by another scandal involving the Prime Minister and the alleged leaking of classified documents.

Eli Feldstein, an ex-adviser to Netanyahu, is accused in the case of leaking a classified document related to Gaza hostage negotiations to shift critical media coverage of the Israeli leader. — AFP

for two months. It said it was continuing to examine the incident but described the number of fatalities reported by Palestinian medics and media as “inaccurate” and at odds with the army’s information.

## Anti-Pak Army stand: 22 nabbed

Lahore, Dec. 11: Pakistani authorities have booked 150 suspects and arrested 22 of them, mostly belonging to Imran Khan’s party, for allegedly propagating against the army on social media on the killings of the party workers in Islamabad on November 26.

According to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), at least 12 party workers were killed and hundreds wounded when law enforcers opened fire on the protesters. It also claims that around 105 party workers have been missing since then.

Following the incident, Khan’s supporters started blaming the Pakistan Army for opening fire on the peaceful protesters.

The government denied



Khalil Haqqani

## SUICIDE BLAST KILLS AFGHAN REFUGEES MIN.

Kabul, Dec. 11: The Afghan minister for refugees was killed on Wednesday in a suicide explosion at the ministry’s offices in the capital Kabul, a government source told AFP.

“Unfortunately an explosion happened at the ministry of refugees and minister Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani has been martyred along with some of his colleagues,” the official said, requesting not to be named. He added that the explosion was caused by a suicide blast.

Khalil Ur-Rahman Haqqani — who is on the US sanctions list and never appears without an automatic weapon in his hand — was the brother of Jalaluddin Haqqani, who founded the feared Haqqani network responsible for some of the most violent attacks during the Taliban’s two-decade insurgency. — AFP

## Tomb of Assad’s father set on fire in Syrian hometown

Khamenei alleges toppling of Assad was result of a plan by US and Israel

Qardaha, Dubai, Damascus, Beirut, Dec. 11: The tomb of ousted Syrian president Bashar al-Assad’s father Hafez was torched in his hometown of Qardaha, AFP footage taken on Wednesday showed, with rebel fighters in fatigues and young men watching it burn.

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that the toppling of Bashar al-Assad was the result of a plan by the United States and Israel. “One of Syria’s neighbours also had a role,” he said. He did not name the country but appeared to be referring to Turkey, which has backed anti-Assad rebels.

“What happened in Syria was mainly planned in the command rooms of America and Israel. We have evidence of this. A neighbouring government of Syria was also involved,” Khamenei said.

Syria’s new prime minister said the Islamist-led alliance that ousted president Bashar al-Assad will “guarantee” the rights of all religious groups and called on the millions who fled the war to return home. He also said that all who were involved in torturing and killing detainees in Syrian prisons would not be pardoned.

“We will pursue them in Syria, and we ask countries to hand over those who fled so we can achieve justice,” Golani said in a

3 We will pursue all who were involved in torturing and killing detainees in Syrian prisons, and we ask countries to hand over those who fled so we can achieve justice.”

— ABU MOHAMMED AL-GOLANI  
Syria’s new PM

statement published on the Syrian state TV’s Telegram channel.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor told AFP the rebels had set fire to the mausoleum, located in the Latakia heartland of Assad’s Alawite community.

AFP footage showed parts of the mausoleum ablaze and damaged, with the tomb of Hafez torched and destroyed.

The vast elevated structure atop a hill has an intricate architectural design with several arches, its exterior embellished with ornamentation etched in stone. It also houses the tombs of other Assad family members, including Bashar’s brother Bassel, who was being groomed to inherit power before he was killed in a road accident in 1994. On Sunday, a lightning offensive by Islamist-led rebels seized key cities before reaching Damascus and forcing Assad to flee, ending more than 50 years of his family’s rule. — Agencies



Rebel fighters stand next to the burning gravesite of Syria’s late president Hafez al-Assad at his mausoleum in the family’s ancestral village of Qardaha in Latakia province on Wednesday, after it was stormed by opposition factions. — AFP

## Kurdish-led force announces US-brokered truce in Manbij

Beirut, Dec. 11: The Kurdish-led force controlling northeast Syria said on Wednesday it had reached a US-brokered ceasefire with Turkish-backed fighters in Manbij, after Islamist-led rebels toppled Bashar al-Assad’s government.

The clashes in Manbij, an Arab-majority city, have killed 218 combatants

since Turkish-backed groups launched offensives in the north following the ouster of Assad on Sunday.

“We have reached a ceasefire agreement in Manbij via US mediation,” said Syrian Democratic Forces commander Mazloum Abdi. He said fighters of the SDF-affiliated Manbij Military Council “will be

withdrawn from the area as soon as possible”.

“Our goal is to reach a ceasefire across Syria and start a political process for the future of the country,” he added. Abdi told reporters last week that the UN had been in touch with the SDF about helping to “shape a political resolution for Syria”. — AFP



Rescuers searching for people under the rubble of a medical clinic destroyed by a missile in the city of Zaporizhzhia, on Wednesday. — AFP

## Ukraine hit sets oil depot ablaze

Kyiv, Dec. 11: Ukraine attacked Russian border regions with missiles and drones early on Wednesday, sparking a fire at an oil depot and damaging an “industrial facility”, officials said.

Two separate attacks targeted Russia’s southern Rostov region and western Bryansk region, both of which have been hit by cross-border Ukrainian fire throughout Moscow’s nearly three-year invasion.

Videos purportedly taken in the Bryansk region showed a distant fireball illuminating the night

sky over an urban area.

Meanwhile air raid sirens could be heard in footage from the southern Rostov region. Kyiv said it struck an oil depot being used to “supply the Russian occupation army” in the Bryansk region, while the governor of Russia’s Rostov region said a Ukrainian missile attack damaged an “industrial enterprise” in the port city of Taganrog, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed “tangible blows against Russian targets last night” that he said would help bring the war to an end. — AFP

## Trudeau governor of Canada: Trump

New York, Dec. 11: US President-elect Donald Trump’s recent dinner with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his visit to Paris for the reopening of the Notre Dame Cathedral were not just exercises in policy and diplomacy. They were also prime trolling opportunities for Trump.

Throughout his first term in the White House and during his campaign to return, Trump has spun out countless provocative, antagonizing and mocking statements. There were his belittling nicknames for political opponents, his impressions of other political figures and the plentiful memes he shared on social media.

Now that’s he’s preparing to return to the Oval Office, Trump is back at it, and his trolling is attracting more attention and eyerolls.

On Sunday, Trump turned a photo of himself seated near a smiling first lady Jill Biden at the Notre Dame ceremony into a social media promo for his new perfume and cologne line, with the tag line, A fragrance your

enemies cant resist! The first lady’s office declined to comment.

When Trudeau hastily flew to Florida to meet with Trump last month over the President-elect’s threat to impose a 25% tax on all Canadian products entering the US, the Republican tossed out the idea that Canada become the 51st US state.

The Canadians passed off the comment as a joke, but Trump has continued to play up the dig, including in a post Tuesday morning on his social media network referring to the prime minister as Governor Justin Trudeau of the Great State of Canada.

After decades as an entertainer and tabloid fixture, Trump has a flair for the provocative that is aimed at attracting attention and, in his most recent incarnation as a politician, mobilising fans. He has long relished poking at his opponents, both to demean and minimize them and to delight supporters who share his irreverent comments and posts widely online and cheer for them in person. — AP

## PIO MP flags Britain ban on first-cousin marriages

London, Dec. 11: An Indian-origin member of Parliament has expressed his concerns over a new bill tabled in the House of Commons that seeks to ban marriages between first cousins over the greater risk of children’s birth defects associated with the practice.

The Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship) Bill got its first reading in Parliament on Tuesday when backbench Conservative MP Richard Holden used the 10-Minute Rule process to introduce his proposals.

Iqbal Mohamed, elected as a first-time Independent MP from Dewsbury and Batley, spoke out against the motion to caution that the matter should be treated as a public health awareness one and not by imposing a ban. “An estimated 35 per cent to 50 per cent of all sub-Saharan African

3 An estimated 35 per cent to 50 per cent of all sub-Saharan African populations either prefer or accept cousin marriage, and it is extremely common in the Middle East and South Asia.

— IQBAL MOHAMED  
Independent MP

populations either prefer or accept cousin marriage, and it is extremely common in the Middle East and South Asia,” stated Mohamed.

“The reason the practice is so common is that ordinary people see family intermarriage as something that is very positive overall; as something that helps to build family bonds and puts families on a more secure financial foothold, Mohamed said. However, as is well docu-

mented, it is not without health risks for the children of those relationships, some of whom will be born out of wedlock,” he said. “Instead of stigmatising those who are in cousin marriages, or those who are inclined to be, a much more positive approach would be to facilitate advanced genetic test screening for prospective married couples, as is the case in all Arab countries in the Persian Gulf, and to run health education programmes targeting those communities where the practice is most common,” he added.

Introducing the proposal, MP Richard Holden argued that while many may wonder why first-cousin marriage is not already illegal, there remain certain diaspora communities with high rates of first-cousin marriages. — PTI



Protesters call for the ouster of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol near the National Assembly in Seoul on Wednesday. — AFP

ing an insurrection” and “abuse of authority to obstruct the exercise of rights”.

During a parliamentary hearing, the commission-

er general of the Korea Correctional Service said the former minister tried to kill himself minutes before his arrest was announced. — AFP

## COOLER | EARTH

La Nina to lower temperatures, says WMO

## La Nina will be weak, says UN

Geneva, Dec. 11: The cooling weather phenomenon La Nina could appear in coming months, but if it does it will likely be too “weak and short-lived” to significantly impact soaring global temperatures, the UN said Wednesday.

There is currently a 55-per cent likelihood of La Nina conditions emerging by the end of February, the United Nations’ World Meteorological Organisation said in its latest update. There was a similar chance of the phenomenon developing between Feb-

ruary and April, it added.

The WMO had earlier this year voiced hope the return of La Nina would help lower temperatures slightly after months of global heat records fuelled in part by La Nina’s opposite number, the warming El Nino weather pattern, which gripped the planet for a year from June 2023.

WMO chief Celeste Saulo warned in Wednesday’s statement that a possible La Nina would have little impact following a 2024, which is on track to be the hottest year on record.

3 Even if a La Nina event does emerge, its short-term cooling impact will be insufficient to counterbalance the warming effect of record heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

— CELESTE SAULO  
WMO chief

ect of record heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere,” she said. “Even in the absence of El Nino or La Nina conditions since May, we have witnessed an extraordinary series of extreme weather events, including record-breaking rainfall and flooding which have unfortunately become the new norm in our changing climate.” La Nina refers to a naturally occurring climate phenomenon that cools the ocean surface temperatures in large swathes. — AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	81,526.14	0.02
Nifty 50	24,641.80	0.13
S&P 500*	6,072.89	0.63
Dollar (₹)	84.83	0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	108.00	0.20
Euro (₹)	89.08	0.31
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	78,515▲177	0.23
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	72.99	1.11
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.719	0.013
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.242	0.021

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Tivolt Electric inks deal to enhance charging infra

Tivolt Electric Vehicles, the EV division of Murugappa Group, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Tata Power Renewable Energy to enhance e-mobility for commercial vehicles. The deal aims to build a robust electric vehicle charging ecosystem by leveraging Tata Power's expertise in diversified EV charging solutions and Tivolt Electric Vehicles' growing network of electric commercial vehicles.



Swiggy declines about 4% on profit booking

Shares of food delivery and quick-commerce major Swiggy declined more than 4 per cent on Wednesday as investors booked profits after the one-month lock-in period for anchor investors expired. On the NSE, the stock slipped 4.46 per cent to close at ₹519.5 apiece. Swiggy's scrip fell 3.84 per cent to settle at ₹522.7 per share on the BSE. As many as 6.5 cr shares became eligible to trade.

Cipla gets nod from CDSCO for insulin drug

Drug maker Cipla said it has received approval from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation for the distribution and marketing of Afrezza inhalation powder in India. Afrezza, a product created and manufactured by MannKind Corporation (MannKind) USA, is used to improve glycemic control in adult patients with diabetes mellitus. The medication dissolves rapidly upon oral inhalation into the lungs.



Travel Food files draft prospectus with Sebi for IPO

Mumbai based Travel Food Services, operating a travel quick service restaurant and a lounge business across airports in India and Malaysia, has filed its draft red herring prospectus with market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for ₹2,000 cr initial public offering. The proposed IPO by the company with a face value of ₹1 is entirely an offer for sale by Kapur Family Trust.

Will maintain continuity, stability in policy: Sanjay

New governor calls for collaboration between banks, financial institutions

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, DEC. 11

Newly appointed Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Sanjay Malhotra on Wednesday said the central bank will maintain continuity and stability in policy but emphasised the need to remain alert and agile in the wake of the current global economic environment.

"The world is changing, there is political uncertainty around the world. We have to be conscious that we have to be alert and agile to meet any challenges, while maintaining policy continuity," said Malhotra after assuming as 26th governor of RBI.

He stated 'stability, trust, and growth' as the key pillars for policymakers to work on. He listed financial inclusion as a priority and called for collaboration between banks, financial institutions and governments. He stressed on greater use of technology to promote financial inclusion.

"We are in a totally different world today than 30 years ago with respect to technology; RBI has also made a big contribution in this regard. How we use

BIG TASKS AHEAD

● Describes new post as a huge responsibility, acknowledges the weight of the position in steering nation's monetary policy and financial stability.



● RBI's new governor begins his tenure at a time when the country has recorded its lowest GDP growth in seven quarters, as the economy grew by 5.4 per cent during the July-September quarter of FY25.



Various tasks include monetary policy, foreign exchange reserves management, currency control, payment systems. So I will continue to uphold the legacy and take it forward.

— SANJAY MALHOTRA, RBI governor.

LISTS GREATER USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO CUT COSTS

● Cautions about risks that come with technological advancements, stresses need for safeguards while supporting innovation.



technology to reduce costs, make financial inclusion all-pervasive is a key theme we will work on," Malhotra said.

He cautioned about risks that come with technological advancements and stressed the need for safeguards while supporting innovation.

Malhotra, acknowledging the weight of the position in steering the nation's monetary policy

and financial stability, described his new role as a huge responsibility.

"You have various tasks entrusted to the central bank, including monetary policy, foreign exchange reserves management, currency control, payment systems. I will continue to uphold the legacy and take it forward," said Malhotra, who succeeded Shaktikanta Das. Malhotra begins his

tenure at a time when the economy has recorded its lowest GDP growth in seven quarters, as GDP grew by 5.4 per cent during the July-September quarter of FY25 and retail inflation surged to 6.21 per cent in October, surpassing the RBI's target range for the first time in a year. The new governor did not take any questions during his maiden press conference.

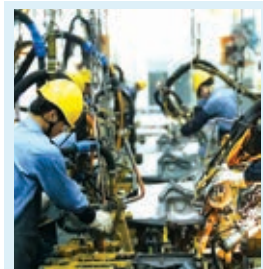
ADB projects India economy may grow at 6.5% in FY25, 7% in FY26

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, DEC. 11

The Asian Development Bank has lowered India's GDP growth projections for FY25 to 6.5 per cent from 7 per cent estimated in September as well as the projection for FY26 to 7 per cent from 7.2 per cent predicted earlier owing to tighter prudential norms and lower than expected industrial growth in Q2. Inflation estimates for the current fiscal has been retained at 4.7 per cent while that of next year has been lowered to 4.3 per cent.

India's growth in Q2 slowed more than expected, due to weak industrial output as tighter prudential norms by the central bank curtailed growth in unsecured personal loans, along with muted public capital spending and elevated food prices, ADB said in its December forecast.

"The lowering of the forecast reflects a deceleration of growth in Q2 FY25. This is on account of lower-than-expected industrial growth at 3.6 per cent year on year, while growth in the agriculture and services sectors has remained strong



BIG POTENTIAL

● Industrial demand is affected by tighter norms from RBI for unsecured personal loans and continued elevated food prices.

● India's growth will remain robust, with the economy supported by higher agricultural output resulting from the summer or kharif crop season.

at 3.5 per cent and 7.1 per cent, respectively. Industrial demand, on the other hand, is affected by tighter prudential norms from the central bank for unsecured personal loans and continued elevated food prices," it said.

Government capital expenditure also contin-

Apple integrates ChatGPT with iPhone in latest update

Dec. 11: Apple on Wednesday started integrating OpenAI's ChatGPT into its devices, delivering on a long-awaited feature that investors hope will help drive sales of its latest iPhones.

The rollout is part of a wider deployment of artificial intelligence-powered tools in the latest

updates to the operating systems for iPhones, iPads and Mac computers.

The ChatGPT integration, announced in June as part of the Apple Intelligence unveil, will allow the company's Siri voice assistant tap the chatbot's expertise including on user queries about photos and documents

● INTEGRATION WILL allow the company's Siri voice assistant tap the chatbot's expertise including on user queries about photos.

such as presentations.

Users can also ask ChatGPT to create written content in any app that

Unabated inflation, unsustainable debt top challenges, says Nirmala

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, DEC. 11

Unabated inflation, unsustainable debt, disruption of supply chains, and lack of food security are top challenges where the industry and the government need to work together, said finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday.

Industry will have to realign its policies keeping in mind political and strategic decisions of the country and attempts should be made to restore global calm and normalcy, she said.

Sitharaman said that the inflation globally is a big challenge, it is contagious and the primary cause of inflation is disruptions. "The global priority for this decade should be to restore normalcy. They are the main cause for disruptions in supply chain,

● Unabated inflation, unsustainable debt, disruption of supply chains, and lack of food security top challenges.

Growing ECONOMY

BENEFITS OF ECONOMIC SUCCESS WILL SPREAD ONLY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

● Any skirmish or war will impact supply chains and food value chains.

● No political risks should threaten the well-being of people.

● Industry needs to realign policies keeping in mind political and strategic decisions of the country.



inflation and other global challenges," she said at the 'CII global economic policy forum 2024' here.

"We have to inbuilt in our decision-making not only economic sense but also political sense. No political risks should threaten the well-being of people. The economy has to 'clawback' more to regain its strength after the Covid pandemic," she said.

"The supply chains should be widespread lest geopolitical risks disrupt them. Economic and commercial considerations will have to blend with the economy," she said.

Digital public infrastructure and open network for digital commerce (ONDC) and tech stack for agriculture have democratised access. "Farmers are now able to access the global markets due to tech."

OPEC LOWERS OIL DEMAND FORECASTS FOR 2024, 2025



London, Dec. 11: OPEC lowered its forecasts for 2024 and 2025 global oil demand growth on Wednesday in the fifth consecutive cut to the producers group's monthly report.

The weaker outlook highlights the challenge facing OPEC+, which comprises the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies such as Russia.

OPEC+ earlier this month delayed its plan to start raising output until April 2025 against a backdrop of falling prices.

OPEC said it now expects 2024 global oil demand to rise by 1.61 million barrels per day (bpd), down from its forecast of 1.82 million bpd last month. — Reuters

GMR may consider 2nd runway, terminal at Hyd

Hyderabad, Dec. 11: GMR Group which manages the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport here may consider adding another terminal and second runway once the passenger traffic hits 45 million annually, a senior official of the airport infra major said on Wednesday.

SGK Kishore, executive director and chief innovation officer of GMR Airports, at a press conference exuded confidence that the passenger traffic would hit 45 million (annually) by 2030 from the existing 30 million and said the ultimate capacity of the airport would be 100 million passengers.

"We are expecting 45 million (per annum) by 2030. It is only an estimate and anything can happen. Based on the projections and based on what we have seen, we have to be proactive. We have started

the planning (for the capacity expansion)," he said.

The GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltf (GHIAL) has already created the necessary infrastructure in a phased manner to handle 34 million passengers. The aerodrome was built in 2008 with a capacity of 12 million. Currently, the airport has one integrated terminal.

"We have to focus on making air travel more accessible, affordable, and convenient to people. And this new AI facility at Hyderabad aligns with the vision for improved ease of travel. The goal is to further create a seamless and people-friendly air travel experience," said union civil aviation minister K Rammohan Naidu.

He was present at the launch event of an artificial intelligence platform. — PTI

SEBI to launch survey to up retail participation in markets

New Delhi, Dec. 11: Market regulator Sebi will conduct a pan India survey on how to bring more people into the capital market, create risk awareness and bridge the gaps in the ecosystem, a Sebi official said on Wednesday.

Sebi whole time member Ananth Narayan G said that volatility in the Indian markets is low and \$14 billion FPI outflow in October-November was matched by an equivalent

amount of inflow by the domestic investors, like mutual funds.

He, however, cautioned that there is no room for complacency.

"While we celebrate the growth of domestic investors, it does not mean we do not need foreign investments. We need foreign investment. We have to ensure that we remain an attractive destination to draw in investment across the globe so that we can fund future

growth" Narayan said at an industry event.

He also said that this inflow from retail and fresh investors should not be taken for granted.

"We have to nurture the golden goose. We are worried about young people, many of them have not seen investment cycle or capital market downside (investing in market)," Narayan further said while wondering that if there is adequate risk awareness. — PTI

BUSINESS USERS TO PAY FOR AI TOOLS, SAYS OPENAI CFO

California, Dec. 11: OpenAI chief financial officer Sarah Friar said it's reasonable to eventually charge business users thousands of dollars a month for its artificial intelligence software to better reflect the value the technology provides to companies.

"I want the door open to everything," Friar said in an interview, when asked about a recent report that the company has discussed a \$2,000 monthly subscription for its AI products.

"If it's helping me move about the world with literally a Ph.D.-level assistant for anything that I'm doing, there are certainly cases where that would make all the sense in the world."

The ChatGPT maker currently offers consumers a \$20-per-month subscription tier as well as a newly launched \$200 monthly option for access to its new models. OpenAI also charges businesses a flat rate per seat, meaning per user at the organization. — Bloomberg

NEW | UPGRADES

Company has increasingly marketed watch and phone as lifesaving devices

Apple's next smartwatch to send texts via satellite

California, Dec. 11: Apple Inc. plans to bring satellite connections to its smartwatch in 2025 and is ramping up work on a blood-pressure feature, seeking to entice hikers and health-conscious consumers into upgrading their devices.

The satellite capability is slated to come to next year's Apple Watch Ultra, the company's top-of-the-line model, according to people familiar with the matter. The technology will let smartwatch users send off-the-grid text mes-

sages via Globalstar Inc.'s fleet of satellites when they don't have a cellular or Wi-Fi connection.

The other feature, which would monitor whether Apple Watch users have high blood pressure, may arrive as soon as 2025 as well, said the people, who asked not to be identified because the work is confidential. But it's been delayed before, with Apple previously aiming to release the tool last year.

The technology would extend one of Apple's biggest efforts under chief



executive officer Tim Cook bolstering the health and safety features of its products. The company has increasingly marketed its watch and phone as

lifesaving devices, and the latest capabilities would strengthen its case.

A representative for Cupertino, California-based Apple declined to comment.

The company first launched a satellite communication feature with the iPhone 14 in 2022. It let users stay in contact with emergency services while off the grid.

The capability was expanded last year to allow for contact with roadside assistance providers.

Apple then upgraded the feature again this year to let people use it to text anyone via iMessage.

But that meant hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts still had to carry their iPhone to use the technology. Now they'll only need their watch.

The Apple Watch Ultra would be the first mainstream smartwatch with satellite abilities. Apple and Globalstar have expanded their partnership over the past few years. In November, the iPhone maker invested

## SHORT TAKES

## Bumrah remains No.1 Test bowler

**Dubai:** Charismatic England batter Joe Root's reign at the top of the ICC Test batting rankings ended on Wednesday with compatriot Harry Brook taking the No.1 spot, while India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and spinner Ravindra Jadeja held on to their top positions in the bowlers' and all-rounders' charts respectively in the longest format. Brook, 25, overtook Root following his eighth Test century against New Zealand in Wellington last week, with the right-handed player now enjoying a slender one-point advantage over his more experienced teammate at the top of the latest ICC rankings.

Brook has a total of 898 rating points, one more than Root, and joins Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar with the equal 34th highest rating of all time for Test batters.

Root had held on to the top spot since July this year when he displaced former New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson from the No.1 position. — PTI

## India suffer series whitewash vs Oz

**Perth:** India failed to avoid a 0-3 whitewash against Australia after losing the third women's ODI by 83 runs here on Wednesday. Chasing a daunting 299, Smriti Mandhana was the lone warrior for India as the tourists folded for 215 in 45.1 overs.

Opening the innings, Mandhana scored 105 off 109 deliveries to anchor the run chase but didn't get support from other Indian batters.

Star spinner Ashleigh Gardner starred with a five-wicket haul. Earlier, Australian middle-order batter Annabel Sutherland (110) struck a fine century as the hosts posted 298/6 against India. Ashleigh Gardner (50) and skipper Tahlia McGrath (56 not out) were the other Australian batters who made vital contributions.

India's Arundhati Reddy grabbed four wickets, conceding just 26 runs in her 10 overs. **Brief Scores:** Australia (Annabel Sutherland 110, Ashleigh Gardner 50, Tahlia McGrath 56 not out, Arundhati Reddy 4/26) beat India 215 in 45.1 overs (Smriti Mandhana 105, Harleen Deol 39, Ashleigh Gardner 5/30).

## Kallis wants more Indians in SA20

**New Delhi:** Legendary South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis hopes Dinesh Karthik's imminent debut in the SA20 would lead to more retired Indian players joining the league. Karthik, set to play for the Paarl Royals in the 2025 SA20, will become the first Indian cricketer to feature in the league. He became eligible to play in the tournament after announcing his retirement from Indian cricket earlier this year. Karthik joined the Royals as a replacement for Jos Buttler, who opted out of the season. "It's wonderful to have quality players especially from India. Hopefully it's the start of many Indians coming," SA20 Ambassador said in a virtual interaction.

Under the current BCCI policy, Indian players are only permitted to participate in overseas leagues after retiring from all formats of the game, including the IPL.

"It would be nice to have them yes definitely, but the obvious reasons are the BCCI will have to look after their own players so there has to be a fine balance," the 49-year-old said.

## Tan back with Satwik &amp; Chirag

**New Delhi:** Malaysian doubles specialist Tan Kim Her has reunited with star pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, starting his second stint at the Indian badminton landscape. The 53-year-old has been roped in by the Badminton Association of India (BAI) for a four-year term till the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. "I am very happy to be back in India and get a chance to work with Satwik-Chirag and also the young and talented group of doubles players who have the potential to follow on the path of Satwik-Chirag," Tan said. Tan, who arrived in Hyderabad on Sunday, was India's doubles coach from 2015 to 2019 and was instrumental in bringing Satwik and Chirag together before the 2016 Olympics. He will take over the reins from Denmark's Mathias Boe, who guided Satwik and Chirag to many highs, including attaining the world number 1 status. — PTI

## FEVER PITCH!

Traditional pace and bounce expected at Gabba for third Test

**Brisbane, Dec. 11:** The pitch for the third Test between India and Australia at the Gabba is expected to have traditional pace and bounce considering the game is scheduled in the early part of the summer and not post Christmas.

India's famous win at the Gabba on their previous tour came when the game was scheduled in the second half of the series. A Rishabh Pant special ensured India a back-to-back series win Down Under with Australia left licking their wounds. It was the hosts' first loss at the venue since 1988. Since then Australia have lost to the West Indies at the 'fortress' and no wonder the players prefer to play at the Gabba at the start of the summer and not at end of it.

"Different times of year definitely makes it different, it can be a slightly different pitch," Gabba curator David Sandurski was quoted as saying by *cricket.com.au* ahead of the third Test beginning Saturday.

"Pitches later in the season might have a bit more wear and tear while ones early in the season usually are a bit fresher and might have a bit more in them."

"Generally speaking, we still prepare the pitch the exact same way every time to try and get the same good carry, pace and bounce that the Gabba is known for. We are just trying to make a traditional Gabba wicket like we do each year," he said.

The five-match series is locked at 1-1 following Australia's comprehensive win in the pink ball Test at Adelaide. As many as 15 wickets fell on the opening day of a domestic pink ball game and the curator said the surface would be similar to that. "The aim is to be similar to that wicket where there was a good balance between bat and ball. Hopefully there is a bit in it for everyone," Sandurski added.

## INDIAN TEAMS LANDS IN BRISBANE

The BCCI on Wednesday posted a video of the Indian players' arrival in Brisbane from Adelaide.

Meanwhile, former Australia opener Matthew Hayden has advised the Indian bowlers to target the "fourth, fifth stump line" and make use of the bounce offered by the Gabba surface. Hayden shared his views on how to dismiss the Australian batters at Gabba. "India, when they do get a chance to bowl, they need to rely on hovering in that fourth, fifth stump line a bit more. And most importantly, they need to use their bounce," Hayden said. — PTI



Rohit & Co. will look to bounce back in the third Test against Australia, beginning at Gabba in Brisbane from Saturday. The five-match series is locked at 1-1. — AP

## Entire Australian top-order is under pressure: Warner

**Brisbane, Dec. 11:** It's not just Usman Khawaja but the entire Australian top-order that is feeling the "pressure" despite the series-levelling win in Adelaide, reckons former opener David Warner.

While the under-fire Marnus Labuschagne found form with a resolute fifty, batting mainstay Steve Smith and rookie opener Nathan McSweeney continue to search for runs in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

"I think the pressure is on all the top order, not just 'Uzzie', the former Australian left-hander was quoted saying by *Fox Cricket*.

Travis Head smashed a memorable hundred at home as Australia bounce back to level the five match series after a crushing loss in Perth.

"Travis came out and counterpunched and scored a brilliant hundred, and we know he's capable of doing it. But it's everyone else around supporting that," said Warner.

"It's not just one player



in particular, it's the top six scoring bulk runs and making sure you're giving rest to the fast bowlers. It was a fast-paced Test in the first game, but this last one was Mitchell Starc at his best as usual with the pink ball.

"Come Brisbane, we need to see some big runs from the top order," he said about the third Test beginning here on Saturday.

McSweeney had a forgettable debut in Perth being trapped LBW by Jasprit Bumrah in both his innings for 10 and 0, while in Adelaide he managed 49 runs.

Khawaja has 34 runs in the first two Tests and in his last 16 innings he has reached fifty only once.

Former skipper Smith is also in the middle of a woeful run, having scored 19 in his three innings of the series. — PTI

## McSWEENEY READY FOR BUMRAH IN THIRD TEST

**Brisbane, Dec. 11:** Ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah has dismissed Nathan McSweeney three times across four innings, but the Australian opener is hoping to "throw a few more punches" at his Indian nemesis in the third Test, beginning here on Saturday.

The 25-year-old had a disappointing start to his international career after being ousted by Bumrah for 10 and 0 in the first Test at Perth.

McSweeney, however, made 39 and 10 not out in Adelaide as the hosts made a comeback into the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with a series-levelling 10-wicket win in the pink-ball Test.

"To get a bowler like Jasprit early in my career, it's not going to get much tougher than that and I take some confidence from getting through a spell in Adelaide. The more I face, the more comfortable I'll get against him," McSweeney was quoted as saying by *cricket.com.au*.

Bumrah had taken eight wickets in the Perth Test, before adding four more in Adelaide to emerge as the best Indian bowler on tour so far.

McSweeney, who was handed a debut after the opening spot was left vacant by the retirement of David Warner, described Bumrah as a "unique" bowler.

"Facing him for the first time — he's quite a unique bowler. He's obviously world-class and a bit different to most bowlers I've faced. It's about adapting to his angle and where he delivers on the crease," said McSweeney, who was one of the Australian batters to train at the National Cricket Centre on Wednesday. — PTI

● McSweeney had a disappointing start to his international career after being ousted by Bumrah for 10 and 0 in the first Test at Perth.

● The 25-year-old, however, made 39 and 10 not out in Adelaide as the hosts made a comeback into the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy with a series-levelling 10-wicket victory in the pink-ball Test.

## WORLD CHESS | CHAMPIONSHIP

## Gukesh, Liren deadlock stays

**Singapore, Dec. 11:** Indian Grandmaster D. Gukesh tried his best but could not break past a resilient defending champion Ding Liren of China and had to settle for a draw after 68 moves in the 13th and penultimate game of the World Chess championship here on Wednesday. With the scores tied at 6.5-6.5 and only one game of classical chess to go, it is only likely that the match will be extended to the tie-break stage where games of shorter duration will decide the winner.

As was expected and predicted, the 18-year-old Gukesh went for the King pawn on his opening move and yet again faced Liren's first-choice opening in French defense.

The Chinese yet again spent a lot of time in the opening phase of the game when Gukesh came out with a novel idea early, but it was clear right from the beginning that there was little for the white.

The middle game saw the exchange of a couple of minor pieces that gave Gukesh's white only a

small advantage optically. And as the game progressed, it was clear that the exchange of pawns on the queen side will only lead to an equal endgame.

Gukesh, knowing fully well that this could be his last chance with the favourable colour, left no stone unturned as he kept looking for more but Liren kept his cool and traded pieces when necessary to reach a queen-plus-rook endgame that was just level.

The players nevertheless fought on for a long time. The pieces changed hands and eventually it was a queen and rook plus pawns on the board.

Much as he tried, Gukesh did everything in the book to keep pushing for more even in the theoretical drawn endgame but Liren was up to the task. The game was eventually drawn to a two versus three rook-and-pawns endgame, and Gukesh played on till there was no life left in the position.

Liren held fort till the very end and will go into the last game of the match as favourite. — PTI

## PCB FACES LOSSES IF IT PULLS OUT OF CHAMPS

**Karachi, Dec. 11:** The Pakistan Cricket Board could face revenue losses, lawsuits and also risk international alienation if it decides to withdraw from the ICC Champions Trophy over a deadlock on the mode of organising the 50-over event scheduled in February-March next year. A senior cricket administrator here, who is well-versed with the organisation of ICC events, said on Wednesday that it would not be an easy decision for the PCB to pull out if the hybrid model is not accepted in entirety by the ICC and the BCCI.

"Pakistan has not only signed a host agreement with the ICC but like all other participating nations in the event, it has also signed a mandatory Members' Participation Agreement (MPA) with the ICC," the administrator explained.

"It is only after a member nation signs the MPA for playing in an ICC event that it is eligible to get a share of revenues earned from ICC events."

"Most importantly when the ICC signed a broadcast deal for all its events, it has given a guarantee that all ICC members are available to play in their events including the Champions Trophy," he said. — PTI

## SYED MUSHTAQ | ALI TROPHY



Baroda's Krunal Pandya (right) and Hardik Pandya celebrate a Bengal wicket during their quarterfinal match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy in Bengaluru on Wednesday. — PTI

## SHAMI UNDERWHELMING AS BARODA BEAT BENGAL

**Bengaluru, Dec. 11:** Pacer Mohammed Shami rarely operated at his best and it had a cascading effect on Bengal as they went down by 41 runs against Baroda in the quarterfinals of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy here on Wednesday.

Opener Shashwat Rawat top-scored with a 26-ball 40 (1x4, 3x6) as Baroda posted a competitive 172 for seven, and Bengal ended up with 131 all out despite Shahbaz Ahmed (53, 36b, 3x4, 4x6) playing a fine cameo.

Skipper Hardik Pandya (3/27) along with his pace colleagues Lukman Merriwala (3/17) and Atit Sheth (3/41) were the lead bowlers in Baroda's stroll into the semifinals.

Shami's outing was more in focus as the sea-

soned quick has been striving hard to join the Indian squad in Australia at least for the last two Tests of the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

His overall numbers ahead of this match was 11 wickets from eight matches at an economy rate of 7.8, but on this day Shami looked anything but sharp. He started with two wides in the first over and hardly looked in control of the proceedings for the rest of the spell. — PTI

**Brief Scores:** Baroda 171/7 in 20 overs (Shashwat Rawat 40, Abhimanyu Rajput 37, Shivalk Sharma 24, Mohammed Shami 2/43, Pradipta Pramanik 2/6) bt Bengal 131 in 18 overs (Shahbaz Ahmed 53, Ritwik Roy Chowdhury 29, Lukman Merriwala 3/17, Hardik Pandya 3/27, Atit Sheth 3/41).

## Salah keeps Reds flying, Real down Atalanta

**Paris, Dec. 11:** Mohamed Salah helped maintain Liverpool's perfect record in the Champions League on Tuesday while holders Real Madrid bounced back from their defeat at Anfield to topple in-form Italians Atalanta.

Elsewhere, struggling Paris Saint-Germain gained a vital win at Salzburg, while Bayer Leverkusen edged Inter Milan to move second.

Aston Villa, in their first appearance in the continent's elite club competition for 41 years, maintained their bright progress beating Leipzig 3-2 to sit third.

The first eight teams qualify directly for the last 16 with those placed ninth to 24 entering a play-off round.

In Spain, Salah's 63rd-minute penalty proved decisive against dogged debutants Girona to extend the Premier League leaders' record to six from six in the revamped format of Europe's flagship club competition.

Under new coach Arne



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah shoots to score against Girona during the Champions League match at the Estadi Montilivi in Girona, Spain, on Tuesday. — AP

Slot Liverpool are virtually assured a place in the last 16. "If you ask me about all six games, I'm really pleased with all the results... (but) I'm far from pleased about the performance tonight," Slot said.

"(We had) hardly any control at all over the

game, maybe the second half was a bit better but then I'm trying to be positive."

## SETTLE NERVES

Real coach Carlo Ancelotti started Vinicius Junior for the first time since a hamstring problem last month.

The Brazilian had Real back on top before the hour, with Jude Bellingham also on the scoresheet for a 3-2 win over the Serie A leaders.

The hard-fought victory moved Real up to 18th on nine points and will have helped to settle any nerves

## THE RESULTS

Girona	0
Liverpool (Salah 63-pen)	1
RB Leipzig (Openda 27, Baumgartner 62)	2
Aston Villa (McGinn 3, Duran 52, Barkley 85)	3
Shakhtar Donetsk (Kevin 5)	1
Bayern Munich (Laimer 11, Mueller 45, Olise 70-pen, 90+3, Musiala 87)	5
Atalanta (De Ketelaere 45-pen, Lookman 65)	2
Real Madrid (Mbappe 10, Vinicius Junior 56, Bellingham 59)	3
RB Salzburg	0
Paris Saint-Germain (Goncalo Ramos 30, Nuno Mendes 72, Doue 85)	3
Bayer Leverkusen (Mukiele 90)	1
Inter Milan	0

at the 15-time European champions ahead of games against Salzburg and Brest in January. — AFP