

SHORT TAKES

Nithari Killings: SC to hear pleas March 25

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday said it would on March 25 hear a clutch of pleas against the acquittal of Surendra Koli in the 2006 Nithari serial killings case. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih was informed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the case was over the "very serious and gruesome" killings in Nithari, UP. Koli's counsel said the evidence against his client was a confessional statement, recorded several days after his police custody in the case. The bench directed its registry to summon the trial court records in other connected matters expeditiously and supply its copies to the lawyers appearing in the matter. The bench then posted the hearing on March 25.

9 Bangladeshis deported: Police

New Delhi: The Delhi police has deported nine Bangladeshi nationals who were staying illegally in the national capital, an officer said on Monday. They were caught during verification drives conducted by police. Among the nine Bangladeshi nationals deported in January are those caught during verification drives in Jama Masjid and Nabi Karim areas, deputy commissioner of police (central) M. Harsha Vardhan said. "They include Mohammad Iman Hossain, who entered India illegally after paying an agent, and Mohammad Sharmin Parvez, whose visa expired in October 2024. Others overstayed their visas and were attempting to acquire Indian identity documents," the officer said.

SC junks plea on city Waqf Board head

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to examine a plea against the appointment of Delhi government's Principal Secretary (Home) Ashwani Kumar as the Delhi Waqf Board administrator. A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal asked the petitioner to move the Delhi high court. The top court was hearing a plea filed by one Zameer Ahmad Jumilana seeking directions to restrain and prohibit Mr Kumar from discharging functions as the administrator of the Delhi Waqf Board and to vacate the office with immediate effect.

CJI RECUSES FROM HEARING PLEAS ON IOA, AIFF STATUTES

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna on Monday recused himself from hearing two separate pleas relating to finalisation of the constitutions of the Indian Olympic Association and the All India Football Federation, both compiled by former apex court judge Justice L Nageswara Rao. The CJI, who was sitting on the bench with Justice Sanjay Kumar, said he would not be part of the bench to hear these cases as he had earlier taken up one of the pleas in Delhi high court. CJI Khanna said: "Let the pleas come before another bench headed by Justice PS Narasimha on February 10. I remember hearing this in Delhi High Court." The pleas were last taken up on March 19, 2024, by a bench headed by the then CJI DY Chandrachud. The top court had then permitted the AIFF to file its objections to the draft constitution proposed by Justice Rao. "The amicus curiae will update the existing chart to reflect the objections of the AIFF," it had said. The apex court had also said that it would decide the issues raised about the IOA and the AIFF constitutions on the next date of hearing.

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, Sharad Kumar Agarwal s/o Late Sh. Devendra Kumar Agarwal am the Allottee/Owner of Flat No.A-1/110, Ekta Garden, Ekta Vihar CGHS Ltd, Plot No.9, I.P. Extn, Patparganj, Delhi. I lost/misplaced my Original Share Certificate of the above said flat. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in Police Station, vide LR No. 2465948/2025 dt.06.01.2025. Any person claiming any right, interest having any objection may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No.9810110444 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice and can personally inform or write to Dy. Director (SH) or Asstt. Director (GH), C-3-Block, Second Floor, Vikas Saden, INA, New Delhi.

Delhi now has over 1.55cr voters

■ 1.67 lakh new electors added in 2 months ■ Atishi alleges 'voter scam' in New Delhi seat

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

The Delhi Election Commission on Monday released the final voter list ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections. There are more than 1.55 crore registered voters in Delhi, showing an increase of 1,67,329 electors in over two months. Out of the total voters, around 83 lakh are male and over 71 lakh are female. Notably, voters whose names are not on the list cannot cast their votes.

The list was released amid the ongoing war of words between the AAP and the BJP.

While chief minister Atishi alleged a 'voters' scam' in the New Delhi constituency from where

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal is contesting the upcoming Assembly elections, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said, "Team Kejriwal must understand that the civil society of Delhi wants to usher in a new dawn and create growth opportunities. As a first step, it aims to make Delhi free of fake and fraudulent voters. The people of Delhi will oust any political party opposing the removal of fake votes and the frustration shown by AAP proves that Mr Kejriwal is losing."

Mr Kejriwal in a post said, "Large-scale fraud taking place in voter additions and deletions in New Delhi Assembly. CM Atishi ji wrote a letter to CEC presenting evidence and seeking time to meet."



In this file photo women line up outside a polling station in New Delhi.

Reacting to Mr Kejriwal, Parvesh Verma, the BJP candidate, said, "Truth does not require proof, Mr Kejriwal Sir. You are repeating the same thing in which you are an expert. It is your old habit to serve lies and then propagate them."

The office of the Delhi

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) published the Special Summary Revision (SSR), 2025, ahead of the Assembly elections.

The total number of voters in the city is 1,55,24,858, including 83,49,645 male voters, 71,73,952 female voters

and 1,261 third-gender voters.

According to a statement from the office of the Delhi CEO, over 5.1 lakh applications for new voter registration were received in the last 20 days, an unprecedented surge after the official claims and objections period ended on November 28, 2024.

The updated roll reflects a net increase of 1,67,329 voters since the draft publication on October 29, 2024, the statement said.

The Delhi electoral roll has witnessed a rise of 8,06,739 voters since the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. On January 22, 2024, before the Lok Sabha polls, the total number of voters in Delhi was 1,47,18,119.

'Sudden rush to register as city voters due to pro-women plan'

New Delhi, Jan. 6: The Election Commission on Monday asked officials to scrutinise each and every application for new voter registration to identify genuine people even as sources attributed the sudden rush for enrolment in the Delhi electoral rolls to AAP's Mahila Samman Yojana.

Under the populist scheme, the ruling AAP has promised to provide monthly assistance of ₹2,100 to registered women voters in Delhi. Elections are set to be held in Delhi next month.

In a statement, the Delhi chief electoral officer said more than 3 lakh voters have been added to the electoral rolls during the special summary revision process. It said an additional 5.1 lakh Form-6 have been received between December 16, 2024, and Monday for registration of new voters.

The statement said the Delhi CEO has asked officials to scrutinise each and every application.

— PTI

₹2,500/mnth to city women, vows Cong

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

The Congress on Monday announced the "Pyari Didi Yojana," promising monthly financial assistance of ₹2,500 to women if voted to power in Delhi.

The scheme would be rolled out on the lines of the model adopted by the Congress government in Karnataka.

Announcing the scheme, Karnataka deputy chief minister D.K. Shivakumar said it aims to financially empower women, promising that it would be implemented at the first Cabinet meeting of the new government.

"Today, I have come here to launch the Pyari Didi Yojana. We are confident that a

Congress government will be formed in Delhi, and on the first day of the new Cabinet, we will implement the scheme to provide ₹2,500 to every woman in the national capital."

Mr Shivakumar said,

"Whatever and wherever Congress has promised at the nation or state level, we have delivered and we are going to deliver," he said.

Women in the entire state travel free in buses, 10 kg of rice is being given to every household, about ₹3,000 is given to the unemployed youth, 200 units of electricity and ₹2,000 is being given to every woman. Additionally, 1.22 crore women are getting ₹2,000 every month, he said.

Refrain from personal attacks: High command schools Cong

Delhi unit indefinitely postpones press meet on Kejriwal

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

As the trouble between the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party intensifies, the Delhi Congress has indefinitely postponed its scheduled special press conference against the AAP.

The press briefing was scheduled for Saturday then postponed for Sunday and finally postponed indefinitely. Insiders claim that the press briefing was to charge the AAP convenor as being "anti-national."

The insiders in the Delhi unit, however, claimed that the presser will be held in the coming days with a bit of modification.

The Congress high command has put up strong candidates against AAP leaders. Challenging the

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal is the son of former chief minister Sheila Dikshit, Sandeep Dikshit. Mr Sandeep Dikshit has been a two-term Lok Sabha MP from east Delhi.

However, the high command is insistent that personal attacks should not be made. The AAP and its leaders should be targeted on specific issues, such as failure to improve the conditions and infrastructure in Delhi. The Congress also wants the party to include the 15-year rule of Sheila Dikshit in its campaign. The party is insisting that its leaders enunciate the development projects, which the party will carry out once voted to power.

In the last couple of weeks, the AAP and the Congress locked horns ever since

Ajay Maken last month said the Congress' alliance with the AAP during the Lok Sabha was a mistake that caused the decline of the Delhi Congress unit and had dubbed Mr Kejriwal anti-national.

Soon after Mr Maken's statement, the AAP came heavily down on the Congress as it mobilised the constituents of the INDIA bloc to get Congress evicted from the grouping if the main Opposition party did not take action against its treasurer Mr Maken.

"Ajay Maken has crossed all limits by calling Kejriwal anti-national. Despite campaigning for the Congress, Kejriwal now faces an FIR though Congress never filed a single FIR against any BJP leader," Mr Singh had said.

'CAG report exposes Kejriwal's black deeds'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

The BJP on Monday claimed that a CAG report raised 139 questions related to former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's previous Flagstaff Road residence and "exposed his" black deeds.

Addressing a press conference, the BJP's Delhi president Virendra Sachdeva said the report of 2022 cited an expenditure of ₹33.86 crores on the "Sheesh Mahal" but the actual cost was far higher. "This report pertains to expenditure till 2022. There is no revelation on expenses of 2023 and 2024 and, according to our information, the real cost runs up to ₹75-80 crores if the inventory of the items in the bungalow are included," he claimed.

The BJP has sharpened its attack on Mr Kejriwal ahead of the Delhi polls, alleging corruption related to bungalow that he occupied as CM.

Light rain in city, min temp 9.6° C; AQI 'very poor'

IMD issues yellow alert for fog

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

Cold weather conditions persisted in Delhi on Monday with parts of the city receiving light rainfall and the mercury settling at a low of 9.6° C, according to the India meteorological department (IMD).

Delhi's air quality index (AQI), meanwhile, stood at 320 (very poor). The fog cover thinned out, improving morning visibility. Najafgarh recorded 2.5 mm of rainfall, Pitampura 2 mm, Palam 1 mm, and Pusa 0.5 mm between 5.30 am and 8.30 am.

The IMD has issued a "yellow" warning for dense fog. The weather department has predicted generally cloudy skies with light rain throughout the day.

The Safdarjung observatory, Delhi's primary weather station, record-

ed a minimum temperature of 9.6°C, 2.7 notches above the normal for this time of the year, at 8.30 am, the IMD said.

At 5.30 am, the visibility at Safdarjung and Palam was 300 metres, it said. Dense fog in the capital reduced morning visibility to zero on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, leading to flight cancellations and diversions and trains being delayed.

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on Sunday revoked curbs under Stage 3 of the GRAP in Delhi-NCR after the region witnessed a dip in air pollution levels owing to favourable meteorological conditions, especially improved wind speed.

However, restrictions under Stage I and Stage II of GRAP remain in place across Delhi-NCR.



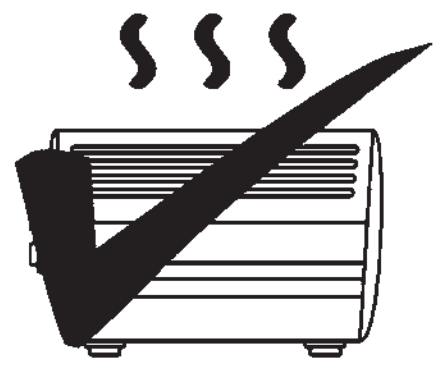
KIND ATTENTION

RESIDENT WELFARE ASSOCIATIONS/ BUILDERS/ PROJECT PROPONENTS/ NGOs/ CITIZENS

AVOID OPEN BURNING

AVOID AIR POLLUTION

PROVIDE ELECTRIC HEATERS
AND WARM CLOTHING TO
SECURITY AND OTHER STAFF



✓ Avoid open burning of biomass & solid waste

✓ Do not use coal and wood for heating purpose

LET'S PROTECT OUR AIR TOGETHER !

Delhi Pollution Control Committee
<https://dpcc.delhigovt.nic.in>

Scan QR code to Download Green Delhi App



NORTHERN RAILWAY (E-Auction Notice)

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites bids through e-Auction through IREPS (<https://ireps.gov.in/>) for the allotment of Automated Teller Machine/Digital Banking Unit/ Banking e-Lobby Contracts, at following Railway stations/locations:-

E-Catalogue No.	Date & Time of bidding	Railway Stations/Locations/Sites
DLI-ATM-01-2025	20.01.2025 at 11.00 Hrs.	Vivek Vihar (VVB)-1, Anand Vihar (ANVT)-1, Nizamuddin (NZM)-1, Karainthi (KHV)-1, Delhi Shahdara (DSA-3), Tilak Bridge (TKJ) - 2 Sites), Shivaji Bridge (CSB) - 2 Sites, Samar Gopalpur (SMF)-1, Klnara (KIU)-1, Julana (JNA)-1, Niliokheri (NLKR)-1

Website particulars where complete details of E-Auction can be seen : <https://ireps.gov.in/>

All bidders who intend to participate in the e-auctions conducted through E-Auction Leasing module of IREPS should fulfil following mandatory requirements before they can submit their bids:

- Registration on IREPS for E-Auction Leasing module - Active IREPS User Account for E-Auction Leasing Module.
- Payment of One Time Registration Fee; Current Account in State Bank of India; Integration of SBI Bank Account with IREPS Account; Lien Marking of Funds; Updation of Turnover Details.
- A new mechanism namely Virtual Account Number (VAN) has been introduced now for E-Auction Leasing module, which can be used by the bidders as an alternative to Lien Marking Mechanism.
- The bidders are free to switch between Lien Marking Mechanism (if activated) and VAN mechanism at any point of time, before entering the bidding room.VAN mechanism does not require the bidder to have a current account in State Bank of India. The users are free to transfer money from any of their existing bank accounts in any bank to their VAN account, which enables them to participate in IREPS E-Auctions.
- Contractors who do not have IREPS account for any module of IREPS can submit their online request for registration by clicking on New Vendors / Contractors (E-Tender /E-Auction Leasing) link on IREPS Home page.

Railway Authority to contact, in case of any query : Divisional Railway Manager's Office, Commercial Branch, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055. Email: publicitycell@delhi.govt.in, Tel: 011-23743084

No.: 3/PUB/ATM/DLI-DIV/E-auction/2022 Date: 01.2025 62/2025

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

SHORT TAKES

Aero India in B'luru
Feb. 10-14: MoD

New Delhi: Aero India 2025, Asia's biggest aeroshow, will be held in Bengaluru from February 10 with an aim to project the country as a defence manufacturing hub. With the broad theme "The Runway to a Billion Opportunities", the biennial aerospace exhibition will provide a platform for forging partnerships between foreign and Indian firms and the discovery of newer avenues in the global value chain to accelerate the indigenisation process. To facilitate dialogue towards strategic partnership with friendly countries, India will host the Defence Ministers' Conclave on the theme "Bridge — Building Resilience through International Defence and Global Engagement". It encapsulates the dynamic geopolitical conditions and the path to mutual prosperity, which can be bridged through cooperation among nations with shared vision of security and development.

Hockey player raped
by coach in U'khand

Haridwar: A minor hockey player was allegedly raped by her coach in Uttarakhand, officials said. The coach, Bhanuprakash (30), who was training players for the National Games has been arrested and is being questioned after the girl's father lodged a complaint against him on Sunday, SIDCUL police station in-charge Manohar Bhandari said. State sports minister Rekha Arya visited Haridwar on Monday and suspended the coach who was working on contract. National-level competitions are to be organised in Roshanabad in the coming days as part of the National Games to be held from January 28 to February 14, for which preparations are underway with practice camps being held for players at the Roshanabad Sports Stadium. — PTI

BJP slams Uddhav
for Saamana article

Mumbai: The BJP on Monday hit back against Uddhav Thackeray after his party's mouthpiece Monday claimed that crores of rupees were spent on renovation of residences of Union ministers in Delhi. Maharashtra revenue minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule said Mr Thackeray should introspect before taking against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and in favour of AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal. The Shiv Sena (UBT) lashed out at the PM calling him "the opulent king of a poor country". "Prime Minister Modi's hobby is to give free food to 80 crore poor people in the country and to go abroad and gift expensive things to the leaders there. A fakir named Modi uses branded items for himself, from clothes to glasses, pens, watches, shoes and it is his hobby," said an editorial in *Saamana*.

'EMPOWERING
WOMEN KEY TO
INDIA GROWTH'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

Highlighting the transformative role of women leadership in strengthening Indian democracy, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday



said that the inclusion and empowerment of women, especially from rural and tribal communities, are pivotal for the socio-economic change. Speaking at the "Panchayat Se Parliament 2.0" programme in the historic Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan, organised by the Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies of Lok Sabha Secretariat in collaboration with National Commission for Women and ministry of tribal affairs, Mr Birla highlighted the government's commitment to fostering gender equality and cited the "Nari Shakti Vandan Act" as a testament to India's progressive vision for women's leadership. The event, which saw participation of over 500 tribal women representatives from Panchayati Raj Institutions from 22 states and UTs, served as a platform to reaffirm India's commitment to women led development and grassroots empowerment.

HMPV enters India, 5 infants found positive

Virus not new, no reason to worry, says Nadda

AVINASH PRABHAKAR
JHA
NEW DELHI, JAN 6

Amid outbreak of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in China, 5 infants tested positive in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat of the viral infections on Monday, the first reported cases of the virus in India.

Union health minister J.P. Nadda sought to assuage fears, saying the government is closely monitoring the situation and there is no reason to worry. He said HMPV is not a new virus and no surge in any of the common respiratory virus pathogens has been observed in the country.

In a video message, Mr Nadda said in the wake of the recent reports of HMPV in China, the health ministry, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the country's apex health research body, and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) are keeping a close watch on the situation in China and other neighbouring countries. The WHO has "taken cognisance of the situation and will share the report shortly with us", he said.

The health ministry said that two cases were detected in Karnataka by the ICMR through routine surveillance for multiple respiratory viral pathogens.

Leaders meet Maha gov, seek removal of NCP mantri

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, JAN. 6

An all-party delegation led by former Rajya Sabha MP Sambhajiraje Chhatrapati on Monday submitted a memorandum to Maharashtra governor C.P. Radhakrishnan, requesting him to intervene and address the deteriorating law and order situation in Beed following Massajog sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh's murder. The delegation also demanded dismissal of NCP minister Dhananjay Munde from the Cabinet following allegations of his links with the accused in the Deshmukh murder case.

Deshmukh was kidnapped and brutally murdered on December 9. His family has claimed Deshmukh was killed because he opposed an extortion bid at a windmill project in his Massajog village.

The murder has caused a state-wide outrage with leaders from all parties alleging that Mr Munde's close associate Walmik Karad is the mastermind. Two days after the murder, Karad, a former NCP corporator, was named in an FIR for allegedly attempting to extort ₹2 crore from the same windmill company.



People outside the Emergency of Bangalore Baptist Hospital where two cases of the Human Metapneumovirus were detected on Monday.

— PTI

A three-month-old female infant with a history of bronchopneumonia was diagnosed with HMPV after being admitted to Baptist Hospital in Bengaluru. She has already been discharged, the health ministry said.

An eight-month-old boy with a history of bronchopneumonia tested positive for HMPV on January 3 after being admitted to Baptist Hospital. He is now recovering, it said.

Neither of the two have any history of international travel, the ministry underlined.

In neighbouring Tamil Nadu, two more children tested positive for the virus. These two are the first cases to be reported from the city and are currently undergoing treatment in two hospitals, officials said.

HC gives 6 weeks to MP govt to act on Carbide waste

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JAN. 6

The Madhya Pradesh high court on Monday granted six weeks to the state government to dispose of the Union Carbide waste, left over from the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, adhering to the safety guidelines.

Normalcy has returned to Pithampur and the high court ruling on the issue has brought "great relief", a senior police official told a news agency on Monday.

The town, some 50 kilometres from the state's commercial capital Indore, saw protests on Friday and Saturday, including two men attempting self-immolation, residents carrying out sit-ins and a mob pelting stones at the gate of the unit where the waste is set to be disposed of.

On Monday, markets remained open, people were seen moving about like other days and police barricades had gone from most parts of the town with a population of 1.75 lakh. Pithampur is home to at least 700 industrial units.

The court's directive comes in response to a plea by the state seeking time to engage with the local people in Pithampur

The fifth case was reported from Gujarat's Ahmedabad. A two-month-old boy admitted to a private hospital in the city tested positive for HMPV.

The infant, who hails from Dungarpur in Rajasthan, was hospitalised on December 24, 2024, with symptoms of respiratory infection.

The Centre stressed that HMPV is already in circulation globally, including in India, and cases of respiratory illnesses associated with it have been reported in various countries.

Following the detection of HMPV cases, the Delhi government directed all the hospitals in the national capital to remain fully prepared to manage a potential surge in respiratory illnesses.

▶ **ON MONDAY**, markets remained open, people were seen moving about like other days and police barricades had gone from most parts of Pithampur town

to allay their fears triggered by the "misinformation" regarding the waste disposal, which led to unrest in the area.

A division bench of Chief Justice S.K. Kait and Justice Vivek Jain granted six weeks to the state government to dispose of the waste and also instructed the print, audio and visual media to refrain from circulating incorrect information.

Around 337 tonnes of toxic wastes, sealed in 12 containers, were shifted from the defunct Union Carbide factory in Bhopal to Pithampur on January 2 for their disposal in the incineration facility there.

The arrival of the waste in Pithampur caused serious anxiety among the local people in the industrial town, leading chief minister Mohan Yadav to declare to put on hold the process of disposal till the court's order.

Mr Yadav hailed the HC directive, saying that the state government has placed its view on the matter before the court.

■ Ravi refrains from reading address ■ ‘Childish’, says Stalin Drama in TN House, gov walks out

Chennai, Jan. 6: In yet another governor versus government face-off in Tamil Nadu, the former walked out of the Assembly without delivering his customary address on Monday, opposing what he described as 'disrespect' to the Constitution and the national anthem by the ruling DMK.

Chief minister M.K. Stalin dubbed Ravi's behaviour "childish", and accused him of continuously insulting the people of the state, the elected government and the Assembly as well, which was unbecoming to the post he holds. DMK announced a state-wide protest against Ravi on Tuesday for "continuously insulting" state anthem, (invocation to Mother Tamil) and the state.

The matter snowballed



Leader of Opposition in Tamil Nadu Assembly Edappadi K. Palaniswami with party MLAs stages a protest during the Assembly session in Chennai on Monday.

— PTI

into a war of words between the Raj Bhavan and the ruling dispensation and Ravi said he had always upheld the sanctity of the state song, *Tamil Thaa Vazhthu*, and he said he 'sings it with reverence at every event.'

On the arrival of gover-

nor, the state song was played in the Assembly and when the proceedings were about to commence, and a few moments before Ravi began making his remarks, members of the main opposition AIADMK gathered in front of him, and raised slogans, hold-

Prashant Kishor arrested for ‘illegal’ fast unto death

Patna, Jan. 6: Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor was on Monday arrested for his "illegal" fast unto death and sent to jail upon refusal to accept bail, granted by a court here with conditions that were deemed "unreasonable".

The 47-year-old, who was last week booked for holding "aamaran anshan" (fast unto death) at Gandhi Maidan, in violation of a Patna high court order that forbids any such demonstration at a place other than Gardani Bagh locality in the city, declared that he would "continue" his agitation from behind bars.

Senior lawyer Y.V. Giri, who is actively associated with Mr Kishor's party, said the bail was granted with an "unreasonable" condition that Mr Kishor must give a written undertaking, which would have been tantamount to "admitting guilt".

The former poll strategist, who started his fast unto death on January 2, demanding, among other things, cancellation of the Combined Competitive



Jan Suraj Party chief Prashant Kishor leaves a local court in Patna on Monday.

— PTI

Examination conducted last month by the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPS), was rounded up along with supporters early in the morning.

Talking to reporters before being taken to the Beur Central Jail on the outskirts of the city, Mr Kishor alleged, "After being picked up at 4 am, I was taken to AIIMS, Patna, for medical examination but doctors refused to do the needful because of reasons best known to them". "Between 5 am and

11 am, the police kept driving me along in their ambulance, never bothering to disclose the location. When I enquired, they said they were trying to get me examined at PMCH or NMCH (both government hospitals in the city)", claimed Mr Kishor.

The Jan Suraj Party founder also claimed that he was finally taken to a community health centre in Fatuha on the outskirts of the city where he refused to give consent for a medical test. — PTI

Key Bastar scribe murder accused held in Hyderabad

Autopsy indicates heart ripped, liver torn into 4 pieces

AGE CORRESPONDENT
RAIPUR, JAN. 6

The prime accused in the murder of a journalist of Bastar in Chhattisgarh has been arrested in Hyderabad, the police said on Monday.

Suresh Chandrakar, the prime accused in the murder of Mukesh Chandrakar, was arrested by the special investigation team (SIT), constituted to probe the incident, late on Sunday night and brought to Chhattisgarh on Monday morning, SIT chief Mayank Gurjar said.

The prime accused's two brothers Ritesh and Dinesh and his supervisor Mahendra Ramtek were

▶ **THE JOURNALIST'S** body was found in a septic tank in the compound of the house of the prime accused in Bijapur on January 3

earlier arrested in connection with the incident.

The scribe had gone missing from his house in the district headquarters of Bijapur under south Bastar in Chhattisgarh on January 1.

His brother Yukesh had filed a missing report in the local police station on January 2.

The journalist's body was found in a septic tank in the compound of the house of the prime accused in Bijapur town

Indonesian Prez will be R-Day chief guest

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

Diplomatic consultations are underway to confirm Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto as the chief guest for India's Republic Day parade on January 26. While both New Delhi and Jakarta have yet to officially announce the visit, diplomatic sources, however, told this newspaper that "all indications point to President Subianto's presence at the Republic Day parade".

It may be recalled that minister of state (MoS) for external affairs Pabitra Margherita had represented India at the inauguration ceremony of the new Indonesian President in Jakarta in October last year. The MoS had then conveyed warm greetings to the Indonesian President on



Prabowo Subianto

Mr Modi for his wishes".

President Subianto succeeded Joko Widodo as the leader of Indonesia, a prominent member of Asean, the largest Muslim-majority nation in the world and therefore occupies an important position in the Islamic world as well.

Indonesia also plays a vital role in the Global South and shares historical and cultural ties with India that span millennia.

Mr Modi had also visited Indonesia in September 2023 days before India had hosted the G-20 Summit.

behalf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi while President Prabowo had also "conveyed his gratitude to

Kashmir rail link won't harm Jammu's interest, says Omar

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JAN. 6

Dispelling the apprehension about the new railway link that connects the Kashmir Valley with the country's railway grid harming the business interests of Jammu, chief minister Omar Abdullah said on Monday that it, in fact, will benefit the entire Jammu and Kashmir and even Ladakh.

"The new Jammu railway division will be beneficial to all. We anticipate significant benefits, including a surge in trade and tourism, and we will ensure that Jammu reaps the rewards of this development as well," the CM said while speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the newly carved out rail division at Jammu. He added that Jammu will not suffer economic losses due to the direct rail link



J&K chief minister Omar Abdullah during the inauguration of the new Jammu railway division and other projects in Jammu.

— PTI

to the Kashmir Valley, but a new railways division will create jobs, enhance trade, and boost tourism in the entire erstwhile state of J&K.

Terminating the launch of the Jammu railway division as a historic moment

for J&K, the CM said that to have their own railway division has been a long standing demand of the people of the erstwhile state and today, that dream has been fulfilled. Reassuring the people of Jammu that the new division will benefit them economically, Mr Abdullah said, "With its control and coordination to be based in Jammu, local recruitment will be prioritised. This will bring employment opportunities to the region, benefiting our youth and boosting the local economy."

"Also, the commissioning of the Srinagar-Katra rail line will revolutionise travel in the region...the connectivity would resolve long-standing challenges such as disruptions in winter flights and exorbitant airfares (on the Srinagar route)," he added.

Dhami asks PM to clear pending U'khand projects

AGE CORRESPONDENT
DEHRADUN, JAN. 6

Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Monday urged Prime minister Narendra Modi to clear a plethora of pending projects of the state awaiting Centre's nod for years.

Mr Dhami also asked Mr Modi to close the existing Rishikesh railway station for the newly-built Yog Nagri station.

He thanked the Prime Minister for nominating Rishikesh as an iconic city in river rafting and requested him to provide technical and financial resources to develop Haridwar-Rishikesh Ganga corridor in Garhwal and Sharda corridor projects in Kumaon regions. He said that these projects are difficult to be realised because of the state's limited resources.

The need to develop rapid and real-time international assistance in criminal investigations was felt due to the growing footprint of transnational crimes including cyber-crime, financial crimes, online radicalisation, organised crimes, drug trafficking, human trafficking etc, a statement from the home ministry said.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Central government has taken several important initiatives to strengthen the country's law enforcement agencies. Bharatpol portal will significantly facilitate Indian law enforcement agencies enabling real-time information sharing for faster access to international police assistance," it said.

The CBI facilitates international cooperation in criminal matters in collaboration with various agencies.

SHORT TAKES

Family of four found dead in Bengaluru

Bengaluru: Four members of a family, including two children, were found dead at their rented home here, police said on Monday. The deceased have been identified as Anup Kumar (38), his wife Rakhi (35), and their two children aged 5 and 2. As per police, the couple was found hanging in the house this morning. The cause for the extreme step is yet to be ascertained. The family, hailing from Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, was residing at the current address for about two years now. Anup Kumar worked as a software consultant at a private firm. Deputy commissioner of police (Central), Shekhar H. Tekkannavar said they have informed the family of the deceased. A case has been registered and investigation is going on in the matter, the officials said. — *PTI*

IC814 Captain retires from AI after 40 yrs

New Delhi: After flying for four decades, Devi Sharan, the captain of the ill-fated Indian Airlines flight IC814, has retired from the airline. Mr Sharan, who turned 65, operated a Dreamliner aircraft from Melbourne to Delhi on January 4. It was his last flight. In a message, he thanked friends and colleagues at Air India for a very memorable career. He also thanked passengers over the years for giving him the opportunity to fly them. A video montage of his days with the airline along with the message was posted by AI on social media with the title “The Sky Bows, The Runway Salutes The Captain of IC814”. “As I embark on the golden chapter of my life, I look forward to making more memories with my family and friends,” he said. The retirement age for a commercial pilot is 65 years. On July 31, 2023, while recalling the hijack episode, Mr Sharan had said, “I had to live to save others” and that he dealt with terrorists who were well-versed with aviation terminologies. — *PTI*

2 SUVs found with same plate near Taj

Mumbai: Two cars with the same number plates were found parked near the iconic Taj Mahal Palace hotel at Colaba in south Mumbai on Monday, police said. Both cars were taken to Colaba police station along with their drivers for a probe, an official said. “The incident came to light at around 12.30 pm when someone observed that two SUVs were parked close to each other outside the hotel after which traffic police was informed. A probe is underway on how two cars had the same number plates and which one these was forged,” he said. The statements of the drivers are being recorded and further action will follow based on the details they give, the official said. — *PTI*

SC panel meets farm leader, urges to accept medical aid

We are hopeful that there will be a breakthrough, says Kapil Sibal

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 6

The Supreme Court on Monday deferred hearing in the farmers protest matter after it was informed that the protesting farmers at the Khanauri border between Punjab and Haryana will be meeting the high-powered committee appointed by the apex court during the day. After the Punjab government’s submission about the scheduled meeting with septuagenarian farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, the SC-appointed panel met him at around 3.30 pm and requested him to avail medical aid. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N. Kotiswar Singh was informed by Punjab gov-

ernment’s counsel Kapil Sibal that the protesting farmers had been persuaded to meet Justice (retd) Nawab Singh, who chairs the top court-appointed panel. Mr Sibal said: “Some of us have been able to persuade those people under protest to meet Justice (retd) Nawab Singh led committee today at 3 pm. We are hopeful that there will be a breakthrough. Kindly take it up after a couple of days.” The bench said, “Let us hope and pray that better sense prevails on everyone.” The SC asked Mr Sibal to prepare a brief note of the deliberations and posted the hearing on January 10. Solicitor-general Tushar Mehta said the committee would file a brief note on

▶ **THE SC** asked Mr Sibal to prepare a brief note of the deliberations and posted the hearing on January 10

the meeting’s outcome. During the meeting, the committee requested the ailing farmer leader to avail medical aid. Mr Dallewal, who is the convener of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political), has been on an indefinite hunger strike since November 26, 2024, pressing the farmers’ various demands, including a legal guarantee on the minimum support price for crops. The apolitical farmers leader has refused medical aid offered by the Punjab government and his condi-

tion deteriorated and reports suggested he developed some health complications.

On December 20, the apex court put the onus on Punjab government officials and doctors to decide on his hospitalisation. The top court said Mr Dallewal could be moved to the makeshift hospital set up within 700 metres of the protest site at Khanauri border. In September, 2024, the apex court constituted the committee in order to amicably resolve the grievances of protesting farmers. In its initial report, the panel flagged various reasons for agrarian distress and listed reasons including stagnant yield, rising costs, debts and inadequate marketing system.

Cyber fraudsters drives woman to kill self in MP

Mauganj (MP), Jan. 6: A 35-year-old teacher ended her life in Mauganj in Madhya Pradesh after being threatened with arrest by cyber fraudsters who claimed a parcel she had sent contained “illegal materials”, a police official said on Monday. Reshma Pandey consumed poison on Sunday evening in Ghurehata area and succumbed on Monday, the official added. “Cyber fraudsters were pressuring Pandey, a government guest teacher, after claiming a parcel she had sent contained illegal materials. The accused were seeking money from her. After she consumed a poisonous substance, her kin rushed her to Sanjay Medical College in Rewa but she died enroute,” SP Rasna Thakur said. — *PTI*

Didi: Fishermen sent back to India tortured in B’desh

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JAN. 6

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee alleged on Monday that 95 Indian fishermen, repatriated from Bangladesh, were tortured during their captivity in the neighbouring country. The CM felicitated the group at an event at Sagar Island in South 24 Parganas by announcing a financial assistance of ₹10,000 to each of them for their welfare. She is on a two-day visit in the farthest part of the district to monitor preparations for Gangasagar Mela. “I saw some of them limping. I have come to know they were tied and beaten up with sticks. They had tears in their



Mamata Banerjee eyes. The district administration will ensure their treatment,” Ms Banerjee said. She added, “Their plight can leave anyone in tears. We are two neighbouring nations and love each other. Our fishermen became victims of circumstances. They crossed the international boundary and entered Bangladesh territorial waters.” The CM also pointed out, “We have managed to bring back 95 fishermen.

▶ **THE CM** felicitated the group at an event at Sagar Island in South 24 Parganas by announcing a financial assistance of ₹10,000 to each of them for their welfare

They spent a long time in Bangladesh prisons. We made all effort to bring them back.” “We were in regular touch with the (MEA) authorities.” She said, “We are giving ₹10,000 each so that they can run their families. But we are pained that another jumped into the water out of fear and died. We are giving ₹2 lakh to his wife.” On the Gangasagar Mela preparations, Ms Banerjee pinned hope on the pilgrimage to become a ‘national fair’ in future.

Odisha capital wears festive look for Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, JAN. 6

The Odisha capital is adorned with vibrant decorations and elaborate preparations as it gets ready to host the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) from January 8 to 10. The city, especially Janata Maidan, is exuding a festive charm, with the state government making meticulous efforts to ensure that this three-day event becomes an unforgettable experience for the Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and other delegates arriving from across the globe. Under the leadership of

chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi, the state government is leaving no stone unturned to showcase the rich culture, hospitality, and potential of Odisha. External affairs minister S. Jaishankar arrived in Bhubaneswar on Monday evening even as nearly 60 NRIs also landed in the city to attend the programme. Senior bureaucrats such as chief secretary Monoj Ahuja, industries department principal secretary Hemant Sharma and information and public relations department principal secretary Sanjay Singh have been overseeing the



Hemant Sharma (right) principal secretary of Odisha's industries department, reviewing preparations at Janata Maidan, the venue for Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Bhubaneswar on Monday.

grand arrangements. The event, which celebrates the contribution of the Indian diaspora to the nation’s progress, will see

a range of activities aimed at building strong connections with NRIs and encouraging investment in the state.

Janata Maidan, the venue for the event, has been transformed into a vibrant hub with a blend of traditional and contemporary decor. Streets leading to the venue are decorated with colorful banners, flags, and light displays, while cultural performances are set to highlight Odisha’s rich heritage. Special care has been taken to ensure that the infrastructure is world-class, with state-of-the-art facilities set up for the smooth conduct of the event. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is expected to attract a significant number of NRIs, government offi-

cials, and business leaders, all gathered to discuss matters of economic development, cultural exchange, and the strengthening of global ties. In preparation, the Odisha government has planned a series of events, including discussions on business and investment opportunities, workshops, and cultural exhibitions that will offer a glimpse into the state’s heritage. “We want this event to leave a lasting impression on the delegates, showcasing not just Odisha’s potential as an investment hub but also its rich cultural history,” said CM Mohan Majhi.

1st bullet train to run soon: Modi

■ **Continued From Page 1** 2025, India has been accelerating its initiatives with its metro rail network expanding to over 1,000 km. The Prime Minister mentioned the recent inauguration of the “Namo Bharat” train in Delhi-NCR along with the launch of Delhi Metro projects on Sunday. He said today’s event was a further testimony to the fact that the entire nation was moving forward together, step by step, as projects launched in Jammu and Kashmir, Odisha and Telangana mark a major leap in modern connectivity for these the north, east and south regions of the country. The PM reiterated that the mantra of “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas” was helping turn the vision of a developed India into reality. Underscoring that the work on modern rail networks like the “Dedicated Freight Corridor” was progressing rapidly in the country, he said these special corridors will reduce pressure on the regular tracks and will also create more opportunities for high-speed trains. Emphasising the railways are undergoing a transformation, Mr Modi said that modern coaches are being developed for metros and railways, and stations are being redeveloped,

solar panels are being installed at stations and “One Station, One Product” stalls are being set up at railway stations. “All these initiatives are generating millions of new employment opportunities in the railway sector. Over the last decade, millions of young people have secured permanent government jobs in the railways. The demand for raw materials in factories producing new train coaches leads to more job opportunities in other sectors as well,” he said. The PM remarked that keeping in mind the special skills related to the railways, the country’s first “Gati-Shakti University” has also been established and as the railway network expands, new divisions and headquarters are being set up, benefiting regions like Jammu, Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Leh-Ladakh. He further said J&K was achieving new milestones in railway infrastructure, with the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail line, which was being discussed all over the country today. Mr Modi said that the completion of the Chenab Bridge, the world’s highest railway arch bridge, will play a key role in connecting the region with the rest of India providing

convenience to the people of Leh-Ladakh. Mentioning that the Anji Khad Bridge, which is the country’s first cable-based railway bridge, is also part of this project, he said that Chenab Bridge and the Anji Khad Bridge are unparalleled examples of engineering leading to economic progress in the region and promoting prosperity. Highlighting that Odisha was blessed with abundant natural resources and a large coastline, and holds significant potential for international trade, Mr Modi said that several railway projects worth over ₹70,000 crores are ongoing in the state, along with the establishment of seven “Gati Shakti” cargo terminals, which are boosting trade and industry. He pointed out that today, the foundation stone has been laid for the Rayagada Railway Division in Odisha, which will strengthen the state’s railway infrastructure promoting tourism, business, and employment in Odisha specially South Odisha, where the number of tribal families is higher. Inaugurating the Charlapalli New Terminal Station in Telangana, the PM highlighted its potential to accelerate regional development by connecting to the Outer Ring Road.

US NSA meets Doval, Jaishankar

■ **Continued From Page 1** East had “disrupted” it, but pointed out that the United States was committed to the vision of the IMEC as an “alternative to what Beijing has to offer”. Cautioning about the dangers in the world of high-technology, Mr Sullivan also mentioned attempts at “cyber espionage and destructive sabotage” that the world is seeing. In a veiled barb at China, the US NSA also cautioned about countries that “continue attempts to change the status quo by force”. On civil nuclear cooperation, Mr Sullivan said in his address: “The United States is now finalising the necessary steps to remove long-standing regulations that have prevented civil nuclear cooperation between India’s leading nuclear entities and US companies.” He added: “Although former President (George W.) Bush and former Prime Minister (Manmohan) Singh laid out a vision of civil nuclear cooperation nearly 20 years ago, we have yet to fully realise it.” The move, Mr Sullivan further said, was the result of India’s “open and transparent engagement” with the Biden administration that enabled it to “open this new chapter together” with India. Mr Sullivan also dwelt on the initiative for Critical and Emerging Technology

(iCET) that was launched two years ago wherein significant strides have been made towards deepening and expanding strategic cooperation across key technology sectors including space, semiconductors, advanced telecommunications, artificial intelligence, quantum, biotechnology, and clean energy. He mentioned artificial intelligence in the sphere of biotechnology as particularly crucial. Mr Sullivan said that in future, India and the United States would achieve great strides in areas including semiconductor technology, space exploration, life-saving vaccines and new innovations. Mr Sullivan met both India’s NSA Ajit Doval and external affairs minister S. Jaishankar, who said on social media platform X: “Delighted to meet US NSA @JakeSullivan46 in New Delhi today morning. Continued our ongoing discussions on deepening bilateral, regional and global cooperation.” “Valued the openness of our conversations in the last four years. Appreciated his personal contribution to forging a closer and stronger partnership.” Releasing details of the meeting between Mr Sullivan and India’s NSA Ajit Doval, New Delhi said that the American NSA

“briefed the Indian side on the updates brought by the Biden administration to US missile export control policies under the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which will boost U.S. commercial space cooperation with India.” New Delhi added, “Reflecting the progress the United States and India have made - and will continue to make - as strategic partners and countries with a shared commitment to peaceful nuclear cooperation, NSA Sullivan announced US efforts to finalise necessary steps to delist Indian nuclear entities, which will promote civil nuclear cooperation and resilient, clean energy supply chains.” The ministry of external affairs said, “The two NSAs have engaged regularly in a high-level dialogue through extensive discussions on a broad bilateral, regional, and global agenda. Following the launch of the India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) by Prime Minister Modi and President Joseph Biden on the sidelines of the Quad Summit in Tokyo on May 24, 2022, the two NSAs have driven concrete initiatives between the two countries across a range of areas, including artificial intelligence, quantum computing, semiconductors, telecommunications, defence, and space.

8 jawans, civilian killed in Naxals’ Bastar blast

■ **Continued From Page 1** forces by the Maoists in the last one and half years. On April 26, 2023, nine jawans and a civilian driver were killed when the vehicle in which they were travelling was blown up in an IED blast by Maoists in Dantewada district in south Bastar. Chhattisgarh chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai severely condemned the attack on the security forces by Maoists in Bijapur district, calling it “an act of cowardice” by the ultras. This clearly indicated that Maoists were frustrated as

they were losing their ground in Bastar very fast, he said and vowed to end Naxalism in Chhattisgarh soon. In another development, the forces on Monday recovered another body of Maoist in Abujhmad, taking the death toll of Naxals in the Sunday’s encounter in the area to five. “Some of the them were believed to be senior cadres of platoon number 32 of People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army of Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee”, the police said. Automatic weapons such as AK-47s and

Delhi CM Atishi breaks down as BJP’s Bidhuri targets her family

■ **Continued From Page 1** Bidhuri) do such a dirty thing for the sake of election? He has come down to the situation where he is abusing an old man. I never thought that this country’s politics could stoop so low.” Speaking at the BJP’s “Pariwartin Rally” in Rohini that was later addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr Bidhuri said Atishi had changed her surname from “Marlena” to “Singh”. Ms Atishi, sitting MLA from Kalkaji Assembly seat, dropped her surname a while back.

“This Marlena (surname used earlier by Atishi) became Singh and (she) changed her name. Kejriwal swore over his children not to go with the corrupt Congress; Marlena changed fathers. Earlier she was Marlena; now she has become Singh. This is her character,” Mr Bidhuri charged. City BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said: “Politicians should refrain from making personal comments on the CM’s parents, but Ms Atishi should also condemn her father for supporting Afzal Guru.”

THE ASIAN AGE

7 JANUARY 2025

Low standards of Delhi poll campaign avoidable

The campaign for the election to the Delhi Assembly has plunged into a mud-slinging one even before it started in right earnest, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading the charge on behalf of the BJP.

Mr Modi, the most accomplished political communicator of our times, has a penchant for twisting words and coming out with sharp coinages, and in Delhi, he has discovered ‘aapdaa’ which in Hindi means disaster, to refer to his party’s main political rival. The BJP would now splash posters of ‘AAPda’ across the national capital, taking the Prime Minister’s message down to the last man.

Elections in our country are about first going past the post, and hence each vote counts. Every party will play every trick in the book to convince the voter about the electability of his party and the non-electability of its rival. This is perfectly legitimate, too.

But there are certain Lakshman Rekhas parties are supposed to follow. Some have been listed by the Election Commission of India in the Model Code of Conduct while some are observed as part of public life. Mutual respect is one of them. There are only rivals in politics, and not enemies, they would clarify.

The Prime Minister calling AAP a disaster is unbecoming of his position. The AAP has been elected to rule Delhi for three consecutive terms, as Mr Modi has been elected Prime Minister the third time. They both are in power because the people thought so. A politician can afford to ignore public opinion at his own cost; a prime minister can never do so.

Not that it is going to affect the AAP. If Mr Modi is a master in turning challenges into opportunities, Mr Arvind Kejriwal, AAP’s national convener, is a past master in the game. The Congress, given its huge historical baggage, may not be able to cope with Mr Modi and his party when it comes to personal attacks, and giving apt replies but the AAP is a different kettle of fish. It will be a costly affair for the BJP to underestimate the man who chose to complain to the RSS chief on the unethical campaign mode of the saffron party, a member of the Sangh parivar.

underestimate the man who chose to complain to the RSS chief on the unethical campaign mode of the saffron party, a member of the Sangh parivar.

Kejriwal has already started using the very same successful strategy Mr Modi used against his rivals: playing the victim card. He has already stated that Mr Modi may continue to abuse him and the party the BJP as long as it would address the issues of the people. On the opulence allegedly indulged in by Mr Kejriwal, the AAP has already started reeling out the numbers related to the Prime Minister’s official residence and the expenses incurred.

The people of national capital territory have real issues which only politicians can solve. Like law and order, housing, education and drinking water. Parties should attempt to find answers on how to make Delhi more livable, instead of raking up topics that can help divert people’s attention. It will be a zero sum game. The campaign should be run as a model one, and it is for Mr Modi to lead it from the front.

HMPV: No need to panic

The news that was dreaded about the incidence of the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in India has come. It was bound to, considering the virus may already have been existing without the medical fraternity and the people being unduly worried about it as the virus has been known to be most prevalent during the winter and early spring months and that it causes flu-like symptoms.

It is the background of the global pandemic of 2020 caused by the Covid-19 virus, which may have come out of an animal market in Wuhan in China or a laboratory in the same city, that the news is being received with various levels of shock. So little was known of the Covid-19 virus that the world was in the grip of absolute panic when it first began spreading in India.

Two babies in Karnataka, diagnosed in private medical laboratories as infected with the virus, are said to be recovering and that must come as a matter of early relief. The medical world is convinced that the HMPV is not a killer of the same ferocity as Covid-19 and that very young children and the elderly may be more likely to contract it. Also, doctors aver that children will quickly build an immunity to it and that there is no reason to spread the kind of alarm that gripped the world five years ago.

Is it time for the world to pull out the masks to keep the personal respiratory system somewhat away from the dangers of the world of today in which viruses travel as quickly as rumours? While high risk groups might be advised caution about touching surfaces or going near infected people, the time is not such that society must have to shut down as it did in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The panic-spreading videos out of Chinese hospitals that have triggered the latest round of global anxiety have also been explained. It is winter in the northern hemisphere which is when influenza, cold, fever and respiratory illnesses are very common. Some countries are in the grip of a ‘quadremic’ with a rise in cases of four winter viruses, each capable of attacking at the same time.

Do not panic would be the best advice anyone can give even in the aftermath of the global pandemic that wrought such havoc in ‘20 and ‘21. And don’t worry about the stock market whose indices will yo-yo as much with bad news as with the good. It might be safe to conclude that rising numbers of people with respiratory problems is not to be equated with the dangers of Covid-19 mortality rates.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER

Editor

K. SUDHAKAR

Printer & Publisher

THE ASIAN AGE office is located at:
New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.

Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida-201 301.

London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.

RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Subhani



World on edge: Trump, tech, tariffs & Xi loom



K.C. Singh

The year 2025 begins with Donald Trump taking the oath as America’s new President on January 20. The Economist magazine predicts an interplay of technology, Trump and uncertainty in the year ahead.

Stanford-based Francis Fukuyama, the acclaimed American political scientist, told Nikkei Asia that US power may have declined, relative to its rivals, but it was still a powerful player in an increasingly multi-polar world. That is so because the US economy and its demographics have it score over China, Russia and even Europe, which face shrinking populations. If a quarter century ago the US and European economies were at par, today the US economy is one-third bigger. Similarly, the gap between the GDPs of China and the US has widened in recent decades.

Fukuyama is confident that the slippage in America’s liberal democratic model, which Mr Trump’s win represents, is transitory. In this lies hope for democracy’s future elsewhere in the world, especially in the Global South.

The world fears the likely disruption that Mr Trump’s threatened actions may bring. First is the threat of higher tariffs on all nations trading with the US, but especially on China. There is unanimity that this could disrupt global trade, which now totals \$24 trillion in goods and \$7.5 trillion in services. For India, the implications are even more serious as 20 per cent of its global exports head to the US. A more sanguine assessment is that Mr Trump’s bark being worse than his bite, his posturing is a negotiating tactic.

Second comes his threat of mass deportation of illegal aliens, a crucial component in his electioneering to debunk Democrats. But

the United States lacks the infrastructure to conduct mass evictions of aliens. The move would also impact the US economy negatively, with low-paid workers eliminated.

Despite the impending Republican control of both Houses of Congress and the presidency, contradictions amongst Mr Trump’s supporters are surfacing. Billionaire Elon Musk took on MAGA (Make America Great Again) supporters by vociferously criticising their negative stand on H-1B visas for talented guest workers. Mr Trump was forced to intervene with a middle position. Similarly, conflict exists between some members of Congress supporting tax breaks for the rich while others want budgetary discipline.

However, the bigger concerns relate to Mr Trump’s handling of external issues, such as the wars in Ukraine and Gaza as well as the containment of China, including the defence of Taiwan. Mr Trump’s invitation to Chinese President Xi Jinping for his inauguration, adding that they together could solve most global issues, raised some concerns in New Delhi. India has always feared a Sino-US convergence, leaving it in a subservient position, as indeed marginalisation of groups like the Quad.

The concerns in Ukraine and West Asia are serious. Any kind of withdrawal, or even scaling back, of US military and economic assistance to Ukraine would embolden Russia, which reportedly is economically and militarily overstretched. A Trump-pushed status quo-based solution to the Ukraine crisis could cause dissonance within Nato.

Meanwhile, Europe’s big powers are facing domestic political churn. Germany will hold an election on February 23. Elon Musk, seen as Mr Trump’s alter ego, generated a controversy saying in an interview

A more sanguine assessment is that Mr Trump’s bark being worse than his bite, his posturing is a negotiating tactic.

the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) was “the last spark of hope”. He also separately called for the British Labour Party, just elected with a huge mandate, to face another election.

French President Emmanuel Macron has been struggling to appoint Prime Ministers as his party lost the majority in the last parliamentary elections. The continued US commitment to Nato and the defence of Europe is critical for Europe when the Ukraine war is stalemated. The best-case scenario is if Mr Trump can convince Russian President Vladimir Putin to settle for a face-saving retention of the occupied parts of Ukraine. Ukraine can be compensated by rebuilding finance and security guarantees against any future Russian mischief.

West Asia presents the possibility of a constructive outcome, but only if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can be cajoled into accepting a ceasefire and a pathway to a political settlement. So far, his right-wing allies have been seeking to annex the West Bank and even the Gaza Strip. Even close US allies amongst the Gulf rulers cannot accept anything less, mindful of their domestic opinion.

The wild card is Iran, seen on the backfoot due to its ally Hezbollah’s weakening in Lebanon and the ouster of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria. Iran has the resilience to regroup and await openings in Syria if the Turkey-supported Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) is unable to carry all minorities along in fresh nation-building. Iran has enough enriched uranium, if it feels cornered and public opinion swings against new regional power-brokers, to conduct a nuclear weapons test. Realising that Israel and the US will react strongly to that, it may need more than a handful

of nuclear weapons.

China has quietly supported both Iran and Russia, happy at them distracting the US and its allies. But Mr Trump threatens to upset this cosy arrangement by directly targeting Chinese exports and US investment in China. Considering the slowdown of the Chinese economy, with most analysts rejecting claims of five per cent GDP growth, fresh US tariffs can prove damaging. China’s National People’s Congress, the Chinese Parliament, will meet on March 5. By then Mr Trump would have played his hand, unlikely to delay it like in 2017. Did China ease border tensions with India, by mutually accepting a solution to the stand-off in Ladakh, because it saw a more serious dispute looming with the US? However, it has undone potential detente by the formal annexation of Aksai Chin and the announcement, without Indian consent, of the world’s largest dam at Yarlung Tsangpo, on the Brahmaputra, close to where the river enters India.

India’s policymakers thus face Trump-caused likely instability and China-created rivalry in South Asia. Bangladesh will hover between the past pro-India Awami League government and a likely inimical order after elections. Pakistan is preoccupied with handling the Taliban government in Afghanistan, which it helped empower, over its refusal to defang Pakistan-opposed Tehreek E-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). But ignoring Pakistan is not a long-term solution for stability and peace. Newly-elected Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has been to New Delhi and appears on track to balance relations between India and China. The Maldives government appears to have settled for peaceful engagement with India after initial sloganeering and fist-waving.

India will find the balancing of external and internal factors more challenging over at least the first year of the Trump presidency.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.

LETTERS

SAFEGUARD MEDIA

Slain independent journalist Mukesh Chandrakar was the creator of the YouTube channel Bastar Junction. It garnered millions of views for his investigative reports. Chandrakar also did very daring ground reporting of the Maoist conflict in India. India reported four journalist killings last year, all from its central region. While Chandrakar was killed following a conflict of interest with his brother, who was a government officer and the beneficiary of a road scam that he was exposing, his murder has once again spotlighted the perils faced by journalists in conflict zones and the urgent need for stronger protections for the media in India.

R. Sivakumar
Chennai

GREATEST PACER

IT IS not every day we get to see a bowler from the losing side in 3-1 Test series results getting the Man of the Series award, that was sheer masterclass by Jasprit Bumrah. It almost seemed that he was operating from a different planet altogether, taking 32 wickets with a miserable average of 13.06 is unbelievable. His absence in the fourth innings of the Sydney Test proved fatal for Team India, but we cannot expect him to come and provide miracles in each spell, each innings and each match; and ultimately, he is a human being too, and his body gave up, albeit at the wrong time.

Bal Govind
Noida, UP

RELEASE FISHERMEN

ACCORDING TO the provisions of the 2008 Bilateral Agreement on Consular Access, India and Pakistan have exchanged lists of prisoners on January 1 and July 1 every year. At present, there are 81 Pakistani fishermen and 266 Indian fishermen in their neighbouring country’s jails. But both sides are awaiting confirmation of their identities for repatriation. These prisoners need to be repatriated by expediting the repatriation process of both the countries. This will not only bring much relief to their families but also boost bilateral ties between the two nations.

R.S. Narula
Patiala, Punjab

Aakar Patel



Places of Worship Act, 1991: What stand will Centre take at SC hearing?

The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 is a law to “prohibit conversion of any place of worship and to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on the 15th day of August, 1947”.

This is an unusually phrased law which says that temples, mosques, churches, stupas, gurdwaras and so on will remain as they were in 1947. Meaning that the religion that was practised in that structure would continue to be practised. Why was it legislated?

To prevent more incidents like the Babri Masjid demolition. It could not be more clear in phrasing or in intent.

However, laws have rarely stopped things from happening in India, even in the courts.

In 2019, after the Supreme Court’s verdict handing over the Babri Masjid site to a temple, a petition was taken up in an Uttar Pradesh court regarding the Gyanvapi Mosque in Varanasi.

The court directed the Archaeological Survey of India to conduct a survey, though historians have clearly recorded that the mosque was built over an existing temple razed by Aurangzeb in 1669. The Places of Worship Act was meant to avoid precisely such medieval history from becoming current affairs.

The matter went to the Supreme Court in 2022. Here, D.Y. Chandrachud, who had authored the

Babri judgment, made an observation that would prove to be devastating. He said that the “ascertainment of the religious character” of a place was not prohibited by the Places of Worship Act. Presumably meaning that people were free to bring to court suits to that effect.

He allowed the continuing of the “survey”, which came to be centred around a fountain which the Hindu side claimed was a shivling. In 2023, the Varanasi district court asked the ASI to ascertain whether the mosque was “constructed over a pre-existing structure of a Hindu temple”.

Predictably, these events have led to a number of judges in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and elsewhere admitting petitions that sought to “ascertain the religious character” of mosques built in medieval India and ordering surveys.

Demands for surveys in places include the Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra mosque in Ajmer, built in 1199 by Qutubuddin Aibak (who also built the Qutab Minar in Delhi) and the Ajmer Dargah of Moinuddin Chishti, who died in 1236.

The mosque is already an ASI-protected site for its historical value, but was now subject to demands from the BJP’s Speaker in the state Assembly who wanted an ASI survey to find out if the claim was true that it had been a Sanskrit college earlier.

The dispute over Lucknow’s largest mosque, Teeleewali Masjid, was centred around a claim

that it was built by Shah Jahan’s governor over a platform named after Lakshman.

In Badaun the Jama Masjid Shamsi, built under Ilutmish (who also died in 1236) was claimed by the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha. The Atala Masjid in Jaunpur is, according to the government’s tourism website, “the ideal for the construction of the other mosques of Jaunpur”. A group named Swaraj Vahini Association has moved the court demanding the right to worship inside it.

In March 2024, the 13th century Bhojshala-Kamal Maula complex in Madhya Pradesh’s Dhar district became the latest site for a “scientific survey” by the Archaeological Survey of India after an order from the Madhya Pradesh high court.

In November last year, a court in western UP heard a petition on the Sambhal Jama Masjid. The court ordered a survey of the mosque premises, which took place on the same day. The team returned for a second visit early on a Sunday and a rumour spread that it was digging under the mosque. A crowd of protesters gathered there and the police shot dead five of them. We can attribute this tragedy directly to that remark made in the court.

The really unusual thing is that those remarks made in the Supreme Court have no binding authority, as experts have noted. Those words have not been recorded in the order and exist

merely because they were reported at the moment they were uttered. The Supreme Court did not stay or undo the Places of Worship Act. It remains in force and unless a structure has been actively used by multiple faiths on August 15, 1947, it cannot be brought to court in a dispute.

And yet, as we can see, the number of cases is rising with structures that are seven centuries old being claimed as property disputes. For those who like the writer were adults when the Ayodhya dispute began to bubble, and then burst, and then remain as the core issue of politics for three decades, these events are alarming. Too much national energy and blood has been expended over that.

Last month, the Supreme Court stopped all courts across the country from registering new suits. It also said no interim or final orders could be passed in the pending suits till it decided on the validity of the Places of Worship Act. The court will hear the matter again soon, when we may learn what the Narendra Modi government’s position on the law is. All governments are expected to defend the laws, but it is unclear what the stand of this government is, headed by the party that benefited from the movement that led to the legislation of the Places of Worship Act.

The writer is the chair of Amnesty International India. Twitter: @aakar_patel

SHORT TAKES

TEHRAN: HOLDING IRANIAN IS HOSTAGE-TAKING

Tehran, Jan. 6: Iran said on Monday the detention of an Iranian national in Italy at the request of the US amounted to hostage-taking.

Iranian businessman Mohammad Abedini was detained in Milan last month. He is wanted by the United States on suspicion of involvement in a drone strike against US forces in Jordan. Iran has denied involvement.

His arrest has been linked to the detention three days later of Italian reporter Cecilia Sala, who was seized in Tehran on December 19.

2 BOATS WITH 260 ROHINGYA LAND IN INDONESIA

Lhokseumawe (Indonesia), Jan. 6: More than 260 weak and hungry Rohingya refugees, mostly women and children, have landed in Indonesia in two boats.

Police and military officers are working with the UN refugee agency and the local government in West Perelak in East Aceh to gather more information about the refugees, who arrived on Sunday evening.

About 1 million Rohingya, predominantly Muslim, are living in camps in Bangladesh after leaving Myanmar. They include about 7,40,000 who fled a brutal clearance campaign.

AL-QADIR CASE VERDICT AGAINST IMRAN ON JAN. 13

Islamabad, Jan. 6: A Pakistan court on Monday postponed until January 13 its verdict in the £190 million Al-Qadir Trust corruption case against former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi.

Judge Nasir Javed Rana of the anti-corruption court had completed the hearing on December 18 but reserved the judgment until December 23. Later he fixed January 6 as the new date for announcing the verdict, *Geo News* reported. Noting that Judge Rana was on leave on Monday, the court staff said that the decision would now be announced on January 13.

EMERGENCY LANDING AT NEPAL AIRPORT

Kathmandu, Jan. 6: A Buddha Air flight with 76 people on board made an emergency landing at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) here in Nepal after experiencing a left engine flameout.

The flight BHA953, en route to Chandragadi, departed from the TIA at 10:37 am local time.

It experienced a left engine flameout and subsequently initiated a VOR (Very High Frequency Omnidirectional Range) approach to Kathmandu at 11:15 am, said a press release circulated by the Tribhuvan International Airport and Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal.

INDIAN'S MURDER: FIVE PIO MEN IN U.S. CHARGED

Las Vegas, Jan. 6: Five Indian-origin men have been charged with murder in the US in connection with the death of a 35-year-old man from India.

Sandeep Kumar, 34, of South Ozone Park, New York, was charged with murder and conspiracy to commit murder in connection with the death of Kuldeep Kumar in Manchester Township around October 22, 2024, said Ocean County Prosecutor Bradley Billhimer.

Other defendants in the case are Sourav Kumar, 23, Gaurav Singh 27, Nirmal Singh 30, and Gurdeep Singh 22, all from Greenwood, Indiana.

JIHADISTS KILL 6 NIGERIA SOLDIERS AT ARMY BASE

Kano, Jan. 6: Jihadists linked to the Islamic State group have killed six soldiers in a raid on a military base in northeastern Nigeria, two military officers told *AFP* on Monday.

Fighters from Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) launched a pre-dawn attack in trucks and on motorcycles on Sunday on the base in Sabon Gari in Borno State's Damboa district, military sources said.

They set fire to the base along with army vehicles, the sources said, on condition of anonymity as they are not authorised to speak.

Canadian PM Trudeau announces resignation

Will leave office once Liberal party chooses new leader

Ottawa, Jan. 6: Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation on Monday, saying he will leave office as soon as the ruling Liberal party chooses a new leader after months of slumping polls and internal division.

"I intend to resign as party leader, as prime minister, after the party selects its next leader," Trudeau, who has been in power since 2015, told reporters in Ottawa following a protracted political crisis that saw top Liberal allies urge him to quit.

It was not immediately clear how long Trudeau will remain in office as a caretaker premier. He said the Liberal leadership race will be "a robust, nationwide competitive process." That means Trudeau will continue to lead Canada when incoming US president Donald Trump takes office this month and will be tasked with leading the country's initial response to the new US administration, including a possible trade war.

Trump has vowed to impose 25 per cent on all Canadian imports, which could prove devastating to the Canadian economy, and Trudeau has vowed to retaliate. Trudeau's support within the Liberal

● Trudeau, 53, took office in November 2015 and won reelection twice, becoming one of Canada's longest-serving prime ministers.

● Trudeau will still be prime minister on Jan. 20 when U.S. President-elect Donald Trump takes office. Trump has threatened to impose tariffs that would cripple Canada's economy.

● Parliament to be suspended until March 24.

● Polls show the Liberals will badly lose to the official opposition Conservatives in an election that must be held by late October, regardless of who the leader is.



Justin Trudeau

party had been teetering through much of last year but plunged to new depths following the surprise resignation in December of his former finance minister and deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland.

In a scathing resignation letter, Freeland accused Trudeau of focusing on political gimmicks to appease voters, including a costly Christmas tax holiday, instead of steadying Canada's finances ahead of Trump's promised tariffs. Canadian media have tipped Freeland as a possible contender to take over the Liberal party along

dence votes in Parliament late last year.

His minority government had been held up by a deal with the left-wing New Democratic Party but in December the NDP said they would vote to topple Trudeau at the next opportunity.

Trudeau confirmed that he had received permission from Canada's governor general to suspend all parliamentary business until March 24.

That could give the Liberals time to choose a new leader while restricting the opposition chances to bring a vote of non-confidence. — *AFP*

Graft biggest threat to CCP: Xi

Beijing, Jan. 6: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday vowed an "all-out battle against corruption" as top leaders convened in Beijing for an annual planning session of the top disciplinary agency.

"We must always maintain our tenacity and perseverance... and resolutely fight the tough, protracted and all-out battle against corruption," Xi said, according to state broadcaster *CCTV*.

The Chinese leader has overseen a wide-ranging campaign against official corruption since coming to power just over a decade ago.

Proponents say the policy promotes clean governance, but others say it also serves as a means for Xi to purge political rivals.

In November, the ruling Communist Party suspended a top military official and placed him under investigation for "serious violations of discipline."

Admiral Miao Hua had



Xi Jinping

● THE CHINESE leader has overseen a wide-ranging campaign against official corruption since coming to power just over a decade ago. Proponents say the policy promotes clean governance, but others say it also serves as a means for Xi to purge political rivals.

been a member of Beijing's powerful Central Military Commission, sitting alongside five other men, including Xi at the top.

He joined a host of high-ranking figures, including two former defence ministers, to fall foul of a sweeping crackdown on graft in the country's armed forces in just over a year.

On Monday, Xi called corruption "the biggest threat" to the Communist Party, adding that "the fight against corruption remains grave and complex."

"Instances of corruption continue to occur," he told

US winter blast shuts schools

Annapolis (US), Jan. 6: A major winter blast of snow, ice, wind and plunging temperatures in the US stirred dangerous travel conditions from central and southern states all the way to the East Coast early on Monday, prompting schools and government offices in several states to close.

Snow and ice blanketed major roads across Kansas, western Nebraska and parts of Indiana, where the state's National Guard was activated to help stranded motorists. Nearly 3,00,000 customers were without power early on Monday across Kentucky, Indiana, Virginia, West Virginia, Illinois and Missouri, according to electric utility tracking website PowerOutage.us.



A snowplow clears the area as snow blankets Capitol Hill ahead of a joint session of Congress to certify the votes from the Electoral College in the presidential election in Washington, on Monday. — *AP*

The National Weather Service issued winter storm warnings for Kansas and Missouri, where blizzard conditions brought

Congress to certify Trump's poll victory

Washington, Jan. 6: As Congress convenes amid a winter storm to certify President-elect Donald Trump's election, the legacy of January 6 hangs over the proceedings with an extraordinary fact: The candidate who tried to overturn the previous election won this time, and is legitimately returning to power.

Lawmakers will gather noontime on Monday under the tightest national security level possible. Layers of tall black fencing flank the US Capitol complex in a stark reminder of what happened four years ago, when a defeated Trump sent his mob to "fight like hell" in what became the most gruesome attack on the seat of American democracy in 200 years.

No violence, protests or even procedural objec-



Donald Trump

ns in Congress are expected this time. Republicans who challenged the 2020 poll results when Trump lost to President Joe Biden have no qualms this year after he defeated V-P Kamala Harris. And Democrats frustrated by Trump's 312-226 Electoral College victory nevertheless accept the choice of the American voters.

Even the threat of a massive snowstorm barreling down on the region wasn't expected to interfere with January 6. — *AP*

TRUMP ASKS JUDGE TO HALT JAN. 10 SENTENCING IN HUSH MONEY CASE

New York, Jan. 6: US President-elect Donald Trump asked a New York judge on Monday to delay his January 10 sentencing on his criminal conviction on charges stemming from hush money paid to a porn star.

In a court filing, Trump's lawyers said they planned to appeal Justice

Juan Merchan's decisions denying Trump's bids to dismiss the case due to presidential immunity and due to the demands of the presidential transition period. Lawyers, Todd Blanche and Emil Bove, asked Merchan to hold off on sentencing Trump while the appeal played out. — *Reuters*

Hasina's second arrest warrant

Dhaka, Jan. 6: Bangladesh's International Criminal Tribunal (ICT) on Monday issued arrest warrants against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 11 others, including former military generals and an ex-police chief, for their alleged role in incidents of enforced disappearances.

This was the second arrest warrant by the ICT against Hasina, who fled to India after her Awami League regime's toppling following unprecedented anti-government protests in August last year. The tribunal has so far recorded three cases against her.

"Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mojumdar, chairman of the tribunal, issued the arrest warrant after hearing a prosecution plea, an ICT official said on Monday.

The Inspector General of Police was ordered to arrest the twelve people, including Hasina, and produce them before the tribunal on February 12 in the case.

The deposed premier's then-defence adviser Major General (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique and former IGP Benazir Ahmed are among those named in the case. — *PTI*



Sheikh Hasina

OBTAIN VISA BY JAN. 31, B'DESH TELLS FOREIGNERS

Dhaka, Jan. 6: The interim government on Monday asked foreigners residing illegally in Bangladesh without a valid visa to obtain the document by January 31, warning that those who fail to do so will face legal actions.

Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd.) Jahangir Alam said that many foreign nationals are residing in Bangladesh without a visa. Many of them are also engaged in jobs. He set a deadline of January 31 for them to acquire the visa to avoid "legal actions". Alam made the comments while visiting the central Passport Office in the capital. — *PTI*

SK's MILITARY SAYS NORTH KOREA FIRED MISSILE INTO EASTERN SEA

Seoul, Jan. 6: North Korea on Monday fired a ballistic missile that flew 1,100 km (685 miles) before landing in waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, South Korea's military said, extending its heightened weapons testing activities into 2025 weeks before Donald Trump returns as US President. The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said

the midrange missile was fired from an area near the North Korean capital of Pyongyang and that the launch preparations were detected in advance by the US and South Korean militaries.

South Korea denounced the launch as a provocation that poses a serious threat to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. — *AP*

DECENNIAL | MEMORY

Islamist gunmen decimated staff at French newspaper

Charlie Hebdo unveils special edition

Paris, Jan. 6: French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* unveiled a special edition on Monday to mark 10 years since an attack on its offices by Islamist gunmen that decimated its staff.

The front-page features a cartoon celebrating the atheist paper's existence with the caption "Indestructible!", while four inside pages show the results of a caricature contest to mock God and religious leaders.

"Satire has a virtue that has enabled us to get through these tragic years: optimism," said an editorial from director Riss, who survived the January 7, 2015, massacre that left 12 people, including eight editorial staff, dead.

"If you want to laugh, it means you want to live. Laughing, irony, and caricatures are manifestations of optimism. Whatever happens, dramatic or happy, the desire to laugh will never cease." The 2015 attack by two Paris-born brothers of Algerian descent was said to be revenge for Charlie Hebdo's deci-

● THE MASSACRE of some of France's most famous cartoonists signalled the start of a gruesome series of Al-Qaeda and Islamic State plots that claimed hundreds of lives in France and western Europe over the following years.

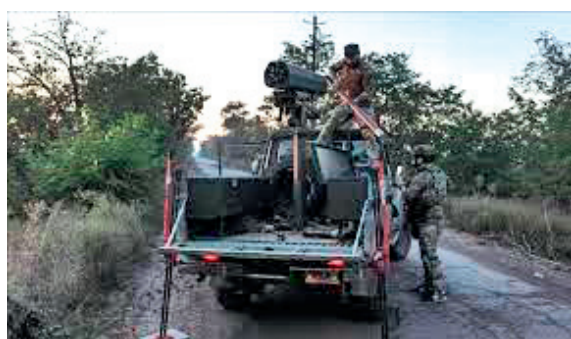
The edition unveiled to the media on Monday will go on sale on Tuesday when public commemorations by President Emmanuel Macron and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo are set to take place.

The weekly had called on cartoonists to submit their "funniest and meanest" depictions of God in a

typically provocative and defiant contest for the special anniversary edition.

"Yes, we can laugh about God, especially if he exists," said a headline over what the paper said were the best 40 out of more than 350 entries.

Along with some typically crude and sexually explicit images, one makes reference to the Prophet Mohammed with the caption "if I sketch someone who is drawing someone who is drawing someone who is drawing Mohamed, is that ok?" — *AFP*



Ukrainian soldiers prepare a vehicle adapted to fire helicopter shells as the Russia-Ukraine war continues in the direction of Toretsk, Ukraine. — *AP*

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	77,964.99	-1.59
Nifty 50	23,616.05	-1.62
S&P 500*	6,004.44	1.04
Dollar (₹)	85.02	0.08
Pound Sterling (₹)	106.22	1.38
Euro (₹)	88.24	0.38
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	76,744*573	-0.74
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	77.33	1.07
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.763	-0.016
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.591	-0.003

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Jubilant hopes 56% rise in ops revenue for Q3

Jubilant FoodWorks on Monday said it estimates a 56.2 per cent growth in consolidated revenue from operations at ₹2,153.2 crore in the third quarter of FY25, compared to the year-ago period. In its quarterly update, the company, which operates popular fast food chains such as Domino's, Popeyes and Dunkin, said the provisional standalone revenue from operations in the third quarter was at ₹1,611.1 cr, higher by 18.9 per cent year-on-year.



Titan sees 24% growth in Q3 on festive demand

Tata group firm Titan Company Ltd on Monday said it registered a year-on-year growth of 24 per cent on a standalone basis in the third quarter of the ongoing fiscal buoyed by strong festive demand, especially in the jewellery segment. Robust consumer traction during Diwali translated into high single-digit buyer growth along with double-digit ticket size growth, the company said in its quarterly update.

Rane, ZF JV plans to bring exclusive steering system

Auto component makers Rane and ZF to introduce rack drive electric power steering system technologies in Indian market. The two companies plan to introduce the new product range through - ZF Rane Automotive India. Additionally, Rane and ZF have entered into a license agreement for column drive electric power steering system technology to be used exclusively by Rane Steering Systems for the domestic market.

Cipla launches app for asthma screening in India

Drug firm Cipla on Monday said it has launched a mobile application CipAir which designed to enable the first line of screening for asthma in India. "By leveraging the power of next-gen technologies, we are developing solutions that are fundamentally transforming patient care and enabling better diagnostic, treatment, and management outcomes," Cipla managing director and global CEO Umang Vohra said.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: Kaushik Mitter, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle® is prohibited.

HMPV fear, selling make Sensex to shed 1,250 pts

Investors lose over ₹11 L-cr as BSE's m-cap falls to ₹438.7 L-cr

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JAN. 6

Market investors booked profit as news of a new respiratory illness spreading in China and three cases reported in India also of HMPV virus infection in Bengaluru and Ahmedabad scared investors of Covid like situation. However, HMPV is not new virus. It was discovered in 2001.

The Sensex fell 1,258 points or 1.59 per cent to 77,964 while Nifty-50 fell 388 points or 1.62 per cent to 23,616.05 as there was profit taking across all sectors. The Sensex fell intraday to a low of 77,781.62 down by 1,441.49 points before a minor pull back. The Nifty-50 fell intraday to 23,551.90 falling 452.85 points.

Investors market wealth fell by over ₹10.98 lakh cr in Monday's market fall as BSE's total market capitalisation fell to over ₹438.79 lakh crore from Friday's over ₹449.78 lakh crore.

HDFC Bank's Oct-Dec. quarter financials was also below market expectations leading to profit booking in almost all major banks. This combination of factors led to a sharp market sell-off,

NOTIONAL LOSS

SENSEX FELL INTRADAY to a low of 77,781.62 down by 1,441.49 points before a minor pull back. The Nifty-50 fell intraday to 23,551.90 falling 452.85 points.

HDFC BANK'S Oct-Dec.'s below market expectations performance, lead to profit booking in almost all major banks.



diminishing investor confidence and dampening near-term market sentiment, said analysts.

Broader markets faced higher selling pressure leading to 2.44 per cent fall in BSE mid-cap index and 3.17 per cent fall in BSE small-cap index.

"The primary catalyst for a sharp sell-off in the domestic market appears to be concerns over the human metapneumovirus (HMPV)," said Vinod Nair,

FPIS NET SELLERS of equities worth ₹2,575.06 cr while domestic institutions turn net buyers by ₹5,749.65 cr.

BROADER MARKETS faced higher selling pressure leading to 2.44 per cent fall in BSE mid-cap index and 3.17 per cent fall in BSE small-cap index.

ON BSE, ONLY 611 stocks advanced compared to 3,530 stocks declining out of 4,244 stocks traded.

INDIAN EQUITIES faced intense selling pressure amid concerns regarding the outbreak of HMP virus and sharp fall in banking stocks post lacklustre quarterly updates.

— SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA, Head - Research, MOFS

Shares and Stock Brokers. FPIs were net sellers of equities worth ₹2,575.06 cr while domestic institutions were net buyers by ₹5,749.65 crore.

"Indian equities faced intense selling pressure amid concerns regarding the outbreak of HMP virus and sharp fall in banking stocks post lacklustre quarterly updates," said Siddhartha Khemka, head - Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Hospitals propose ₹16,000-cr spend

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, JAN. 6

Large hospital chains are expected to add around 8,500 beds in the next two years with an outlay of ₹14,000 cr to ₹16,000 cr in 4 to 5 years. They are undertaking sizeable greenfield and brownfield expansions across both metros and tier II cities.

They are expected to add over 4,000 beds and 4,500 beds in FY25 and FY26, respectively, with an outlay of ₹7,000-8,000 crore each in FY25 and FY26, respectively. This will see deployment of a cumulative capex of ₹14,000-16,000 crore, finds ICRA.

Apollo Hospitals has announced that it will add 3,512 beds across 11 locations in India at an investment of around ₹6,100 cr over the next four years.

Manipal Health Enterprises will come up



with four new hospitals in India, adding about 1,100 beds in its portfolio.

Aster DM Healthcare to merge with Quality Care India to create one of the top-three hospital chains in India in terms of revenue and number of beds. Aster DM plans to add 1,700 beds in India by FY27, bringing its total bed count to around 6,600.

Fortis is also planning to add 2,200 beds across its existing hospitals in next 3 years. Max Healthcare has announced that it will invest up to ₹5,500 cr over the next 3-5 years to more than double its existing bed capacity.

After gold, silver to have hallmarking

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, JAN. 6

Government is in the process of introducing mandatory hallmarking for silver, similar to gold.

The government is working with the stakeholders to make hallmarking mandatory for silver, said Prahlad Joshi, minister of consumer affairs, food and public distribution.

"Currently, hallmarking for silver is voluntary. After seeing that the consumer losses have significantly reduced for gold due to mandatory hall-

marking, people have been demanding it for silver also. We have already started working on it and we will consult the stakeholders on this," he said.

The industry too is in favour of bringing in mandatory hallmarking. However, it finds that this is not bereft of challenges.

"We are in favour of mandatory hallmarking for silver. As the silver prices have gone up, we want customers not to be cheated," said Surendra Mehta, national secretary, India Bullion and Jewellers Association.

NPAs may rise on high unsecured loans

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JAN. 7

Banks are expected to report tepid Q3FY25 earnings sequentially on account of muted credit growth translating to slower net interest income growth as well as profitability.

Some banks have increased their card rates on shorter tenor deposits and would also see some

residual repricing of legacy low-cost deposits resulting in overall cost of deposits to rise but the quantum would be lesser than preceding quarters.

Several banks have also raised the marginal cost of funds based lending rate. The average weighted average domestic term deposit rate for private

sector banks for October and Nov. 2024 rose 4 bps, to 6.9 per cent compared with the average for 2QFY25. The corresponding weighted average lending rate was down by one basis points to 10.83 per cent, implying that loan spread declined 5 basis points.

Anil Gupta, senior VP and co-group head finan-

cial sector ratings, ICRA said, "The credit to deposit ratio at a system level is expected to decline marginally with deposit growth slightly outpacing the credit growth. Asset quality is expected to remain steady."

Some banks with higher exposure to microfinance loans and unsecured loans may report a sequential increase in non-performing assets as well as cred-

it loss provisions," added Gupta.

Fresh slippages in 3QFY25 would remain elevated for banks with high exposure to unsecured retail and microfinance but may not rise materially on sequential basis.

HSBC expects return ratios of private banks to remain under pressure due to slower loan growth, NIM compression and credit cost normalisation.

FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN WILL PRESENT THE UNION BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2025-26 ON FEBRUARY 1 IN THE LOK SABHA. THIS MARKS HER EIGHTH CONSECUTIVE BUDGET PRESENTATION AND THE SECOND FULL BUDGET OF THE MODI GOVERNMENT IN ITS THIRD TERM

WHAT IS Budget?

BUDGET FOR PEOPLE
Public expects sops from direct tax to get more money in hand from their income. This will lead to higher consumption. From indirect tax, they seek lower tax slabs for food and other consumer items for better affordability. Many see it as blueprint on plans for improving health and education infra, employment generation and steps to improve the living standards in general.

TAXES: The current taxation system attracts 5% to 20% tax from annual income of ₹3 lakh to ₹15 lakh. Higher income attracts 30%. Middle income groups want the salary bands be increased.

WHAT GOVERNMENT WANTS FROM BUDGET?
Government focus is on fiscal prudence, GDP growth, direct, indirect and corporate taxes, containing inflation and others. It stresses on boosting exports and manufacturing to create more jobs in the country. Focus areas are infrastructure, defence, railways, energy, agriculture, electric vehicles, and MSMEs sector.

WHAT INDUSTRY WANTS?
Industry wants government to lower excise duty on fuel. It wants govt to reduce marginal tax rates for personal income up to ₹20 lakh per annum to boost consumption. It expects measures to boost exports, manufacturing, ease of doing business.

INDIA'S MANUFACTURING grew at its weakest pace for the year 2024, falling to a 12-month low in December to 56.4 from 56.5 in November.

WHAT MARKETS WANT?
Incentives for long-term savings, both in debt and equity, to boost investor participation. Reforms for increasing access to capital markets.

BUDGET IS a financial document of the government that outlines the expected income and expenses for a defined period. It is a roadmap guiding resource allocation to government departments.

● India's GDP slumped to 5.4% in second quarter of FY25, its lowest level in 7 quarters.

● RBI projects a full-year GDP growth of 7.2% for FY25. Govt expects sharp rebound in second half of the year with real GDP rising 6% in Apr-Sep this fiscal.

HOME-COOKED MEALS GET DEARER ON PRICY POTATO

Mumbai, Jan. 6: Prices of home-cooked meals increased in December on dearer key kitchen staples like tomato and potato, a report said on Monday.

The average cost of preparing a vegetarian thali was up 6 per cent at ₹31.6 per plate in Dec. when compared to the year-ago period's ₹29.7, but was down from preceding Nov. month's rate of ₹32.7, the report by a unit of rating agency Crisil said.

In the roti, rice, rate report, Crisil found that a non-vegetarian thali cost was higher by 12 per cent on-year and 3 per cent on-month to ₹63.3 in December.

The report said tomato prices were up 24 per cent at ₹47 per kg in Dec., while potato surged 50 per cent to ₹36 for a kg on a low base.

RBI ADDS 73 TONNE GOLD TO RESERVES IN 11 MTHS TILL NOV.

FC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JAN. 6

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) added 8 tonnes of gold to its reserves in Nov. 2024, lifting the total gold reserves to 876 tonnes.

In eleven months of 2024, RBI bought a total of 73 tonnes. RBI was third largest gold buying central bank after Poland and Turkey in 2024.

In 2023, RBI had bought just 16 tonnes and the 2024 purchases are the highest since 2009.

Ajay Kedia, MD, Kedia Commodities, the central banks are building gold reserves as a response to the geo-political tensions around. "Further, the new regime in the US is also likely to add to the uncertainties," he said.

DIGITAL | DRIVE

World's largest tech event to host global cos, top brands, start-ups and govt leaders

CES 2025: AI, digital health trends to stay in focus

Las Vegas, Jan. 6: Cutting-edge innovations in artificial intelligence (AI), mobility, quantum, digital health, and sustainability will take centre-stage as top companies and start-ups from around the globe showcase their products and offerings at the world's largest tech event here.

Considered the world's most powerful technology event, Consumer Electronics Show (CES) 2025 will run through

January 7-10, bringing together global companies from top brands to innovative start-ups, industry executives, media, and government leaders.

The tradeshow, produced by the consumer technology association (CTA), will see participation from over 4,500 exhibitors, including about 1,400 start-ups and 1,100 speakers for over 300 conference sessions.

CTA chief executive officer and vice chair Gary

AI, TECH innovation in health, energy transition focused on shaping a sustainable future, agriculture, marine tech, and advanced air travel remain key themes.

Shapiro said, "We are on track for an incredible show where attendees will

BIG PLAYERS

AMAZON, BMW, Bosch, Caterpillar, Honda, LG, Nikon, Panasonic, Qualcomm, Samsung, and Sony will be present at the expo.

see everything that is new in tech from the latest in artificial intelligence and

digital health to advanced mobility, smart communities, sustainability, and accessibility tech.

CTA president Kinsey Fabrizio said that exhibitors from big brands including Amazon, BMW, Bosch, Caterpillar, Honda, LG, Nikon, Panasonic, Qualcomm, Samsung, and Sony will be present at the tradeshow.

There are some truly phenomenal exhibitors showcasing the best innovations in fields such as

AI, digital health, mobility and sustainability and they are showcasing how they are creating solutions that are solving some of world's biggest challenges, Fabrizio said.

"It's all focused around innovation, and a lot of it is focused on sustainability and making the world better," Shapiro said.

"These are themes that go throughout the show, and exhibitors show them in different ways," he said.

SHORT TAKES

ICC mulls new Test system with Big 3

Sydney/ New Delhi: The ICC in collaboration with cricket boards of India, Australia and England is exploring the possibility of a two-tier Test system to facilitate more series between big three nations. The *Age* reported that Jay Shah, the new ICC chairman, is set to meet Cricket Australia chair Mike Baird and his England counterpart Richard Thompson later this month to discuss the finer points. "Any plan for a move to two divisions in Test cricket would kick in after the end of the current Future Tours Program in 2027," the *Age* reported quoting its sources. The BCCI is currently gearing up for its Special General Meeting on January 12 in Mumbai where interim secretary Devajit Saikia is expected to get a full-time role. Saikia was appointed in the interim role after Shah vacated his post last month to take over as ICC chairman. — PTI

Sriram-Miguel win; Nagal exits

New Delhi: Indian doubles duo of N. Sriram Balaji and Miguel Reyes-Varela advanced to the Adelaide International pre-quarterfinals while Sumit Nagal fought hard before making an early exit at the Auckland ASB Classic on Monday. The Indo-Mexican pair of Balaji and Reyes-Varela staged a remarkable comeback to defeat Rohan Bopanna and his new Colombian partner Nicolas Barrientos 4-6, 6-2, 10-7. Bopanna, who ended his two-year partnership with Australia's Matthew Ebden and paired up with Barrientos ahead of the Australian Open, had a stellar first-serve percentage. With an 81 first-serve percentage and winning 76 per cent of those points, their clinical service game made the difference. Despite losing the first set, Balaji and Reyes-Varela improved their game to dominate the second set, taking advantage of their opponents' faltering serve and return game. Meanwhile, India's top singles player Nagal put up a spirited fight before falling to his USA rival Alex Michelsen 7-6 (8), 4-6, 2-6 in a gruelling two-hour, 40-minute battle. — PTI

Srinu, Nirmaben aim to defend title

Mumbai: Defending men's and women's champions Srinu Bugatha and Thakor Nirmaben will headline a star-studded Indian elite field for the Tata Mumbai Marathon (TMM) to be held on January 19. Reigning Asian marathon champion Man Singh, Olympian Gopi T., a two-time winner and three-time runner-up, and the experienced Kalidas Hirve are among the leading contenders in the men's race. Gopi won the 2024 New Delhi Marathon with a time of 2:14.40, pipping second-placed Army-mate Bugatha by one second. Maharashtra's Hirve, who finished third in the 2023 edition underlined his current form by winning the recent Vasai-Vihar Mayor's Marathon. The World Athletics Gold Label race will also see Kartik Kumar, the 2023 Asian Games 10,000m silver medallist, making his debut over the classic distance in Mumbai. Kartik's best marathon time is 2:22:50, which he recorded in Bengaluru in October last year. — PTI

Marseille hit 5 to close gap on PSG

Paris: Marseille closed the gap on leaders Paris Saint-Germain to seven points at the top of Ligue 1 after crushing strugglers Le Havre 5-1 at the Velodrome on Sunday as the season approaches the halfway point. Valentin Rongier, Bilal Nadir, Neal Maupay, Elye Wahi and Ulisses Garcia scored the goals for Roberto De Zerbi's team, who also moved three points clear of third-placed Monaco with the victory. Marseille have won five and drawn one of their last six outings in all competitions, and have scored nine goals in two matches either side of the fortnight-long winter break. Rongier drove in the first from distance on 25 minutes and Nadir fired a low shot into the far corner to make it two, the 21-year-old scoring his first senior goal on just his second Ligue 1 start. Elsewhere on Sunday, Champions League revelations Brest slumped to a 2-0 defeat away at Angers, a result which leaves them 12th in Ligue 1 as the season reaches its midway stage next weekend. — AFP

EMPTY BOWL

Plenty of batting options for India; bowling talent sparse

Sydney, Jan. 6: The nightmarish batting performance is deservedly under the scanner after India's meek surrender in the Border-Gavaskar series but a closer look at the team's bench strength would reveal that bowling resources are a bigger concern for the side as it navigates a difficult transition.

Skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's Test future hangs in balance after their poor returns with the bat but the national selection committee has the reserves to ensure that the order remains a solid one even if the two giants were to be phased out.

However, bowling, especially pace, is a different story.

The cupboard in the fast bowling department is bare and it will take some time to prepare another crack line-up that can match up to the aura of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami and Ishant Sharma.

The available names are doing their best but is that enough for the team or for Bumrah, whose workload became a massive concern during the just-concluded series?

The spearhead was forced to watch from the dressing room during the last innings of the decisive fifth and final Test that India lost by six wickets as back spasms prevented him from bowling.

Mohammed Siraj, after 36 Tests, hasn't developed into a game-changer yet and Prasad Krishna bowls too many loose balls.

There is the duo of Akash Deep and Mukesh Kumar, who are skilful, but they are not really tested at the highest level.

In the Ranji circuit, there aren't too many exciting fast bowling options that the selectors can explore as of now. The main problem seems to be a dearth of left-arm seamers as Arshdeep Singh hasn't actually set the stage on fire and Yash Dyal doesn't look a finished product.

But when it comes to batting there is some real talent available although the Ajit Agarkar-led selection committee will not decide anything till the end of the Ranji Trophy season.

If the panel decides to move away from Rohit and Kohli or the two announce retirements, there are at least half a dozen name ready to stake a claim for the two slots that will open up.

One of the prime contenders could be B. Sai Sudharsan of Tamil Nadu.

The elegant left-hander impressed in his appearance for India 'A' against Australia 'A' in Mackay but then he had a sports hernia operation and is undergoing rehabilitation. — PTI

Australia aim to dominate world after taming India

Sydney, Jan. 6: Cricket's World Test Championship final is still five months away but it is already playing on the mind of Australia skipper Pat Cummins, saying the defence of their title is "a huge goal" after conquering India.

Australia surged into a June showdown against South Africa at Lord's with a six-wicket victory in the fifth Test against India in Sydney on Sunday.

The thrilling win sealed a first series triumph against India in a decade.

It also confirmed their place in a clash against South Africa that will determine the world's most consistent red-ball side over the last two years from the nine teams contesting the WTC. "To hold the Border-



The cupboard in the fast bowling department is bare and it will take some time to prepare another crack line-up that can match up to the aura of Jasprit Bumrah (in pic), Mohammed Shami and Ishant Sharma. — AP

Injured Bumrah is likely to miss majority of Eng series

Sydney, Jan. 6: Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who sustained back spasms, is likely to be rested for the majority of India's home white-ball series against England, keeping an eye on the ICC Champions' Trophy, starting from February 19.

Bumrah, who was India's stand out player with 32 wickets in their 1-3 thrashing at the hands of Australia in the just-concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy, couldn't bowl in the final innings of the series here after suffering back spasms.

The 30-year-old Bumrah who bowled more than 150 overs in the series.

The injury has a direct link to his excessive workload in the series, and the BCCI medical team will try to ensure the new Test captain is ready for the ICC showpiece where his presence is mandatory to India's fortunes.

According to sources privy to the development, the grade of Bumrah's back spasm has not yet been ascertained.

India will open their Champions Trophy campaign against Bangladesh on February 20 in Dubai.

BUMRAH'S ABSENCE ON DAY 3 PLAYED 'BIG ROLE' IN OZ WIN

Sydney, Jan. 6: Australian batters Usman Khawaja and Travis Head have conceded that the incomparable Jasprit Bumrah's absence on the third day of the series-deciding fifth Test played a big role in their team's victory against India on the bowler-friendly SCG deck. "I was just getting Bumrah'd. It was tough work. I have to face this guy with the new ball every single time. You never want to see anyone injured and it's a shame he was but thank God for us. Today would've been an absolute nightmare facing him on that wicket. As soon as we didn't see him out there we thought 'alright, we've got a chance here'," Khawaja told *ABC Sport*.

The 38-year-old Khawaja said that Bumrah just did not give him any opportunity to score runs off him. "He's the toughest bowler I've ever faced. And I have faced him in 2018. He got me out once, he was alright, he was good but he has been something else this time. He has got his tail up," Khawaja said.

Khawaja's views were seconded by the swashbuckling left-handed batter Travis Head during a chat with the broadcasters.

"I think there were 15 people really pleased that Bumrah didn't bowl today. He's a great performer, he had an exceptional tour," Head said. — PTI

If Bumrah's injury is in grade 1 category, then it will take a minimum two to three weeks of rehabilitation before Return to Play (RTP). In case of Grade 2 injury, the recovery can go up to six weeks

while Grade 3, the most severe in nature, requires a minimum three months of rest and rehabilitation programmes. India will face England in five T20Is and three ODIs from January 22. — PTI

ODI SERIES | AGAINST IRELAND

HARMAN, RENUKA RESTED; SMRITI IS NAMED CAPTAIN

New Delhi, Jan. 6: Prolific opener Smriti Mandhana was on Monday named captain of the Indian women's cricket team for this month's three-match home ODI series against Ireland after regular skipper Harmanpreet Kaur was rested. Also given a break was pacer Renuka Singh Thakur, the BCCI announced in a press release.

The short series against Ireland will begin on January 10 at Rajkot and all three games will be played at the same venue.

Harmanpreet had injured her knee during the home series against the West Indies last month, forcing her to sit out of the last two T20Is before returning to play

three ODIs. Before that, the 35-year-old had sustained a neck injury during the match against Pakistan in the Women's T20 World Cup in October last year.

Lead pacer Renuka was the player of the series in the ODIs against the West Indies after taking 10 wickets from three matches. In the past, a stress fracture of the back had troubled her. The move to rest her for the series against Ireland could be to ease workload. — PTI **India squad:** Smriti Mandhana (captain), Deepti Sharma (vice-captain), Pratika Rawal, Harleen Deol, Jemimah Rodrigues, Uma Chetry (wicket-keeper), Richa Ghosh (wk), Tejal Hasabnis, Raghvi Bist, Minnu Mani, Priya Mishra, Tanuja Kanwer, Titas Sadhu, Saima Thakor, Sayali Satghare.

PREMIER | LEAGUE

Utd rally to slow Reds title charge

Liverpool, Jan. 6: Manchester United rallied to snap a four-game losing streak and slow Liverpool's romp towards the Premier League title in a thrilling 2-2 draw at Anfield on Sunday.

Liverpool move six points clear at the top of the table, with a game in hand to come, over second-placed Arsenal.

But this was an opportunity lost for Arne Slot's men after they came from behind to lead 2-1 through Cody Gakpo and Mohamed Salah's penalty. "Of course it feels for us like two points dropped," said Slot.

United broke their six-year goal drought at Anfield to open the scoring in spectacular fashion through Lisandro Martinez and got the point a much-improved performance deserved when Amad Diallo levelled on 80 minutes.

A point edges United up to 13th in the table and seven clear of the relegation zone.

"I'm pretty upset. If we show this level at Liverpool, first in the league, why can't we do this everywhere? It frustrates me. Also, finally I did a proper performance. We said we need much more from ourselves to get more from this season," said United captain Bruno Fernandes.

Slot warned that United were "much better" than their shocking league position suggested ahead of the game and so it proved.

United had been carved

THE RESULTS

Liverpool 2
(Gakpo 59, Mohammed Salah 70-pen)
Manchester United 2
(Martinez 52, Diallo 80)

Fulham 2

(Jimenez 69-pen, 90+1-pen)
Ipswich 2

(Szmodics 38, Delap 71-pen)

open at will by Newcastle in a dismal 2-0 defeat on Monday that left manager Ruben Amorim declaring they were in a relegation battle.

Amorim's hand was strengthened by the return of Fernandes and Manuel Ugarte from suspension, while Kobbie Mainoo also returned to the starting line-up.

The Portuguese's plan to frustrate Liverpool worked but the home side did have the chances early on to make the breakthrough in the first half.

Gakpo prodded past the far post before Alexis Mac Allister's volley forced Andre Onana into a fine save with his feet.

United took time to begin to impose themselves as an attacking threat but should have been in front before the break.

Rasmus Hojlund then had the best chance of the first half when he raced in behind the Liverpool defence but could not beat Alisson Becker.

— AFP



Liverpool's Cody Gakpo (top) and Manchester United's Noussair Mazraoui vie for the ball during their English Premier League match at the Anfield Stadium in Liverpool, England, on Sunday. — AP

MALAYSIA OPEN | BADMINTON

Satwik & Chirag eye winning start

Kuala Lumpur, Jan. 6: India's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will aim for a strong result, Lakshya Sen will look to build on his recent form and H. S. Prannoy will hope to shake off rust after a lengthy break at the season-opening Malaysia Super 1000 tournament starting here on Tuesday.

For Satwik and Chirag, seeded seventh, this \$ 1.45 million event marks the start of a new season like it did in 2024.

Last year, although they narrowly missed out on the title, the pairing went on to reach three more finals, winning two of them.

The Asian Games gold medallists were in exceptional form and was hoping to replicate that success this year. Having reunited with Malaysian coach Kim Tan Her, the former world number ones are determined to go

the distance, but they face a tough challenge ahead.

The high calibre of opponents in their draw will make the path to victory anything but easy.

Satwik and Chirag, who reached the semifinals of the 2024 China Masters in their last event, will open their campaign against the pair of Ming Che Lu and Tang Kai Wei from Chinese Taipei. If they progress, they are likely to face a quarterfinal clash against Indonesia's fourth seeds Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Rian Ardianto, a matchup that promises to be a thrilling contest.

In men's singles, Lakshya will look to carry forward his recent success after ending a long title drought with a victory at the Syed Modi International Super 300 and a third-place finish at the King Cup International last month. — PTI

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. and Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C - 9, Sector - III, Noida - 201301.
Editor - Kaushik Mitter,
RNI Registration number 57299/94
Price in Nepal - Nep.Rs. 20.00 per copy.