

**OPINION 6**  
DECIPHERING THE VERDICT  
ON ARTICLE 370

**WORLD 9**  
ISRAEL LAUNCHES HEAVY STRIKES  
ACROSS CENTRAL, SOUTHERN GAZA

**MONEY 10**  
SENSEX SCALES 72,000  
PEAK FOR FIRST TIME

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY DECEMBER 28, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

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12 SPORTS



## Army will wipe out terrorism: Rajnath

### Soldiers must not only secure nation, but also win hearts of people

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday said that soldiers must safeguard national interests and also win the hearts of the people while discharging their duties. Addressing a gathering of troops in one of the forward locations in Rajouri, he emphasised, "The Indian Army is not an ordinary army. Soldiers are our protectors, tasked not only with safeguarding national interests but also with winning the hearts of the people."



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during an interaction with Army personnel in Rajouri on Wednesday

Referring to a recent terrorist strike on Army vehicles, Rajnath Singh remarked, "Such incidents (ambush) cannot be taken for granted. I acknowledge your alertness to the situation, but heightened vigilance is required. I want to assure you that the government stands with you, and your welfare is our top priority."

In an apparent reference to the killing of three civilians, the Defence Minister urged the troops to avoid "mistakes that harm the citizens of the country."

As one of the senior-most Cabinet ministers in the Narendra Modi-led Union Government, Rajnath Singh's visit to the border area was

significant. He made all-out efforts to pacify aggrieved members of civilian families. He described the recent incidents in the sector as unfortunate and urged all to undertake operations based on hard intelligence, following established procedures and aided by niche technology. He also urged all Commanders to have zero tolerance for violations of the well-established Standard Operating Procedures.

Sounding a word of caution,

the Defence Minister exhorted the troops to remain extra vigilant to prevent untoward incidents in the future, reiterating that there should be zero tolerance for terrorism. Lauding the role of the Indian army, Singh expressed full faith that the Indian Army would eradicate terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir.

While addressing the troops at a military garrison in Rajouri, the Defence Minister said, "I believe in your bravery and steadfastness...

Terrorism should be eradicated from Jammu and Kashmir, and you need to move forward with this commitment. I have full faith that you will achieve victory." Singh paid tribute to the fallen soldiers and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured personnel. "I want to assure you that given the seriousness of the incident, required and appropriate steps will be taken. For us, every soldier is a part of the family, and his life is very precious. Anyone eyeing our

soldiers is not acceptable to us," he said. "The government treasury is open for further beefing up security and intelligence gathering," he added. "The sacrifice of the soldiers is unparalleled and cannot be compensated with money. The void can never be fulfilled," he added.

During his day-long visit, Rajnath Singh also conducted a first-hand assessment of the prevailing situation and counter-terror operations in the area.

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## Empowering lives our mission: Modi

RAHUL DUTTA ■ NEW DELHI

From farmers to members of self-help groups, Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with a diverse group of beneficiaries of various government schemes on Wednesday as part of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra. The yatra is being undertaken across the country with the aim of achieving saturation of flagship government schemes, ensuring that the benefits reach all targeted beneficiaries in a timely manner. Prime Minister Modi connected with a diverse group of beneficiaries participating in the Sankalp Yatra through video conferencing.

The event saw thousands of participants from various corners of the country, including Union ministers, MPs, MLAs, and local representatives. According to an official statement, the Prime Minister began by acknowledging Sapna Prajapati from Kota, Rajasthan, a beneficiary of the SVANidhi scheme who played a crucial role in mask-making during the pandemic. Praising her for her digital business transactions, Modi highlighted her group's promotion of millets, an initiative applauded by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla. Modi encouraged women



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with the beneficiaries of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra via video conferencing in New Delhi on Wednesday

entrepreneurs like Sapna to leverage the Vishwakarma Scheme and contribute to the success of "Modi ki Guarantee ki Gaadi".

"Your collective 'Matru Shakti' will take you to new heights, and I ask all of you 'didis' to make 'Modi ki Guarantee ki Gaadi' a great success by informing people about the benefits they can avail," Modi was quoted as saying in the statement.

Continuing the engagement, he greeted Harikrishnan, a farmer from Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu, who has successfully embraced modern agricultural practices. The farmer, a beneficiary of various government schemes, including Ayushman Bharat Yojana, commended the introduction of Nano Urea and the support provided by the government.

Modi reiterated the government's commitment to stand with farmers and appreciated their adoption of modern techniques, according to the statement. Further, the Prime Minister extended greetings to Gurdev Singh from Haridwar, involved in both farming and fisheries. Singh shared his success story under the Matasya Sampada Yojna, which doubled his income. Emphasising the importance of animal husbandry, fisheries, and the blue revolution, Modi reiterated the government's commitment to augmenting farm income through innovative practices. In another inspiring story, Rubina Khan from Dewas, Madhya Pradesh, a member of a self-help group, shared her entrepreneurial journey.

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## Separatist Muslim League Jammu Kashmir banned

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday declared a faction of the Muslim League in Jammu and Kashmir, led by separatist leader Masarat Alam Bhat, as a banned organisation under the stringent anti-terror law. The ban comes in response to the outfit's involvement in anti-national and secessionist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, with the intent to create a reign of terror in the country, the Union Home Ministry said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while announcing the ban under the UAPA, emphasised that the Modi Government's message is clear: those who act against the unity, sovereignty, and integrity of the nation will face the full wrath of the law and will not be spared.

"The Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction) is declared as an 'Unlawful Association' under UAPA. This organisation and its members are involved in anti-national and secessionist activities in J&K, supporting terrorist activities, and inciting people to establish Islamic rule in J&K," Shah said in a post on 'X'.

Masarat Alam Bhat is known for his anti-India and pro-Pakistan propaganda. He became the chairman of the hardline faction of the Hurriyat Conference following the death of Syed Ali Shah Geelani. Currently, he is incarcerated.

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Security officials with the Forensic and K9 unit near the Israel Embassy during an investigation after a reported low intensity blast nearby in New Delhi on Wednesday

## Israel calls embassy blast possible terror attack

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Hours after a suspected explosion outside the Israel Embassy in New Delhi and a letter addressed to the ambassador at the site, Tel Aviv has issued a travel advisory for its citizens in India, suspecting that the blast near the embassy was "a possible terror attack". An advisory issued by Israel's National Security Council urged Israeli citizens in India, particularly those in New Delhi, to avoid crowded locations such as malls and markets.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Police intensified their probe into a low-intensity blast that occurred near the Israel Embassy here, and sources said two youths were caught on camera walking on the road close to the spot shortly before the explosion. The National Security Guard (NSG) along with forensic experts visited the spot on Wednesday morning and collected samples of leaves and grass that

they suspected might contain chemicals used in the explosion, police sources said, adding a team of dog squad by the NSG also inspected the spot.

The advisory issued by Israel's National Security Council advised Israeli citizens in India to maintain increased vigilance in public places, including restaurants, hotels, and bars, and avoid displaying Israeli symbols. It further cautioned Israeli nationals to avoid participating in "events with many participants that are not secure" and to refrain from posting details of their trips on social media, both before the journey and in real-time.

Forensic experts have used magnetic gadgets to detect the intensity of the blast. CCTV footage has been recovered from near the spot in which two youths were found walking on the road shortly before the blast. "It is yet to be ascertained whether they are suspects," sources said.

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## Delhi grapples with zero visibility

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid cold wave in Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR), with the temperature at 7.8 degrees Celsius, slightly higher than usual, visibility in various parts of Delhi was significantly affected on Wednesday morning. Dense fog enveloped the city during the early hours, causing nearly zero visibility and posing challenges for residents.

An orange alert, calling for the residents to remain prepared, was issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) across the city at 8 am as visibility in many parts remained around 50 metres. IMD advised people to use fog lights during driving, cover up the face while going out, avoid outings unless emergency, and be in touch with airlines, railways, and State transportation ahead of the scheduled journey. IMD further advised the power department to keep maintenance teams ready as chances of tripping are high during dense fog.

The IMD advisory further said dense fog contains particulate matter and other pollutants and, in case exposed, it gets lodged in the lungs, clogging them and decreasing their functional capacity which increases episodes of wheezing, coughing, and shortness of breath. This also impacts peo-



Commuters on a foggy morning in Delhi on Wednesday

ple having asthma, bronchitis, and causes eye irritation leading to various infections, leading to redness or swelling of the eye.

The visibility in Delhi's main weather station Safdarjung was recorded at 50 metres while in Palam it stood at 125 metres at 8.30 am. Several trains and flights have experienced delays in their operations due to the pervasive fog. IMD classifies fog intensity into four types: shallow, moderate, dense, and very dense fog. The visibility ranges from 999m to 500m, 499m to 200m, 199m to 50m,

and < 50m, respectively. "Very dense fog engulfed Delhi NCR. Visibility is almost nil at many places. At 07:30 hours Palam reported 50 metres visibility. Take care and drive carefully. Improvement expected after 11 am," Skymet official Mahesh Palawat said in a post on 'X'.

The air quality index (AQI) recorded in the "very poor" category at 383 at 9 am which settled at 380 at 4 pm. The AQI scale categorises levels from 0 to 500, with Anand Vihar breaching the "severe". At the Anand Vihar area, PM2.5 lev-

els remained in the "severe" category standing at 500, and PM10 reached 500, and CO plummeted to 118, classified as "moderate", according to the Central Pollution Control Board. AQI stood at 799 in Shahdara, 641 in Wazirpur, 621 in Noida, 558 in Satyawati College, 366 in Major Dhyan Singh Stadium at 2 pm.

Besides Delhi-NCR, the entire North India has been grappling with a cold wave as temperatures continue to plummet in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and Delhi-NCR.

Continued on Page 2

## Thrissur Pooram in peril as Kerala hikes venue rent

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The tug of war between the CPI(M)-led Kerala Government and Hindus in the State has cast a shadow on the future of the more than two centuries old Thrissur Pooram, scheduled for April 2024. Thrissur Pooram, known across the world as the Festival of Festivals and featuring nearly one hundred caparisoned elephants and more than 500 percussionists, is facing unprecedented uncertainty. A decision by the Kerala Government to hike the rentals of the venue from ₹42 lakh to ₹2.2 crore has upset the organisers, who told the authorities that they would be forced to cut short the festivities to mere ritual and do away with the splendour and pomp of Pooram.

Nandakishor, humourist and the unofficial cultural ambassador of



Thrissur, has taken up the cudgel on behalf of Pooram aficionados and believers.

"The stance of the Government to hike the rental is not at all justifiable or convincing. Pooram is a cultural event and has become famous for its aesthetic value. Though the organisers of Pooram hinted at restricting the festival to a ritual, the response by the Government that it would organise the Pooram is being seen as an

attempt to wrest control of the two famous temples, Vadakkunnathan and Paramekkavu," Nandakishor told The Pioneer.

He said that Pooram is a socio-cultural event and should not be treated as a money-spinner. "All temples that come under the Cochin Devaswam Board, which is under CPI(M) control, are financed by the Thiruvampady and Paramekkavu Devaswams," said Nandakishor.

Millions make it to Thrissur to watch the Pooram show when elephants line up for a colourful display of umbrellas and fireworks. "Many movies in Malayalam have Pooram as a theme, and it is impossible to imagine what Thrissur would be without this centuries-old festival," said Raju Raphael, a documentary filmmaker based in Thrissur. He said organisers were hoping against hope to stage the event to rekindle the spirit of the local

residents.

The controversy took a new turn on Wednesday as leading astrologers assembled at Kozhikode, issuing a statement asking the Kerala Government and the organisers of the event to work out a solution. "If there is any interruption in organising the Pooram, it would adversely affect the divinity associated with Thrissur and surrounding areas. Thrissur, besides being the cultural capital of Kerala, is a major commercial and trading hub in South India," said Kakkassery Raveendran Panicker, an astrologer-cum-astronomer who is the secretary of Panicker Service Society, a think-tank on astrology and astronomy. Pooram, which is led by Devaswams (the boards that control the Vadakkunnathan and Paramekkavu temples), features nearly 20 temples in and around Thrissur city.

Continued on Page 2

## Ad hoc panel formed to run wrestling federation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Wednesday formed a three-member ad hoc committee to run the day-to-day affairs of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) after the Sports Ministry suspended the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) after the Sports Ministry suspended the wrestling national body for not following the provisions of its own constitution while taking decisions.

Wushu Association of India president Bhupinder Singh Bajwa will be the chairman of the panel with hockey Olympian MM Somaya and

former international shuttler Manjusha Kanwar being the other two members.

The Sports Ministry on Sunday suspended the WFI, three days after it elected new office bearers with Brij Bhushan Singh loyalist Sanjay Singh as president, and also asked IOA to constitute an ad hoc panel to manage the affairs of the sports body. The IOA said in a release that the newly-elected president and officials of WFI have made arbitrary decisions in violation of their own constitutional provisions and also flouted principles of good governance.

"The IOA has recently become aware that the recently appointed president and officials of WFI have made arbitrary decisions in violation of their own constitutional provisions and against the principles of good governance espoused by IOC and further without following due process overturned the rulings of the IOA-appointed Ad hoc Committee," IOA president PT Usha said.

"This not only highlights a governance gap within the federation but also signifies a noticeable departure from established norms."





Covid JN.1 cases cross 100 mark; three deaths

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Cases shot past the 100 mark as the tally touched 109 on Wednesday in the country...



2020 and has seen more than 4.5 crore people getting infected and over 5.3 lakh deaths in about four years since then across the country.

Amit Shah to chair BJP organisational meet in Telangana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair BJP's organisational meetings in Telangana on Thursday as he leads the party's push in a slew of states...



BJP leaders said Shah will attend a meeting of the party's core group, which includes senior leaders from the state, in Hyderabad and later interact with 'mandal' presidents of the party from across Telangana.

Anurag Thakur takes swipe at Congress on Bharat Nyay Yatra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Union Minister Anurag Thakur on Wednesday took a swipe at the Congress' decision to take out 'Bharat Nyay Yatra', accusing the party of failing to bring justice to the 1984-Sikh riots victims...



Thakur said that the people of the country have recognised "their real face, who call Bhagwan Ram imaginary, whose alliance partners show Sanatan Dharma in poor light and insult Hindus."

are needy also get facilities and assistance in the next five years when the Modi government returns to power (in 2024), he added.

Congress to hold Bharat Nyay Yatra from Manipur to Mumbai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

Congress on Wednesday announced it will hold 'Bharat Nyay Yatra' led by Rahul Gandhi from Manipur to Mumbai, passing through 14 states and 85 districts from east to west of India in 67 days, beginning January 14, an exercise seen as party's attempt to rally support ahead of the crucial 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

While Rahul Gandhi raised the issues of "economic disparities, polarisation and dictatorship" during the Bharat Jodo Yatra, the Nyay Yatra will focus on social, economic and political justice for the people of the country.

December 28 on the occasion of the party's foundation day. The rally, named 'Hain Tayyar Hum' (we are ready), will sound the bugle for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections for the Congress.

yatra from the east to the west of India. Asked about the rationale behind choosing Manipur as the starting point of the Yatra, Venugopal said it is an important part of the country and also the party wanted to begin the process of "healing the wounds" of the people of the northeastern state.

Ramesh said while the Bharat Jodo Yatra was anchored in the Constitution's Preamble's pillars of "liberty, equality and fraternity", the Bharat Nyay Yatra is anchored in the Preamble's very first pillar of justice — social, economic and political.

Cabinet approves Migration and Mobility Agreement with Italy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday granted ex-post facto approval to sign and ratify the Migration and Mobility Agreement with Italy that allows Indian students temporary residence in the European nation for up to one year after studies to gather professional experience.

initial professional experience, after completing academic/vocational training in Italy a temporary residence in Italy for up to 12 months. Italy has listed provisions related to professional training, extracurricular internships and curricular internships that allow Indian students/trainees to gain experience in Italian skill/training standards.

PUBLIC NOTICE ICICI Bank. The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

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PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET. Notice for sale of immovable assets. E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 6 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Office of the Superintending Engineer 1st Circle, Public Works Department, Alмора. Letter No. : 5810(I)/Nivida-01/2023-24. NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering) Short Term E-TENDER NOTICE.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS CHANGE OF NAME. I, hereto known as Hemlata D/o. Mr. Diwan Singh Rawat, R/O. House No.-116, H Block, Phase-I, Banicamp, Jai Vihar, Nangloi Road, Najafgarh, South West Delhi-110043 changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Hemlata Rawat for all future purposes.

PUBLIC NOTICE. Notice is hereby given that my client Mrs. Tammy Section (a partnership firm) is in process to avail IAF facility against Entire Second and Entire Third Floor (with roof/terrace rights) Part of Property bearing No. WZ-4, Plot No. 11, area measuring 86.14 Sq. Yds., part of Khata No. 352, 13, 14, 17, 18, 23 & 24, situated in the abadi of Vishnu Park, in the area of Village Khayala, New Delhi (availing loan from Primal Capital & Housing Finance Limited), having acquired the said property via Sale Deed dated 5/7/2023 (Document No. 8653) executed by Divya Arora, they confirmed that they are not having the below documents pertaining to the property in question for that online FIR has already been lodged on dated 26/12/2023.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## White blindness

Areas in and around Delhi experience winter blues as dense fog descends, visibility nears zero

Annual events in the Capital go like clockwork: Now, it is time for fog to blind the NCR. It is like this: First comes the smog in November, which makes breathing difficult; next up is fog to give a heartburn, a perfect end to the year. As winter firms up its grip on north India, Delhi and surrounding areas have to bear the scourge of dense fog. This meteorological phenomenon not only adds chill to the air but also disrupts daily life, affecting transportation, and leading to delays and cancellations in surface and air travel. The latest episode of "most intense fog this winter" in Delhi-NCR has been particularly severe, prompting an orange alert and causing chaos. Winter fog is a common occurrence in Delhi, attributed to a combination of factors. The drop in temperature at night, coupled with high humidity, creates the ideal conditions for fog formation. The cool air condenses the moisture present in the atmosphere, resulting in the formation of tiny water droplets or ice crystals, which make up the fog. This process is accentuated in the early hours, leading to reduced visibility. Yesterday, the minimum temperature was recorded at 7.8 degrees Celsius, and the AQI was in the "very poor" category. The severity of this fog formation prompted Met authorities to issue an orange alert for the NCR. An orange alert signifies that the weather conditions are likely to have a significant impact on daily life. The possibility of accidents is rather high as visibility nears zero, so citizens must take necessary precautions.



At the IGI Airport, flights were delayed or cancelled for two days due to poor visibility conditions. Fliers had to experience frustration and inconvenience as they grappled with now-uncertain travel plans. Similarly, the railways experienced disruptions, with several trains delayed or cancelled to ensure passenger safety. The combination of reduced visibility and potential hazards on railway tracks necessitated precautionary measures, causing inconvenience to daily commuters. It is a good idea to use fog lights, maintain safe distance and drive slow and cautiously. Meanwhile, to mitigate the impact of dense fog, authorities have implemented various measures: Airports have deployed advanced technology such as 'CAT III Instrument Landing Systems,' which aid pilots during low-visibility conditions. Similarly, the railways have heightened vigilance, and train schedules are adjusted to accommodate the challenges posed by fog. While the orange alert signals the need for caution, it also underscores the importance of preparedness and mitigation measures to minimise disruptions to daily life. The fog, a passing phenomenon though, is enough to remind us that despite all the modern technology, we are still small and helpless in front of Nature. There is, of course, hope that advancements in technology and improved planning will contribute to a safer and more efficient response in future. But, for now, to put it in adingo: 'Delhi mein to fog chal raha hai.'

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### PICTALK



NCC Cadets perform during the full dress rehearsal for the 2024 Republic Day parade, in Jammu

PTI

## Beginning of a new welfare state

The country is going to be a developed country by 2047; free from poverty, unemployment and deprivation

In the counting of votes held on December 3, 2023, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is going to form government in three of the four big states, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, and Congress has won in only one state, Telangana. BJP has often been raising issues of vote bank politics, corruption, dynasty politics etc. in the elections. Issues like the construction of the Ram temple, the abrogation of Article 370, and communal violence, were widely discussed. But history is witness to the fact that even though these issues are important if a party or the government does not work for the welfare of the people, then they will be summarily rejected. In 2014, India's economy was among the five most fragile economies, facing the tragedy of declining investment and a continuously declining growth rate. But in less than 10 years, India has moved from the tenth to the fifth largest economy of the world. Today India has also become the fastest growing economy in the world. In such a situ-



ation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given new wings to the aspirations of the common people of the country by pledging to become a developed nation before the completion of the first 100 years of independence.

### A New Welfare State

Till now, the distribution of money through employment schemes, free or cheap electricity and water, subsidy on petrol, diesel and gas, cheap ration, government expenditure on education and health etc. were considered to be the essence of a welfare state. But over the last 9 years, the definition of the welfare state itself has changed and seems to be improving, which has also received public support. Firstly, there has been an attempt to ensure the gen-

uineness of expenditure on the housing scheme, by using technology, in a unique housing scheme. In just a few years, about 3 crore houses have been constructed, for which Rs 5 lakh crore was given by the Central Government and Rs 15 lakh crore was spent by the beneficiaries themselves, who built better houses for themselves in rural and urban areas; and started enjoying a respectable life. Under the Ujjwala scheme, 10 crore poor women were given free LPG connections and later those poor women got cylinders refilled, at their own expense. Today, on average, Ujjwala beneficiaries get more than three cylinders filled in a year. By providing electricity to almost all the villages in the country, not only has the standard of living improved but the government has also been successful in taking the communication and internet revolution across the country. The target of providing tap water to all the houses is almost achieved, due to which women do not have to go far to fetch water, which

saves their time. Construction of toilets in every house has freed us from the curse of open defecation, pictures of which foreigners often used, to show India as a backward nation. Improvement in primary care and most importantly free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh under Ayushman Yojana is proving to be a boon for the less resourceful people. If seen, all these schemes are for the targeted beneficiaries. Beneficiaries have got relief with the help of the government. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in just five years from 2015-16 to 2019-21, the index of multidimensional poverty has decreased from 0.122 to just 0.069. Today, the changing circumstances are giving birth to new dimensions to politics in the country, and the country is moving towards becoming a developed country by 2047, free from poverty, unemployment and deprivation.

(The author is Professor, PGDAV College, University of Delhi; views are personal)



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

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# Deciphering the Verdict on Article 370

The Court held that Parliament has legislative powers on state reorganisation and that Article 370 was a temporary provision

Article 370 died on August 5, 2019, with a stroke of pen when former President Ram Nath Kovind signed Constitutional Orders (CO) 272 and 273. However, it was not cremated and its corpse continued to be kept in the mortuary in the hope that the Supreme Court of India would blow life into it. However, vide three separate but concurring judgments, the Supreme Court of India unanimously let Article 370 rest in peace. This historic moment saw a Constitutional Bench led by the CJI delving into multiple facets, each crucial in determining the status and implications of this constitutional provision, namely: the extent of sovereignty enjoyed by J&K, temporary versus permanent nature of Article 370, the validity of amendments and abrogation through constitutional orders (CO), and scope of parliament's power under Article 3 of the Constitution. Although Paragraph 8 of the Instrument of Accession by which J&K acceded into India, retained sovereignty with Maharaja Hari Singh, the subsequent Proclamation by Yuvraj Karan Singh on 25 November 1949 explicitly stated the supremacy of the Indian Constitution over all other conflicting provisions within the state. Furthermore, Article 370 read with Article 1 of the Indian Constitution declares J&K to be an integral part of India. Unlike the Preamble to the Indian Constitution, there is nothing in the Constitution of J&K that declares it to be sovereign. On the contrary, the unamendable Section 3 of the Constitution of J&K reinforces the position under Article 1 of the Indian Constitution. The Bench, distinguishing judgements like Prem Nath Kaul (1959), held that there was complete subordination of J&K to the Constitution of India, and its status aligned with the principle of asymmetric federalism and not internal sovereignty. Regarding the status of Article 370, the Court inferred from an analysis encompassing historical, textual as well as purposive angles that it was a temporary provision. Article 370 was needed given the war-like situation in the State, besides serving an interim pur-

pose till the Constituent Assembly of J&K ratified the Indian Constitution and decided the contours of engagement between the Union of India and the state of J&K for matters other than those mentioned in the Instrument of Accession. Textually, its placement in Part XXI of the Constitution and the marginal heading of the provision suggest the inference that Article 370 is temporary and transitional. And finally, Article 370(1)(d) and 370(3) had the avowed purpose of constitutional integration of J&K into India. At the time of the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly of J&K, the war-like situation persisted, and hence Article 370 outlived the Constituent Assembly. Holding that Article 370 cannot be abrogated after dissolution would lead to derailing the process of integration which was the purpose of introducing the said article in the first place. It is the prerogative of the President to decide if the special circumstances that necessitated Article 370 have ceased to exist. The Court did not find any mala fide as the State had already seen a series of integrative endeavours through 370(1)(d), and CO 273 was only the culmination of that process. Further, given the absence of any limitation concerning the extent or manner of the Constitution's application, the Court dismissed claims of non-application of

mind merely because CO 272 applied all provisions of the Constitution to J&K. The Court highlighted that the consequential effect of applying all provisions of the Constitution to J&K under Article 370(1)(d) mirrors the outcome of issuing a notification under Article 370(3). Since the President had unilateral powers under Article 370(3) post the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly of J&K, hence there was nothing mala fide in the President not seeking concurrence of the state government for the full application of the Constitution under Article 370(1)(d). Thus, the Presidential action was not ultra vires the law laid down in S R Bommai (1994). CO 272 vide Paragraph 2 amends Article 367 by which the Constituent Assembly in proviso to Article 370(3) would mean "Legislative Assembly". And then it abrogates Article 370, effectively amending Article 370. Hence, Paragraph 2 of CO 272 was held unconstitutional however the rest of the portion which extended the whole of the Constitution of India to the state of J&K was held to be valid. The Court categorically held that the power under Article 356 is not subject to Article 357. Hence, Parliament gets not just the legislative power but also the power to give recommendations on behalf of the legislature for irreversible actions like state reorganization. Given the non-



binding nature of the State Legislature's recommendations and reasonable nexus between the exercise of power and the object sought to be achieved, there was nothing mala fide in the recommendation by Parliament on behalf of the Legislature. The Court directed the restoration of statehood at the earliest possible opportunity. The Court mandated the Election Commission of India to conduct elections, a fundamental facet of India's representative democracy, to the Legislative Assembly of J&K by 30 September 2024. Justice Kaul recommended setting up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the lines of post-apartheid South Africa which would complement the process of integration of J&K with India. The Court has delineate a nuanced and pivotal perspective on controversial issues of national importance. At the same time, the court's avoidance of conclusively addressing Parliament's power under Article 3 to alter a State's character into Union Territories leaves room for future considerations regarding the scope, impact, and legitimacy of such actions on the principles of federalism, historical context, and representative democracy.

(Siddharth Mishra is Sr Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi and Shashank Rai is an advocate at the Supreme Court of India, views are personal)



IT IS THE PREROGATIVE OF THE PRESIDENT TO DECIDE IF THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT NECESSITATED ARTICLE 370

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SWIMMING POOL AS STATUS SYMBOL

Sir — Over the past few years, it has become a trend to have swimming pools in gated complexes, housing societies, and bungalows. The presence of a pool is believed to enhance the property's value. However, the use, chlorination, and maintenance of these pools vary. During the monsoon seasons, the pools can become breeding sites for mosquitoes. Despite India experiencing two monsoon seasons, water scarcity is prevalent in most states. Even in urban areas, irregular or no water supply is common due to poor water management and misplaced priorities. In rural areas, the situation is worse, as people have to walk long distances to fetch water for their basic needs. Meanwhile, there are farmhouses with swimming pools equipped with change rooms. Considering these facts, state governments should consider prohibiting swimming pools in private properties, especially if the water supply is sourced from the Public Works Department (PWD) pipeline that caters to the dwellings. Property owners or housing societies seeking to construct pools should be required to demonstrate the source of water before obtaining a construction license. Strict actions should be taken if any illegalities are discovered. It would be practical for municipalities to construct public swimming pools. This approach would not only create job opportunities and generate a steady income for them but also contribute to water conservation. It is disheartening that, on one hand, numerous people lack proper access to potable water, while others indulge in the luxury of swimming pools.

CK Subramaniam | Chennai

### PUNISH THE INHUMANE TEACHERS

Sir — A distressing incident has come to light involving students from Class 7 to 9 at Morarji Desai Residential School in Malur. Authorities forced these students to clean a septic tank as a form of punishment, despite the fact that manual scavenging was banned 30 years ago. Schools are expect-

## BANK ON BASEL BASICS



The Basel Norms are a set of international banking regulations that aim to ensure the stability and safety of the global banking system. They were developed by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, a group of central bankers and bank supervisors from around the world, in response to the global financial crises of the 1980s and 1990s. Basel I norms were intro-

duced in 1988 and Basel II in 2004. Basel III was introduced in 2010 by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) to further strengthen regulation, supervision, and risk management within the banking sector. It was introduced in response to the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, to improve the resilience of banks and reduce the risk of systemic failures. The present status of Basel III norms in India is that the RBI has extended the deadline for the full implementation of the norms to March 31, 2022, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the banking sector. The RBI has also provided some regulatory relief to banks in terms of capital and liquidity requirements to mitigate the stress caused by the pandemic.

CK Ramanathan | Ghaziabad

largest opposition party in Lok Sabha. This amendment raises concerns as the previous law included the Chief Justice of India (CJI) in the selection committee. The substitution of the CJI with the Union Cabinet Minister has sparked a debate, suggesting that the bill may be acting against established law, potentially leading to an arbitrary shift of power to the Union government. The government argues that the bill aims to bring transparency to the appointment process of the chief election commissioner and election commissioner. However, the substitution of the Union Minister may tilt the balance in favor of the ruling party in the selection committee, diminishing the influence of the opposition leader. This could lead to the government selecting individuals without adequate scrutiny, potentially undermining the transparency sought by the bill. This bill raises concerns about its impact on the Election Commission, a crucial pillar of democracy responsible for maintaining fairness in conducting elections.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

## MIND IS A GREAT HEALER

Mind has the potential to destroy carcinogenic cells, eliminate toxins and combat infections



RAVI VALLURI

Winter was quite chilly in Delhi and to keep himself warm, a middle-aged obese man had a swig of Old Monk rum. Soon, he started perspiring and feeling nauseous and felt a real thud in his chest region. His anxious homemaker-wife rushed to their neighbours seeking help. Visiting the neighbours was an Art of Living teacher, who immediately rushed to the aid of the patient. He advised the patient to adopt a posture called the Sanjeevani mudra and take deep breaths. The mudra entails fixing the index finger on the base of the thumb and the middle and ring finger touch the tip of the thumb, while the little finger is spread apart. While adopting the mudra the individual needs to take deep Ujjayi breaths.

The patient afflicted with the heart attack surrendered to his saviour and continued with this breathing technique, till he was hospitalized. The ECG did not reveal any great damage to the heart and the medical team grudgingly accepted the intrinsic and therapeutic values of the Sanjeevani mudra.

On recovering completely, the gentleman undertook courses in the Art of Living, which detoxified his system and cured him of the craving for alcohol. This helped him stage both a physical and mental recovery. "Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes a matter of great opportunity," said Hippocrates. The mind plays a pivotal role in the healing process of an individual. When we get up every morning, we should take a few deep breaths and feel grateful and blessed about whatever has been provided by nature and our Universe.



The mind remains an enigma, with a reservoir of potential that we fail to tap. If exploited to the optimum level, it can help in destroying carcinogenic cells, eliminating toxins, combating infections, fighting foreign bodies, and enhancing self-repair mechanisms. The placebo effect also plays a major role in recovery. The mind has also been called an 'amygdala' which may harbour negative thoughts and beliefs such as financial woes, relationship problems, work stress, general pessimism, and feelings of threat. These attributes act as a roadblock to attaining good health.

The breath and the mind have a deep relationship. By simply observing the breath, toxins get expelled from the system and there is great mental clarity to view life in its totality. A power of discrimination dawns on the individual and he/she can focus on what the body needs, the quantum of exercise to be performed, the exact intake of food required, the amount of medication needed, whether the job or living conditions are irksome and if any changes are required to be made and take necessary steps in that direction. An architect imagines a building, conceives a blueprint, and designs a beautiful home. Similarly, a dancer or a painter through mental imagery visualizes a piece of art that is appealing and becomes the cynosure of all eyes.

Soulful singers conjure melody and symphony which strike the right notes and chords in our hearts and we are transported to an ethereal world. All this creation is the magic of the mind. Similarly, the middle-aged man (who suffered the heart attack), surrendered his physical and mental unwelcome situations to a superior power and adopted various techniques and strategies of self-healing. However, the success of the therapies lies in the orientation of the mind. The mind must be necessarily a YES MIND, believing that success is guaranteed, and their lives would be transformed with the power of mind injecting positive affirmations such as "I am transformed", "I am healed" and "I am feeling wonderful".

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. and is a faculty of the Art of Living. Views are personal)

## Malpractices in the trade of medicines

There is a huge trade margin, especially on generic medicines, including those marketed by renowned drug manufacturers. Even branded medicines have exorbitant profit margins



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL

Jan Aushadhi Kendras are now being opened under Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojna claiming a huge saving to commoners ranging from 50-90 per cent on the purchase of generic medicines from these about 10000 centres throughout the country with the average monthly sale of just rupees 1.50 lakhs per month for each centre. Much more could and should be achieved simply by fixing a maximum trade margin on all medicines and medical consumables including generic medicines of say 30 per cent between ex-factory price and maximum retail price (MRP).

Presently there is a huge trade margin, especially on generic medicines where a box of 10-20 strips is available with distributors at about one-tenth of printed MRP including those marketed by renowned drug manufacturers of branded medicines. Even branded medicines had varying trade margins with a box of 10 strips of 10 capsules each of Bifilac-HP with a total printed MRP of rupees 2100 per box available with the distributor at just rupees 1140 per box. Even the World Health Organization (WHO) established that even essential drugs in India with the lowest printed MRP are exorbitantly priced over manufacturing followed by abnormally high trade margins between ex-factory price and MRP. The same holds good for other medical consumables like a box of 200 Accu-Chek Safe T Pro Uno single-use lancing devices with printed MRP of rupees 2200 used to be available at just rupees 400 only.

Drug manufacturers at times pack just eight lozenges per strip of commonly advertised cough medicines instead of ten because consumers usually judge by price per strip rather than per lozenge. Many drug manufacturers have started packing medicines in strips of fifteen rather than earlier ten to boost up sales because most chemists sell complete medicine rather than cutting the strip to sell in bulk. National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) should direct all medicines to be compulsorily packed in units of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000 and likewise higher multiples unless permission is sought from concerned authorities to pack certain medicines in units other than these for dose-wise administration. The name of the medicine is usually printed just once on the side of the medicine strip. The wrapping foil must be so designed that the name of the medicine may appear for each packed tablet/capsule with the name of the medicine also embossed/printed on each tablet/capsule.

Ex-factory prices of different branded medicines for the same basic salt have vast differences. Branded medicines from different renowned companies are priced with heavy differences depending on the popularity of the brand like Calmpose and Valium-5 both having Diazepam-5 as basic salt have huge price-difference. Government-owned Indian Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Limited (IDPL), since closed, sold Diazepam-5 under the brand name Calmod at a still lower price. Medicines are put in different categories for price-regulation with Calmpose and Valium-5 put in a category where there is no price-regulation. The system of having multiple categorisations for medicines must be removed because patients have to take prescribed medicine irrespective of their categorization.



A BOX OF 10-20 STRIPS IS AVAILABLE WITH DISTRIBUTORS AT ABOUT ONE-TENTH OF PRINTED MRP INCLUDING THOSE MARKETED BY RENOWNED DRUG MANUFACTURERS OF BRANDED MEDICINES

A study conducted by a prominent newspaper in the year 2018 revealed that five chemist shops around the premier Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) in Chandigarh were selling a particular medicine having prices ranging from rupees 255 to rupees 1550. There is a regular price increase for many branded medicines, with NPPA being a mute spectator. NPPA should devise a mechanism whereby drug companies may be allowed to have some basic profit margin on all types of drugs irrespective of their categorization allowing any price revision only once in a year. Madras High Court once directed the Income Tax Department to submit details of claims made by pharmaceutical companies towards tax deductions for gifts made to doctors, names of doctors and penalties paid by these companies for drug overpricing. Any type of gifts by drug companies must be banned. Paying commissions to medical practitioners by pathological laboratories, investigating centres and hospitals should also be a criminal offence to ensure economical medical investigations. Private hospitals should be directed not to take any share from consulting/visiting fees of medical practitioners. Some upper limits should be fixed for the consultation fees of medical practitioners. Since the wholesale medicine market of Bhagirath Palace (Delhi) has virtually turned to be a retail market giving 20-25 per cent discounts even on single strips of medicines, tenders can be invited for opening chemist-shops in gov-

ernment and private hospitals at least in big cities where branded medicines may be available even in single strips at 20-per cent discounts. Only branded medicines should be allowed to be prescribed in all fields of medicines including Allopathic, Ayurvedic, Unani, and Homeopathy with the Central Government having its large production units for every type of medicine by reviving Indian Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Limited (IDPL). Central Information Commission (CIC) in its order dated 01.10.2018 recommended that NPPA and others concerned consider all these suggestions in the larger public interest. But NPPA challenged the CIC decision just on recommendations (and not directions) at the Delhi High Court. Soon after Competition Commission of India (CCI) in its policy note also pointed out unreasonably high trade margins as a reason for exorbitant drug prices. But no corrective measures are seen at least on non-essential and generic medicines. BJP MP Bhartruhari Mahabir raised the issue of generic drugs in Lok Sabha on 19.07.2019, rightly demanding an inquiry to find out the efficacy of generic drugs quoting a book study that Indian drug manufacturers were producing quality generic medicines for US and European countries with sub-standard generic medicines marketed in domestic market. NPPA should ensure that generic medicines sold in Indian markets are of export quality. Export of world-class generic medicines can provide the country with adequate foreign exchange and reputation.

Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court in the year 2018 imposed a fine on three doctors for illegible handwriting on injury reports. Odisha High Court on 13.08.2020 advised doctors to write legible prescriptions preferably in capital letters. Medical practitioners should compulsorily issue computerised prescriptions.

The Union Health Ministry should develop user-friendly software separately for hospitals, pathological laboratories and medical practitioners providing a unique ID for each patient so that complete medical history may be available even online to the patient. Dual pricing must not be allowed in health services including for pathological and biochemical tests for normal patients and those covered under the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS).

Vegetarian cellulose capsules should be encouraged to replace non-vegetarian gelatin capsules presently having a 98-percent market share to respect the sentiments of the majority vegetarian population. The Supreme Court ruling of the year 2013 made it possible to distinguish vegetarian and non-vegetarian medicines by having green and red dots. Providing land at subsidised cost/lease is substantial government funding. All such hospitals should be directed to sue-motto declare themselves as public authorities under section 2(h) of the RTI Act, or else pay market-price of land provided to these hospitals at current market rates.

(The writer is an RTI consultant holding the Guinness World record, views are personal)

## Measuring skilling success: Metrics that matter

The imperative to measure the impact of skilling programmes goes beyond a statistical exercise. It is crucial for ensuring their effectiveness and relevance

In the realm of nonprofit programs, the conventional metric for success often revolves around their reach—the sheer number of individuals served. However, this simplistic measure can be misleading, as a focus on 'quantity' alone does not guarantee meaningful transformation or lasting impact. Prioritizing quantity over quality runs the risk of compromising program excellence.

The right way to expand a nonprofit's impact is to build programs on three pillars: breadth, depth, and durability. Scaling requires advancement in all three dimensions simultaneously.

While the particular metrics used by each organisation may differ, some version of



ARUNESH SINGH

each of these elements must be measured and advanced collectively to remain on the right path.

Let's start with the example we know best, Generation, a global employment nonprofit network that recruits, trains, and places adult learners into careers that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

At Generation, we define "breadth" as the number of learners who graduate from our programs—the most basic unit of impact—but we also use depth to capture the employment and income outcomes of those graduates within three months of program completion. Finally, we also track durability, or how well these outcomes persist over time: We

follow the financial and personal well-being of our alumni for up to five years after they graduate by measuring their ability to cover daily financial needs while saving for the future and taking care of their mental and physical health. Each of these pillars are equally important, and our goal is to move all three forward together. We can embrace these essential approaches to assess the impact of skilling programs:

1. **Defining Clear Goals and Indicators:** Meticulously outline specific objectives for programs, identifying measurable indicators to encapsulate the changes aspired to achieve. This includes evaluating the frequency and quality of interactions, learner out-

comes, and stakeholder feedback.

2. **Rigorous Data and KPI Analysis:** Emphasise robust data and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) analysis to assess program performance and effectiveness. Valuable insights into the outcomes of initiatives can be gained through the tracking and analysis of relevant metrics.

3. **Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback:** Actively seek feedback from learners and engage with various stakeholders, including local governments, training partners, donor partner and employers, to tap into valuable insights. This feedback will not only provide insights into program impact but will also fuel continuous

improvement efforts. **Challenges and Opportunities**

While significant strides have been made in impact measurement, the field presents its own set of challenges. The concept of employability and its measurement can vary significantly across different stakeholders, leading to a lack of coherence in defining and measuring outcomes. However, this challenge also presents an opportunity for organizations to work towards establishing an agreed-upon definition of impact and employability, allowing for more aligned and effective measurement practices.

**Looking Ahead**  
As we continue on our mission of empowering youth

through skilling programs, the focus on impact measurement remains paramount. By leveraging the right mix of metrics and tools, any organisation can further enhance its ability to assess, communicate, and improve the outcomes of its initiatives. This commitment to robust impact measurement not only benefits the organisation but also contributes to the broader goal of creating positive and sustainable change in the workforce development landscape.

The imperative to measure the impact of skilling programs goes beyond a statistical exercise. It is crucial for ensuring their effectiveness and relevance. By defining clear goals, leveraging the right metrics, and embracing

stakeholder feedback, organizations can enhance their ability to assess, communicate, and improve the outcomes of their programs.

In essence, moving beyond the fixation on numbers is a journey toward a holistic understanding of impact—one that transcends quantity and embraces the transformative potential inherent in the quality of skilling programs. This shift in perspective heralds a new era where success is measured not just by the breadth of reach but by the depth of positive change and the enduring impact on the lives of those touched by these programs.

(The writer is CEO, Generation India Foundation, views are personal)





# Israel launches heavy strikes across central & southern Gaza

AP ■ RAFAH (GAZA STRIP)

Israel launched heavy strikes across central and southern Gaza overnight and into Wednesday after broadening its offensive against Hamas to more areas where the military had told Palestinians to seek shelter earlier in the war.

Residents reported heavy bombing in the built-up Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza, in the southern city of Khan Younis and in the southern town of Rafah, areas where tens of thousands have sought refuge as much of northern Gaza was pounded to rubble. "It was a night of hell. We haven't seen such bombing since the start of the war," said Rami Abu Mosab, speaking from the Bureij camp, where he has been sheltering since fleeing his home in northern Gaza. He said warplanes flew overhead and gunfire and explosions echoed from the eastern edge of the camp — which, like others in Gaza, houses refugees from the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation and their descendants and now resembles other densely populated neighbourhoods.

A home near Abu Mosab's shelter was hit, but no one was able to reach the area, he said. Mobile phone and internet service was down for several hours before being gradually restored on Wednesday, the latest of several such outages that have complicated rescue efforts.

With much of northern Gaza levelled, Palestinians fear a similar fate awaits other areas, including Khan Younis, where Israeli forces launched ground operations in early December, and a cluster of built-up refugee camps in central Gaza where the focus has shifted this week.



Palestinians walk through the aftermath of the Israeli military raid on Nur Shams refugee camp in the West Bank, Wednesday. Israel's forces raided a refugee camp in the northern occupied West Bank, killing at least six Palestinians, Palestinian health authorities said early on Wednesday.

The military's latest evacuation orders cover an area of central Gaza that was home to nearly 90,000 people before the war and now shelters more than

61,000 displaced people, mostly from the north, according to the UN humanitarian office. Israel has said the bombing campaign and ground offensive

are necessary to dismantle Hamas and prevent a repeat of its Oct 7 attack, in which militants broke through Israel's formidable defenses and killed some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducted around 240. An estimated 129 remain in captivity after dozens were freed.

Achieving its goals, Israel has said, will take "many months".

### DEATH, DISPLACEMENT AND STARVATION

Its offensive is already one of the most devastating military campaigns in recent history. More than 20,900 Palestinians, two-thirds of them women and children, have been killed, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza. The count doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants.

Some 85% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million Palestinians have fled their homes, crowding into smaller and smaller areas in recent weeks as the ground offensive has expanded. For many Palestinians, the exodus has echoes of the mass displacement in 1948 that they refer to as the Nakba, or catastrophe.

UN officials say a quarter of the territory's population is starving under Israel's siege, which allows in a trickle of food, water, fuel, medicine and other supplies. Last week, the UN Security Council called for immediately speeding up aid deliveries, but there has been little sign of change.

US calls for Israel to curb civilian casualties, and international pressure for a cease-fire, have also had little effect. Israel blames Hamas for the high civilian death toll in Gaza because the militants oper-

ate in dense, residential areas. The military says it has killed thousands of militants, without presenting evidence, and that 164 of its soldiers have been killed since the ground offensive began.

### STRIKES IN LEBANON, WEST BANK

The war has ignited other fronts across the Middle East. Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group have repeatedly traded fire along the border. An Israeli strike on a family home overnight killed a Hezbollah fighter, his brother and his sister-in-law, local officials and state media said Wednesday. Another family member was wounded. In the occupied West Bank, Israeli forces killed at least six Palestinians during an overnight raid in the built-up refugee camp of Nur Shams, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. More than 300 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since the start of the war, mostly in confrontations with Israeli forces during raids and protests.

As fears of a wider conflict mount, the US, Qatar and Egypt have been working on a new agreement to release more hostages. US President Joe Biden spoke with the ruling emir of Qatar on Tuesday.

Hamas says no more hostages will be released until Israel ends the war, and that it will trade the remaining captives for large numbers of Palestinian prisoners, including high-profile militants. Israel has rejected both demands. Egypt has floated a proposal to end the war that would include the release of all hostages held in Gaza and all Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, as well as the establishment of a government of Palestinian technocrats to administer Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

## Michigan SC to keep Trump on 2024 ballot

AP ■ MICHIGAN

Michigan's Supreme Court is keeping former President Donald Trump on the state's primary election ballot. The court said Wednesday it will not hear an appeal of a lower court's ruling from groups seeking to keep Trump from appearing on the ballot. It said in an order that the application by parties to appeal a Dec. 14 Michigan appeals court judgment was considered, but denied "because we are not persuaded that the questions presented should be reviewed by this court."

The ruling contrasts with Dec. 19 decision by a divided Colorado Supreme Court which found Trump ineligible to be president because of his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. That ruling was the first time in history that Section 3 of the 14th Amendment has been used to disqualify a presidential candidate.

The Michigan and Colorado cases are among dozens hoping to keep Trump's name off state ballots. They all point to the so-called insurrection clause that prevents anyone from holding office who "engaged in insurrection or rebellion" against the Constitution. Until the Colorado ruling, all had failed.

The Colorado ruling is likely to be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which has never ruled on the rarely used Civil War-era provision.

The plaintiffs in Michigan can technically try again to disqualify Trump under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment in the general election, though it's likely there will be a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the issue by then. The state's high court on Wednesday upheld an appeals court ruling that the Republican Party could place anyone it wants on the primary ballot. But the court was silent on whether Section 3 of the 14th Amendment would disqualify Trump in November if he



becomes the GOP nominee.

"We are disappointed by the Michigan Supreme Court's decision," said Ron Fein, legal director of Free Speech for People, the liberal group that filed the suit to disqualify Trump in the state. "The ruling conflicts with long-standing US Supreme Court precedent that makes clear that when political parties use the election machinery of the state to select, via the primary process, their candidates for the general election, they must comply with all constitutional requirements in that process."

Trump hailed the order, calling the effort to keep him off the ballot in multiple states a "pathetic gambit".

Only one of the court's seven justices dissented. Justice Elizabeth M. Welch, a Democrat, wrote that she would have kept Trump on the primary ballot but the court should rule on the merits of the Section 3 challenge. The court has a 4-3 Democratic majority. Trump pressed two election officials in Michigan's Wayne County not to certify 2020 vote totals, according to a recording of a post-election phone call disclosed in a Dec. 22 report by The Detroit News. The former president's 2024 campaign has neither confirmed nor denied the recording's legitimacy.

Attorneys for Free Speech for People, a liberal nonprofit group also involved in efforts to keep Trump's name off the primary ballot in Minnesota and Oregon, had asked Michigan's Supreme Court to render its decision by Christmas Day.

## Wild weather kills at least ten in Aus

Brisbane (Aus): Wild weather has left at least 10 people dead in the eastern Australian states of Queensland and Victoria, officials said on Wednesday. Three men, aged 48, 59 and 69, were killed after a boat with 11 people on board capsized in rough weather in Moreton Bay off the south Queensland coast on Tuesday, police said. Ambulances took eight survivors to a hospital in stable conditions. The men were aboard the 39-foot pleasure craft on an annual fishing trip. The Courier Mail newspaper reported.

Queensland Police Acting Chief Superintendent Andrew Pilotto said those rescued were lucky to survive.

"The storm was still raging when they were rescued," Pilotto said. "It would have been very difficult to survive in those conditions anywhere."

Elsewhere, a 59-year-old woman was killed by a falling tree in the Queensland city of Gold Coast on Monday night. The body of a 9-year-old girl was found on Tuesday in the neighbouring city of Brisbane hours after she disappeared in a flooded stormwater drain.

The bodies of a 40-year-old woman and a 46-year-old woman were found in the Mary River in the Queensland town of Gympie. They were among three women swept into the flooded river through a stormwater drain on Tuesday.

Another 46-year-old woman managed to save herself.

Queensland Police Commissioner Katarina Carroll blamed "extraordinarily difficult weather" for the tragedies. "It has been a very tragic 24 hours due to the weather," Carroll told reporters. Severe weather has lashed parts of southeast Australia since Monday including Queensland and Victoria. A woman, who is yet to be identified, was found dead late Tuesday after flash flooding receded at a campground in Buchan in regional Victoria. The body of an unidentified man, who had been camping with the woman, was found late Wednesday, police said.

## Kim Jong boasts of achievements as he opens year-end political meeting

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un praised what he called achievements and victories that strengthened national power and boosted the country's prestige this year, as he opened a key political meeting to set new policy goals for 2024, state media reported on Wednesday. Experts said that during this week's year-end plenary meeting of the ruling Workers' Party, North Korea would likely hype its progress in arms development because the country lacks economic achievements amid persistent international sanctions and pandemic-related economic hardships.

In his opening-day speech at the meeting that began on Tuesday, Kim defined 2023 "as a year of great turn and great change both in name and reality, in which (North Korea) left a great trace in the glorious course of development in the efforts to improve the national power and enhance the prestige

of the country," according to the official Korean Central News Agency. KCNA said North Korea achieved a rapid advancement in its defence capabilities this year thanks to the launch of its first military spy satellite in November and the introduction of other sophisticated weapons.

KCNA said North Korea also reported a rare good harvest this year as the country finished building new irrigation facilities ahead of schedule and met major agricultural state objectives. It said that modern



streets, new houses and other buildings were built in Pyongyang and elsewhere across the country.

The Workers' Party meeting, expected to last several days, will review state projects from this year and establish new objectives for next year. In recent years, North Korea has published the results of its meeting, including Kim's closing speech, in state media on January 1, allowing him to skip his New Year's Day address. The meeting comes after North Korea launched its most advanced intercontinental ballistic missile, the solid-fuelled Hwasong-18, which is designed to strike the mainland US, into the sea last week. North Korea said the Hwasong-18 launch, the third of its kind this year, was meant to warn the US and South Korea over their confrontational moves against North Korea.

On November 21, North Korea put its first military spy satellite into orbit, though outside experts question whether

it can send militarily useful high-resolution imagery.

The launches of the Hwasong-18 missile and the spy satellite were part of an ongoing run of weapons tests by North Korea since last year. Kim has maintained he was forced to expand his nuclear arsenal to cope with increasing hostilities from the US and its allies toward the North, but foreign experts say he eventually hopes to use an enlarged arsenal to win greater outside concessions when diplomacy resumes. Last Thursday, South Korean Defence Minister Shin Wonsik told lawmakers that North Korea appeared to be speeding up its weapons testing activities to highlight its achievements in defence sectors because it lacked major progress in the economy and public livelihoods.

In recent years, North Korea's fragile economy was severely battered by pandemic-related curbs, US-led sanctions and the North's own mismanagement.

## US ambassador thanks Japan for allowing Patriot missile sale

AP ■ TOKYO

Fumio Kishida's government on Friday eased its postwar ban on lethal weapons exports, a move seen as a major break from Japan's postwar self-defense-only principle. It also approved a 16.5% increase in defense spending next year to a record 7.95 trillion-yen (\$56 billion) with a focus on missile strike and defense capabilities.

The revision to the arms transfer policy allows Japan to export weapons and components made in Japan under foreign licenses to the licensing nations. It's also a first major revision of Japan's arms export ban since an earlier easing on non-lethal weapons transfer in 2014. Kishida's government is currently in the process of further easing the policy to

allow sale to third countries of jointly developed lethal weapons, like a next-generation fighter jet Japan is co-developing with Britain and Italy.

Japan on Friday quickly approved a U.S. request for shipment of surface-to-air Patriot guided missiles produced in Japan under an American license to complement U.S. inventory, prompting speculation they may be sent to Ukraine.

Kishida said Tuesday the two sides were still discussing details as officials need to carefully make production and shipment plans so "this will not make a hole in the defense of Japan."

Pacifist groups, academics and some opposition lawmakers

in Japan have questioned why Tokyo is selling the Patriot missiles. Critics say it also needs to fortify its missile strike and defense capabilities to be able to cope with an increasingly assertive China.

Kishida said the Patriot shipment is intended to showcase the will and capability of the Japan-U.S. military alliance and to ensure the peace and stability of Japan. It also shows Japan does not tolerate any attempts to change the status quo of international order, he said.

Emanuel described Japan's revision to the military equipment sale policy as "a capstone to a year of reform." He said it will result in a greater inventory for the United States as well

as it can send militarily useful high-resolution imagery.

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## Turkiye hits 70 sites linked to Kurdish groups in Syria

Ankara (Turkiye): Turkiye has hit more than 70 sites allegedly linked to Kurdish groups in Syria and northern Iraq during airstrikes launched this week in retaliation for the deaths of 12 Turkish soldiers in Iraq, the defense minister said Wednesday. At least 59 Kurdish militants were killed in the strikes as well as in land clashes, Yasar Guler said in a video message to top military officials which was posted on X, formerly Twitter.

"Our pain is great, but our determination is complete," Guler said. "We avenged (the deaths) of our precious children and we will continue to do so."

There was no immediately statement from Kurdish groups and the 59 deaths could not be independently verified.

On Friday, militants affiliated with the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, attempted to infiltrate a Turkish base in northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, Turkish officials said. Six Turkish soldiers were killed in the ensuing firefight. The following day, six more Turkish soldiers were killed in clashes with the Kurdish militants.

Turkiye responded by launching strikes against sites that officials said were associated with the PKK in Iraq and Syria.

A spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said at least eight civilians were killed in the airstrikes in northeast Syria on Monday. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a United Kingdom-based war monitor, said 12 others were wounded.

Turkiye insists it takes utmost care to avoid civilian casualties and harm to cultural heritage. The PKK, which maintains bases in northern Iraq, has led a decades-long insurgency in Turkiye and is considered a terror organization by Turkiye's Western allies, including the US. Tens of thousands of people have died since the start of the conflict in 1984.

## S Korean actor Lee Sun-kyun found dead

AP ■ SEOUL

Lee Sun-kyun, a popular South Korean actor best known for his role in the Oscar-winning movie "Parasite," was found dead in a car in Seoul on Wednesday, authorities said, after weeks of an intense police investigation into his alleged drug use.

Police and emergency officers initially found Lee in what they believed was an unconscious state in the car parked on a street in northern Seoul. Emergency officers later confirmed he was dead, according to Seoul's Seongsu police station.

Police had been searching for Lee, 48, after receiving a report that he was missing, similar to a suicide note. Lee's body was later transported to a nearby Seoul hospital, according to Seongsu police.

Lee appeared in "Parasite," which won Oscars for best



picture and three other categories in 2020. The class satire was the first non-English-language film to win best picture in the then-92-year history of the Academy Awards, and was the first South Korean movie ever to win an Oscar. In the film, Lee played the head of a wealthy family.

In 2021, he won a Screen

Actors Guild award for "cast in a motion picture" for his role in the same film. He was nominated for best actor at the International Emmy Awards for his performance in the sci-fi thriller "Dr. Brain" last year, as well. Even before "Parasite," Lee had been a popular actor in South Korea for a long time. He rose to stardom for his role in a hit TV drama series, "Coffee Prince (2007)," and gained mainstream popularity with the medical drama "Behind The White Tower (2007)," "Pasta (2010)" and "My Mister (2018)."

Lee had undergone police probes into allegations that he used illegal drugs at the residence of a bar hostess. The investigation prompted extensive tabloid coverage. Lee insisted he was tricked into taking the drugs and that he did not know what he was taking, according to Yonhap.

The strike was declared ahead of contract negotiations with the city of Paris, which owns the 134-year-old monument, the spokesperson said. Union representatives did not immediately respond for comment, and it was unclear how

## Eiffel Tower closed while workers strike on 100th death anniv of its founder

Paris: The Eiffel Tower was shut down to visitors Wednesday because of a strike over contract negotiations, the day the Paris monument marks 100 years since the death of its creator, Gustave Eiffel. Tourists can still access the glass-enclosed esplanade beneath the tower, but access to the 300-metre (984-foot) landmark itself is closed until further notice, according to an Eiffel Tower spokesperson.

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**PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY**  
MARINE DEPARTMENT  
No. MID/ACCIS/WMR-17/2023-1592 Date: 22.12.2023  
e-Tender Call Notice (e-TCN)  
Name of the work: Providing Assistance for Berthing / Un-berthing of Vessels and other Marine Operations at Paradip Port Authority for a period of 03 years.  
Estimated cost: Rs.2,93,66,070/- Last date & time of submission of tender through on-line bidding is 17:00 Hours on dt. 15/01/2024. For further details, please log on the Website: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>  
Sd/- Deputy Conservator, Paradip Port Authority  
PPA/PR/22/2023-2024 dtd.26.12.2023

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
To be known to all that my client Smt. Kavita Aggarwal wife of Sh. Sanjay Aggarwal resident of A-402, Flat no. 14, Dream Apartments, Dwarika Sector-22, New Delhi-110075 has lost/misplaced the page no. 8 of the Sale Deed dated 7th Jan. 2019 registered as Wasika no. 14791 in Book no. 1, Vol no 18, at page 69 alongwith additional book no. 1 Volume no. 453 pages no. 88-90 registered on 7/1/2019 for the property i.e. Residential Plot bearing no.5, on Road no. H-1 measuring 250 Sq.mts. situated in the residential colony known as DLF Quabo Enclave Complex, Phase I, situated at Village Sikandarpur Ghos, Tehsil and Distt. Gurgaon/Haryana. The same is not traceable despite the best efforts of my client. A FIR/NCR to this has been lodged in the Police Station on 27/12/2023 to this effect. Any person(s) claiming any rights, interest having any objection or found in possession of original documents may write/contact with above named person at above address within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.  
**SUDHA SHUKLA (Advocate)**  
28-B, MIG, Pocket VI, Mayapuri Vihar,  
Phase III, Delhi-110 096

**DOON UNIVERSITY DEHRADUN**  
Mothrowala Road, Kedarpur, Dehradun  
Ph. 0135-2533105, 134  
**E-TENDER NOTICE**  
Doon University, Dehradun invites separate e-tender for the procurement of water isotope analyzer for Doon University. The tender documents are available on Uttarakhand government e-portal [www.ukenders.gov.in](http://www.ukenders.gov.in) Interested firms may apply through e-tender.  
**Store & Purchase Officer**

**Public Notice**  
This is to inform the general public that Sh. Rajinder Gautam is the unequivocal owner of S/S Duplex Flat Bearing No. 60-C on First & Second Floor, Category-III, in Block-H, Situated at DDA SFS Park Sector, New Delhi. This legal ownership was established through a Relinquishment Deed dated 09.02.2022 vide doc. No. 458 executed by Sh. Ashwin Gautam & Sh. Ashish Gautam. Subsequently, Smt. Ari Katheria is in the process of mortgaging the said property with IDFC First Bank Limited (Our Client). Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 10 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 10-day period will not be considered for the purpose of this notice. If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 10-day period by contacting **Law Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants)** at G201501, Landlines Floor, Building No. A-44A, Sector-15, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301; Landline(s): +91120-3101683/4582899; mail: [naccounts@lwnorth.in](mailto:naccounts@lwnorth.in)

Sensex scales 72k peak for first time

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Sensex and Nifty soared to fresh closing record highs on Wednesday...



Broad base fundraising, reduce dependence on banks: RBI to NBFCs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Wednesday asked non-bank finance companies to broaden their fundraising...

reduce overdependence on bank funding. Banks and non-banks both, need to bring in greater empathy...

Rising for the fourth straight session, the BSE gauge jumped 701.63 points or 0.98 per cent to settle at its all-time closing high of 72,038.43.

Among the indices, metal jumped 1.33 per cent, auto climbed 1.33 per cent, commodities (1.19 per cent), tech (0.96 per cent), IT (0.68 per cent), consumer durables (0.67 per cent) and capital goods (0.67 per cent).

of some volatility as we approach the monthly expiry. 'FII's have been buyers in the last couple of sessions in Index options while they continue to stay long in the index futures segment.'

declined 0.21 per cent to USD 80.90 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 95.20 crore on Tuesday...

The consolidated balance sheet of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) in 2022-23 expanded by 12.2 per cent, driven by credit to retail and services sectors.



ICICI Prudential Life gets GST demand notice of ₹270 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance on Wednesday said tax authorities have slapped a demand notice of Rs 270 crore on it for alleged short payment of GST for 2017-18.

ated at Rs 526.55 apiece, up 0.56 per cent over previous close on the BSE. In a separate filing, ICICI Lombard General Insurance said it has received a demand notice for alleged short payment of GST of over Rs 5.66 crore from Madhya Pradesh state GST department.

P-Note investments surge to ₹1.31 lakh crore in November

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investments through participatory notes in the Indian capital markets jumped to Rs 1.31 lakh crore by the end of November, bouncing back from a decline in the previous month...



overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly. They, however,

need to go through a due diligence process. According to the latest data from markets regulator Sebi, the

value of P-note investments in Indian markets — equity, debt, and hybrid securities — stood at Rs 1,31,664 crore at the end of November compared to Rs 1,26,320 crore at the end of October.

July 2017 — when investment through the route stood at Rs 1.35 lakh crore. In comparison, investment through the route was Rs 1.28 lakh crore in August, Rs 1.23 lakh crore in July, Rs 1.13 lakh crore in June, Rs 1.04 lakh crore at May-end, Rs 95,911 crore at April-end, Rs 88,600 crore at March-end, Rs 88,398 crore at February-end and Rs 91,469 crore at January-end.

Suzlon bags two wind energy orders

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Renewables solutions provider Suzlon has bagged two separate wind energy orders of 100.8 MW each from Mahindra Susten and an Indian arm of a leading nordic energy company.



ply, installation, and commissioning. Additionally, Suzlon will also undertake post-commissioning operation and maintenance services.

'We look forward to creating many landmark IPP renewable energy projects in the future with a focus on increasing adoption of renewable energy in India,' said Deepak Thakur, Managing Director and CEO, Mahindra Susten.

bine generators (WTGs) with a Hybrid Lattice Tubular (HLT) tower and a rated capacity of 3.15 MW each for an Indian arm of a leading nordic energy company. The project is located at Karnataka. As part of the agreement, the Suzlon will supply the wind turbines (equipment supply) and supervise the project including commissioning.

Majority prefer banks to park savings, 21 per cent in gold: Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The affinity of Indians for gold and traditional bank deposits remain unwavering as about 77 per cent of respondents preferred to safeguard their earnings through bank deposits and 21 per cent choose to invest in gold in 2023, according to a survey.



from 19 per cent in the 2022 survey. However, a 53 per cent of households still lack health insurance coverage, according to the survey, which is based on 35,000 responses from over 35,000 households across 20 states.

embraced mutual fund investments, up from 6 per cent in 2022. The survey also showed that regional variations persist, with southern Indian cities such as Bengaluru (69 per cent) and Thiruvananthapuram (66 per cent) leading in gold savings.

Companies raise nearly ₹9,000 crore in December IPO rush

PTI ■ MUMBAI

As many as 12 companies raised Rs 8,931.69 crore through initial share sales this month, making it the best IPO month in two years. The previous best was December 2021, when 11 companies mopped up Rs 9,534 crore through Initial Public Offerings (IPOs).



Captab, which has raised Rs 570 crore through an IPO, is yet to be announced. Through the IPO, Doms Industries raised Rs 1,200 crore while Flair garnered Rs 593 crore and India Shelter Finance fetched Rs 1,200 crore. Inox CVA mopped up Rs 1,459.32 crore and Muthoot Microfin's initial share sale was worth Rs 960 crore.

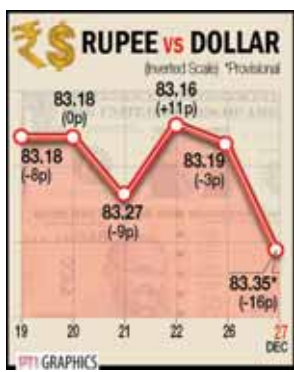
Among others, Motisons Jewellers raised Rs 151 crore, Suraj Estate Developers (Rs 400 crore), Credo Brands (Rs 549.77 crore), Happy Forgings (Rs 1,008.6 crore), RBZ Jewellers (Rs 100 crore) and Azad Engineering (Rs 740 crore). Together, these 12 firms have mopped up Rs 8,931.69 crore, as per the analysis.

Rupee falls 16 paise to 83.35 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined 16 paise to settle at 83.35 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday due to sustained outflow of foreign funds and increased demand for American currency from importers and banks.

volatile crude oil prices fearing disruption in global trade through the Red Sea route. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic currency opened at 83.21 and traded between the peak of 83.20 and the lowest level of 83.35 against dollar during intra-day deals.



rency settled at 83.19 against the dollar. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said Indian rupee depreciated on dollar demand from foreign banks and importers.

end dollar demand from oil marketing companies and importers. 'USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83 to Rs 83.70,' he said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading marginally lower at 101.07 on Wednesday.

# Dipa to participate in senior nationals after 8 years

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Star gymnast Dipa Karma will compete at the Senior Artistic Gymnastics National Championships after a gap of eight years in Bhubaneswar next week.

The prestigious event will be held here from January 2 to 4. Besides Dipa, the championship will feature the likes of Tokyo Olympian Pranati Nayak, Yogeshwar Singh, Rakesh Patra, Tapan Mohanty, Saif Tamboli, Gaurav Kumar among others. "Dipa will compete at the Senior nationals. The last time she had participated at the domestic event was in 2015. This will be her last nationals," her coach Bisweswar Nandi told PTI. The 30-year-old from Agartala, the first female gymnast from India to compete in the Olympics, was ignored for the Asian Games despite topping the trials as she didn't meet SAI's selection criteria of players needing to score equivalent to the eighth ranked gymnast in the last Asian Games.

It was since then she couldn't participate in any event following her 21-month suspension due to a doping violation.

Nandi, however, hasn't given up hope on his ward's chances of qualifying for the Paris Olympics. Dipa is recovering from a nagging knee issue for quite some time now. "She is gradually reaching her 100 per cent and will compete in few international events next year. Of course, she will have to do well



in the selection trials to be in the Indian team," Nandi said. Odisha is all geared up to host the Junior and Senior Artistic Gymnastics National Championships at the Gymnastics Centre in the Kalinga Stadium. The Junior Championship will

begin on Thursday, followed by the Senior Championship from January 2. A total of 750 participants, including 550 players, 120 support staff and 100 officials from across the country, are expected to descend on the state for the championship which will see

the participation of 28 affiliated units from the Gymnastics Federation of India. Sudhir Mital, President, Gymnastics Federation of India, said: "We are pleased to host the Junior and Senior Artistic Gymnastics National Championship

here in Bhubaneswar which has the best of infrastructure and facilities to conduct a National Championship. "This championship will give the entire junior and senior participants experience of showcasing their skills at world class venue."

# Naomi hits practice court

To prepare for her tennis return at the Brisbane International



AP ■ BRISBANE

Former No. 1 and new mom Naomi Osaka hit the practice court Wednesday ahead of the Brisbane International as she prepared for her much anticipated return to tennis. Osaka will make her WTA comeback at the tournament which begins Sunday at Pat Rafter Arena. A two-time Australian and U.S. Open champion, Osaka pulled out of last year's Australian Open in Melbourne before later revealing she was pregnant. The U.S.-based Japanese player and her American rapper

boyfriend Cordae became parents to daughter Shai in Los Angeles in July. Osaka has only played one game since the 2021 U.S. Open in New York. She was leading Daria Gavrilova 1-0 at the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo in September 2021, before the Australian suffered a serious knee injury and had to retire in the match. Rafael Nadal is also set to return from injury in Brisbane in a 32-man ATP field so strong that Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini and 2020 U.S. Open champion Dominic Thiem will have to qualify to feature in it. Thiem made the Australian

Open final in 2020 and Berrettini was a semifinalist two years later. Both are currently sitting outside the top-60 cutoff mark which received automatic entry into the season-opening event. Holger Rune, at No. 8, is the highest-ranked male in the tournament. American Ben Shelton and three-time Grand Slam singles champion Andy Murray are also entered. Reigning Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka, Elena Rybakina, Jelena Ostapenko, Victoria Azarenka, Sofia Kenin and Sloane Stephens are in the 54-player women's draw.

AP ■ MANCHESTER

# Despair then delight at Old Trafford

Welcome to Manchester United, Jim Ratcliffe.

In the space of 90 minutes, and in front of soon-to-be director Dave Brailsford, Old Trafford witnessed the best and worst of Erik ten Hag's team.

Two days after confirmation that British billionaire Ratcliffe will buy a stake of up to 25% in the club, United trailed by two goals inside 26 minutes against Aston Villa and was booed by the home crowd on Tuesday. Ten Hag's players then produced a spectacular second-half comeback to win 3-2 and spark celebrations rarely seen at its famed stadium during a troubled season so far.

"We said Keep going. Believe it, in ourselves. That is what I demand from the team," Ten Hag said afterward. "We said it before the game and during halftime, Keep believing and we will win this game."

Going into the game on the back of a run of four matches in all competitions without a win or a goal, United took to the field for the first time since Ratcliffe, one of Britain's richest people, secured an agreement worth around \$1.6 billion to buy into the club he has supported from childhood.

Brailsford is the director of sport for INEOS Sport, which Ratcliffe owns, and on Tuesday it was confirmed he will be a director of United once the deal is completed.

He got a taste of the sense of frustration among the 20-time league champions' fans — with

United last winning the title in 2013 — and the animosity toward American owners the Glazer family, who put the club up for sale last year.

Ratcliffe will take charge of soccer operations as part of his investment and Brailsford is expected to play a big part in a new structure.

While it will take more than one win to turn a season around that has already seen United eliminated from the Champions League and the English League Cup, the atmosphere in the second half was a taste of what can be achieved by bringing the good times back to Old Trafford.

"We're looking forward. I think it is positive for the club that they are stepping in. They have a lot of experience in sport at the highest level - F1, a cycling team, football clubs," Ten Hag said. "They can only help us and support us to get our targets. We are looking forward. They want to work with us and we want to work with them."

Villa went ahead through first-half goals from John McGinn and Leander Dendoncker.

Alejandro Garnacho sparked United's revival with two goals in the second half and Rasmus Hojlund scored his first league goal to win the game.

Third-place Villa had been unbeaten in 10 games going into the match.

"Two weeks ago I was asked if

## UNITED BEATS VILLA IN 1ST GAME AFTER DEAL



we were contenders to the title and said no, and was thinking the same as I am now," Villa manager Unai Emery said. "Today we missed an opportunity to have that consistency against one of the top ten teams.

This can happen." United moved up to sixth place, three points behind defending champion Manchester City in fifth. City has played two fewer games than United. **LIVERPOOL LEADS:** Liver-

pool is back at the top of the league and Darwin Nunez is again among the goals. Nunez ended a 12-game scoring drought to set up Jurgen Klopp's team for a 2-0 win against Burnley and overtake

Arsenal in the standings. Liverpool moved two points clear of second-place Arsenal, which has a game in hand against West Ham on Thursday. Nunez curled a shot from distance beyond Burnley goal-

keeper James Trafford in the sixth minute at Turf Moor, having failed to find the back of the net for his club since Nov. 1.

Having drawn back-to-back league games against Manchester United and Arsenal, Liverpool failed to make the most of its dominance as it saw two goals disallowed and Mohamed Salah hit the bar. Substitute Diogo Jota eventually ended any concerns of a Burnley equalizer with a goal in the 90th.

"We've created a lot of chances recently and haven't used an awful lot of them but in the end it's about performing," Liverpool manager Klopp said. "We've played four games in 10 days and you just have to get through it."

**WOOD'S HAT TRICK:** Chris Wood came back to haunt Newcastle and hand Nuno Espirito Santo his first win as Nottingham Forest manager.

Wood, who joined Newcastle in January 2022 and was sold to Forest 18 months later, struck a hat trick in his team's 3-1 win in the Premier League at St. James' Park on Tuesday.

"I'm just happy to stick them away. That's what I'm here to do and I'm just happy I could," the striker said.

Wood was one of Newcastle's first signings after the club was bought by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund in 2021. He moved from Burnley for around

\$32 million, but was loaned to Forest 12 months later after scoring five goals in 39 appearances.

He completed a permanent move to Forest in June this year in a deal worth \$19 million. Newcastle has now lost five of its last seven games in all competitions and has only had one win in the league during that run.

It was Nuno's second game in charge at Forest after replacing former manager Steve Cooper before Christmas.

Newcastle took the lead through Alexander Isak's first-half penalty, but Wood evened the score just before halftime. He went on to score two goals and complete his hat trick after the break.

**LUTON DOUBLE:** Back-to-back wins for Luton have boosted the relegation-fighting club's chances of survival. But Rob Edwards' team had Sheffield United to thank for the 3-2 win at Bramall Lane after the bottom-place team scored two own-goals in the space of four minutes.

Jack Robinson and Anis Ben Slimane put through their own net in the 77th and 81st minutes to hand 18th-place Luton the win that moved it to within a point of Everton in 17th.

Alfie Doughty had given Luton a first-half lead in the 17th. Oliver McBurnie leveled in the 61st and Anel Ahmedhodzic put Sheffield United 2-1 up in the 69th. But the own-goals turned the game around as Luton followed up its 1-0 victory over Newcastle with another win.



# Alexia will undergo knee surgery

AP ■ BARCELONA

Two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas will undergo knee surgery on Wednesday. The Barcelona women's star will have "an arthroscopy on her left knee," her club said Tuesday, adding it will make "an official medical announcement once the operation has concluded." Putellas was part of Spain's World Cup-winning squad earlier this year.

The 29-year-old midfielder missed the entire 2022 European Championship after injuring her knee in training. The Spanish soccer federation said Putellas tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee.

# 'Morris target of racist comment'

AP ■ SHEFFIELD

An alleged racist comment was made by a fan toward Luton player Carlton Morris during his team's Premier League match against Sheffield United.

Luton manager Rob Edwards said the police had talked to Morris after the game at Bramall Lane, which Luton won 3-2.



"There was an alleged racist comment, the police are dealing with that, they have spoken to Carlton and got his take on it, so it is with them now, I have no more comment on it," the Luton manager said. "He is alright - he was, at the time, pretty angry but he seems fine now." Morris came on as a 71st-minute substitute and created two chances that led to

own-goals in his team's win. The match was the first in the Premier League in 15 years to be officiated by a black referee. Sam Allison took charge of the game.

He spoke to both managers following the incident, Sheffield United boss Chris Wilder said.

"There was a comment that was made and the referee came over to speak to me and Rob from a racial point of view, which is obviously not great if found to be the case," he said.

# Mayank to lead Karnataka in Ranji Trophy

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Experienced opener Mayank Agarwal was on Wednesday named as Karnataka captain for the first two matches of the upcoming Ranji Trophy season. The promising young batsman Nikin Jose has been appointed as Agarwal's deputy.

However, KL Rahul has not been named in the 16-man squad considering India's upcoming assignments at home against Afghanistan (three T20Is) and England (five Tests) across January and February.

Agarwal had a big 2022-23 domestic season emerging as the top run-getter in the circuit with 990 runs from nine matches at average of



82.50 that contained three hundreds and six fifties. Karnataka will open their Ranji campaign against Punjab at Hubli from January 5-8 and in their second match, the former champions will face Gujarat in Ahmedabad from January 12-15. Former batsman PV Shashikanth has been retained as the coach of the side.

**Karnataka squad:** Mayank Agarwal (c), Ravikumar Samarth, Devdutt Padikkal, Nikin Jose (vc), Manish Pandey, Shubhang Hegde, Sharath Srinivas (wk), Vysakh Vijayakumar, Vasuki Koushik, Vidwath Kaverappa, K Shashikumar, Sujay Sateri (wk), D Nischal, M Venkatesh, Kishan S Bedare, AC Rohit Kumar.



# Moon to be Mumbai Marathon ambassador

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Two-time pole vault world champion and Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Katie Moon has been roped in as event ambassador for the 19th edition of the Tata Mumbai Marathon to be held on Sunday.

Promoted by Procam International, the Mumbai Marathon is a World Athletics Gold Label Race. Moon had clinched gold medal at the 2022 Eugene and 2023 Budapest World Athletics Championships.

"While running the race of life, every step is an opportunity to inspire and make a difference. I

am deeply honoured to be named the International Event Ambassador for Tata Mumbai Marathon 2024, where each stride carries the spirit of resilience, determination, and community," said the 32-year-old American who will be defending her title in the 2024 Paris Olympics.

"I look forward to inspiring and being inspired by the incredible participants as we come together to celebrate the power of human potential and the pursuit of excellence. Let's lace up Mumbai, and run towards a healthier, and happier future!" she said in a release.

# ELGAR OVERSHADOWS RAHUL

**AS SOUTH AFRICA TAKE CONTROL AT TEA**

PTI ■ CENTURION

**K**L Rahul's superlative century was neutralised by a brilliant counter-offensive ton from the soon-to-be retired Dean Elgar as South Africa looked on course for a first innings lead, reaching 194 for 3 at tea on the second day of the opening Test against India here Wednesday.

It was Rahul's 101 off just 137 balls which propelled India to a first innings score of 245 on a track that offered variable bounce.

But the left-handed Elgar was way more attacking against a wayward Indian attack whose third and fourth pacers were rendered completely ineffective on a good bowling track.

Playing his penultimate Test match, Elgar nicely blended defence with a plethora of pulls and tucks off his legs as his 115 not out off 168 balls, took the Proteas to 51 runs within India's first innings total.

Jasprit Bumrah (2/35 in 11 overs) bowled a couple of wicket-taking deliveries to pull India briefly back into the contest.

Bumrah and his seasoned new-ball colleague Mohammed Siraj (1/39 in 10 overs) did test the home batters but unfortunately Shardul Thakur (0/47 in 10 overs) looked insipid and debutant Prasidh Krishna (0/51 in 10 overs) was very erratic, leaking way too many runs.



Such was their profligacy that in South Africa's first 100 runs, 18 were boundaries.

The Gujarat slinger ended the 93-run second wicket stand by bowling a perfect off-cutter to southpaw Tony de Zorzi (28 off 62 balls), which pitched on length and moved enough to take a thick outside edge into the hands of Yashuvi Jaiswal at third slip.

Keegan Petersen (2), India's nemesis during the previous tour, lasted only seven deliveries, as he lazily played away from his body and dragged a slightly back of the length delivery coming in with the angle onto his stumps.

However, the dismissals didn't deter Elgar, who hit as many as 21 boundaries and was quick to cut and pull whenever any-

thing short came his way. While Thakur drifted on Elgar's pads, Prasidh, who had not so memorable half-century to his name, either bowled too full or too short.

Prasidh was imperiously pulled for a six by the South African debutant David Bedingham (32 batting) in an unbroken stand of 81. Bedingham also handed the

same treatment to Thakur as Indian shoulders drooped with passage of time.

**Rahul's best Test knock**  
In the morning, Rahul scored one of his most satisfying hundreds in extremely difficult batting conditions to take India to an above-par first innings score. Starting the day unbeaten on 70, Rahul made a brilliant hundred

and the innings could well be considered on par with some of the best knocks played by Indians in SENA countries if the degree of difficulty is taken into account. No Test batter from any other country has been able to score two Test hundreds at the Supersport Park and Rahul now holds that unique record.

His innings had 14 boundaries and four sixes as he most of the time decided to ride the bounce rather than get on top of it en route his eighth Test ton.

As someone, who was dropped earlier this year during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in India on account of poor form, this was some comeback for Rahul where he was literally the lone ranger.

Consistency has been the problem for the Bengaluru man but class has never been an issue as his range is as good as a Virat Kohli or a Rohit Sharma.

The ramp shot off Kagiso Rabada (5/59 in 20 overs) was pure class while a quick bye run stolen off Gerald Coetzee to prevent a genuine No. 11 Prasad from facing more of the fast bowler was pragmatic.

Rahul got into the 90s with a smashing six as he picked Rabada's length very early and dispatched him into square leg grass embankments.

The hundred came when he slogged Coetzee into the 'Cow Corner' for his fourth and final maximum.



# Muzumdar mantra for India Women side

PTI ■ MUMBAI

**W**ithout fretting over opposition's achievements and threats they pose, the need to focus inward was one clear message delivered to the Indian Women cricket team under him, said head coach Amol Muzumdar here on Wednesday. Having beaten both their fancied opponents England and Australia in consecutive one-off Tests here, in-form India has now set sights on extracting maximum result from the limited-overs series against Alyssa Healy's side, beginning Thursday.

The three-match ODI series will be followed by a T20I series for as many games.

With the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup scheduled for September-October 2024 in Bangladesh to be followed by the 50-over World Cup to be held in India, Muzumdar said focus has been on the 'bigger picture' given his side's trait of failing at crucial moments.

"I will now shy away from saying that we have not had a look at the bigger picture. But at the same time, do not lose focus on the current happenings," Muzumdar told the media ahead of India's training session at the Wankhede Stadium.

"Yes, they (Australia) are a good team. They have been doing well in the past, but the message is very clear to the team - we would look inwards," he said.

"We would look to improve on every given opportunity on every single day. If we can do that, I will be happy," he said.

Muzumdar acknowledged Australia as a consistent team over a period of time but once again emphasised on the importance of looking inwards.

"They have been a consistent team for a long period of time and that is why they have won so many World Cups whether it is T20 or ODI," he said.

"But we need to focus on our strengths and we need to focus inward and think about how we are going to do against one of the best sides in the world," he added.

"Credit also goes to the selectors who have picked up the team. We had long, good discussions with the selectors and the BCCI officials that we need to look ahead at the World Cup," he said.

With 11 matches across all formats against two opponents to be played in a span of 35 days, Muzumdar said his side are not complaining.

"The scheduling has been fantastic," he said.

"The T20Is followed by the Test against England and we were into the red-ball cricket and we have carried that into the Australia series."

# CA looking at three-match Test series against India

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

**C**ricket Australia is looking to increase "marquee" women's Test series at home against India and England to three matches from the current one-off contest, according to its Chief executive Nick Hockley.

The CA top official said the governing body will "keep advocating for more Test cricket" in the women's game.

Hockley's comments came after captain Alyssa Healy felt a sense of unfinished business following Australia's historic defeat to India in Mumbai last week. Playing their first Test in India since 1984, Australia were beaten by eight wickets in the one-off contest at the Wankhede Stadium.

"We'll keep advocating for more Test cricket as part of multi-format series," he told SEN.

"Maybe that's something in the future that we can think about key marquee series going to three Tests."

Marquee series for Australia would be against England and India-only, with New Zealand reluctant to schedule women's Tests, according to cricket.Com.Au.

The loss in Mumbai was Australia's first against India in 11 Tests, with Healy saying she would love to be involved in more red-ball



cricket. "It would create a real contest over three games. That would be an unbelievable experience for our group, and probably a true test of both sides' abilities," she said.

"The one-off Test, India playing in their home conditions, you'd expect them to be heavy favourites. We would love to have another crack at it, show what we learned and put it into practice."

The last women's Test series of more than one match was played way back in 2006, while India had not hosted any red-ball cricket for nine years before 2023. The first of the three-match women's ODI series between India and Australia begins on Thursday at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. This will be followed by three T20Is at DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai.

# Shubam wants to buy house after ₹5.60 crore deal with RR

PTI ■ JAIPUR

**S**hubam Dubey's life took a turn for the better when Rajasthan Royals acquired him for Rs 5.60 crore in the recent IPL player auction, and that sunny moment has washed away all those early turmoil in the Vidarbha man's life.

Dubey, an aggressive middle-order batter who impressed in the recent Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy with a strike rate of 185, had seen his father taking up odd jobs like selling paan to buy a cricket kit for him.

But now the struggle is behind the family, and Dubey was understandably delighted.

"My family couldn't afford to buy a cricket kit but my father still got me one. But they never forced



me to do something else despite our struggling financial situation. "My father is a modest man who took up odd jobs to support the family, right from operating a paan stall to working as a hotel

manager to getting into real estate," Dubey said in a Royals media release.

Now, Dubey wants to buy a house for his family. "I've found my biggest supporters in my family. My twin brother took care of the house financially without letting the pressure affect me, my parents were right behind me. When I was injured and out of action for a while, they kept me in a positive state of mind."

"I want to give them the comfort and happiness they deserve. So, I wish to first buy a house for the family," added Dubey.

Meeting Vidarbha captain Faiz Fazal gave him a much-needed opening to higher-level cricket. "One of my uncle's friends suggested I should get enrolled in to

'Advocate XI' that trains talented young kids who can't afford to pay fees. It was there that I first saw Fazal."

"His personality, the confidence he carried and the way everyone treated him with so much respect made me feel I wanted to reach that level too. He's also a left-handed batter. So, I could relate to him even more."

Dubey now wants to meet former Sri Lankan batsman Kumar Sangakkara, the RR Director of Cricket and Head Coach.

"I have followed Sanga sir's journey till his retirement and he is such a respected figure in the cricketing fraternity."

"He was also a lefty like me. So, just being around him will surely be a learning experience for me," he said.

PTI ■ MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)

**A**ustralia's pace-bowling captain Pat Cummins struck twice in four balls to crush Pakistan's comeback attempt on the second day of the second cricket Test on Wednesday.

Pakistan started strongly then collapsed to reach 194 for six at stumps in reply to Australia's first-innings total of 318 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. A total of 13 wickets fell in an eventful second day's play.

Cummins claimed three for 37 and off-spinner Nathan Lyon took two for 48 for Australia. Abdullah Shafique (62) and skipper Shan Masood (54) both made half-centuries, sharing a 90-run partnership

for Pakistan's second wicket. Pakistan's openers had survived the new ball before Lyon made the initial breakthrough in the 16th over, removing Imam-ul-Haq caught at second slip for 10 at 34 for one. Cummins changed the momentum of the day's play by claiming a diving return catch to dismiss Shafique at 124 for two. Cummins leapt into the air in delight in his next over after bowling Babar Azam for one, finding a gap between bat and pad with a fabulous off-cutter as the crowd of 44,837 roared with



delight. Skipper Shan aimed a mighty swipe down the ground, advancing down the pitch and edging a catch to point off

Lyon's bowling as Pakistan slumped to 147 for four. Four runs later, pace bowler Josh Hazlewood clipped Saud Shakeel's off stump. When Cummins removed Salman Ali Agha caught behind at 170 for six, Pakistan had endured a middle-order collapse of five for 46.

Mohammad Rizwan was unbeaten on 29 at stumps. Pakistan trails by 124 runs with four first-innings wickets in hand.

Australia had resumed Wednesday on 187 for three, following a rain-interrupted

first day of play in which only 66 of the scheduled 90 overs were bowled.

The home side was bowled out for 318 at lunch Wednesday, losing seven wickets for 131 in an extended morning session that lasted more than two-and-a-half hours.

Marnus Labuschagne top-scored with a patient 63 off 155 balls and Mitchell Marsh crunched 41 off 60 deliveries including six fours and a six. David Warner, dropped on two, scored 38 in a 90-run opening stand with Usman Khawaja (42) Tuesday.

Australia's second top-scorer was the 51 extras conceded by Pakistan, including 20 byes and 15 wides.

Wicketkeeper Rizwan's one-handed catch to remove Alex Carey for four was a fine example of Pakistan's improved efforts on the field Wednesday as pace quartet Shaheen Shah Afridi (2-85), Mir Hamza (2-51), Hasan Ali (2-61) and Aamir Jamal (3-64) maintained pressure on Australia.

Australia won the opening Test in Perth by 360 runs.

The third and final Test in the three-match series is scheduled to begin January 3 at the Sydney Cricket Ground, where Pakistan won its last Test in Australia in 1995.

# Bangladesh beats New Zealand by 5 wickets

AP ■ NAPIER (NEW ZEALAND)

**L**itton Das carried his bat for 42 to steer Bangladesh to a five-wicket win in the opening Twenty20 International on Wednesday as it rolled New Zealand out cheaply at McLean Park for the second time in four days.

On Saturday, Bangladesh bowled out New Zealand for 98 on the same pitch to set up a nine-wicket win in the third one-day international, its first limited-overs victory over the Black Caps on their home soil.

Four days later, Bangladesh claimed three wickets with the first nine balls of the New Zealand innings and contained the home side to 134 for nine.

The Black Caps were one for three after Shoriful Islam dismissed Finn Allen and Glenn Phillips with consecutive balls in the second over, and then 20 for four following the fall of Daryl Mitchell.

Jimmy Neesham made 48 and captain Mitchell Santner 23 as New Zealand staged a partial recovery.

Das led an unhurried run chase that saw Bangladesh reach its target with eight balls to spare. The opener was given out lbw to Tim Southee when he was 22 but had the decision reversed under review and stayed on to steady the innings later.

He needed medical treatment for a leg injury at the start of the 18th over when he was 29 and



Bangladesh needed 24 from 18 balls. On 33, and with 20 needed from 16 balls, his lofted shot found Ish Sodhi at fine-leg but

the fielder stepped over the boundary line in completing a simple catch, giving Das another reprieve.

Clearly impeded while running between the wickets, Das was able to look on from the non-striker's end as Mahedi Hasan

(19 not out) finished the chase with a six and a four off Adam Milne in the 19th over.

Earlier, Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto entrusted the first over to off-spinner Mahedi and the decision paid off when he bowled Tim Seifert with the fourth ball.

"In these conditions, spin bowling is hard, but I was able to get my execution right," said Mahedi who was Player of the Match for his all-round performance.

"I hit the right areas in the power play and was able to do a good job for my team. When I bowl well, then I am able to bat confidently and finish the job for my team."

Seifert went back to a delivery

from Mahedi that he tried to dab wide of slip. But, the ball kept low, skipped on and hit his middle stump.

Shoriful then followed up his effort in the third one-dayer, where he took three wickets, with a double strike in the second over. Allen threw his hands, without moving his feet, to a ball going across him and was caught at slip.

Next ball Phillips offered no shot to a delivery that struck him on the knee roll in front of the middle. New Zealand called for a review, but Phillips had begun to walk off the field before the decision was made.

When Mitchell was bowled by Mahedi, New Zealand was in desperate trouble. Neesham

led the Black Caps with his 48 from 29 balls, which included four fours and three sixes. But, he was out just when the innings seemed to be gaining momentum, at 110 for seven in the 17th over.

Shanto (19), Soumya Sarkar (22) and Towhid Hridoy (19) made valuable contributions for Bangladesh but Das held the innings together when it seemed it might falter. Afif Hossain fell to Southee in the 15th over when the visitors were 97 for five and Das had his successful review later in the same over, a turning point in the match.

Had Das fallen, Bangladesh might have struggled, but he survived to the finish.