

SHORT TAKES

DCW chief molested

NEW DELHI: Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) chairperson Swati Maliwal Thursday alleged she was molested by an inebriated man and dragged by his car for 10-15m here with her hand stuck in the vehicle's window as he drove on. The 47-year-old accused was arrested following the incident which took place in the early hours. Maliwal said she was out in the night to inspect the state of women's security in Delhi along with her team when the incident occurred. **P7**

NZ PM to step down

WELLINGTON: New Zealand PM Jacinda Arden, who became a global icon of the left, said Thursday she was leaving office after five and a half years. Arden was praised for her handling of the nation's worst-ever mass shooting and the early stages of the pandemic. But she was facing mounting political pressures at home and a level of vitriol from some that hadn't been experienced by previous New Zealand leaders. **P10**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Our sportspersons deserve extra medals for the kind of administration they are dealing with

India qualify for crossovers

HOME TEAM BEAT WALES 4-2 BUT FAIL TO TOP POOL, TO PLAY NZ IN CROSSOVER FOR PLACE IN LAST-EIGHT



India players celebrate after a goal against Wales at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: India defeated Wales 4-2 to finish second in Pool D and qualify for the crossover match, where they will take on New Zealand, for a place in the quarter-final of the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup here Thursday.

India took a 2-0 lead through goals from Shamsher Singh (21st) and Akashdeep Singh (32nd) before Wales stunned the home team with twin strikes in a span of two minutes. Both the Wales goals came from penalty corners through Gareth Furlong (42nd) and Jacob Draper (44th) as they drew level.

Akashdeep came to India's rescue, scoring a fine field goal in the 45th minute before skipper Harmanpreet Singh converted a penalty corner in the 59th minute.

Both India and England finished with seven points each from three games but the latter topped the pool on account of better goal difference.

In an earlier Pool D match, England beat Spain 4-0. While England directly qualified for the quarter-finals by topping the pool, India and Spain will play in the crossover matches for the other four quarter-final spots. **FULL COVERAGE ON P12**

State nod for projects worth ₹1.53 lakh crore

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: The state government Thursday approved nine mega industrial projects worth ₹1,53,074.63 crore that would generate employment for over 27,030 persons in the state.

The High Level Clearance Authority led by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has approved the projects, for which intents were received during the Make in Odisha Conclave, 2022. The approved projects are spread across diverse sectors like green energy and equipment, metals and minerals, paper and IT infrastructure. The projects will be set up in Balasore, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Kalahandi, Khurda, Koraput, and Mayurbhanj.

The H.L.C.A has given a go-ahead to four projects in the green energy and equipment sector; two projects in the paper industries; two projects in the metals and minerals sector and one project in the IT infrastructure sector. The Committee approved the proposal of ACME Clean Energy Private Limited, entailing an investment of ₹58,209.13 crore. It has proposed to set up a green hydrogen plant and a green ammonia plant with a capacity of 1.1 million tonne at Kujanga, Jagatsinghpur and a captive renewable energy unit (4500 MW solar power plant) in Koraput and Kalahandi districts. It is expected to provide employment opportunities to about 3,400 people in the state.

The state has also approved the proposal of Aavaada Green H2 Private Limited in Ganjam district, which promises an investment of ₹23,500 crore and is expected to provide employment opportunities to about 1,500 people. **Continued on P4**

As India debates population, Sikkim wants more babies

REUTERS

New Delhi, Jan 19: India is set to overtake China as the world's most populous country this year; but a small northeastern state is worried about its shrinking indigenous communities and urging them to have more babies.

Sikkim, a state with fewer than 700,000 people, has India's lowest fertility rate and now wants families to have three children, making it the first to do so in a country where authorities, in a bid to fight overpopulation, have long pushed par-

ents to stop at two.

"If our indigenous people vanish, their culture will vanish with them too, which will be a big loss for us," said Shanker Deo Dhakal, secretary to the Chief Minister of Sikkim, where almost 80% of people are estimated to be indigenous.

The border state also recently announced incentives like year-long maternity leave for women, month-long paternity leave for men, and financial support for those seeking pregnancy through IVF.

Family size came into spotlight this week when China announced



that its population fell last year for the first time in six decades, a

historic turn that is expected to mark the start of a long period of

decline with major implications for its economy and the world.

Following news of China's shrinking population, commentators in India called for authorities to make the most of its young population while it was in a position to do so by improving resources for them to achieve their full potential.

Those calls come as India's population gains slow. Growth has averaged 1.2% since 2011, easing from the 1.7% in the 10 years previously, government figures show, and that trend is expected to fall further. **Continued on P4**






Bridal Blessings

20th Jan Onwards

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FREE
2 GOLD COINS*
on every purchase of Diamond Jewellery
Worth ₹30,000



leisure



KIM BUYS PRINCESS DIANA'S NECKLACE

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian has bought a necklace once owned by Princess Diana for almost \$200,000. The 42-year-old has reportedly purchased the diamond-encrusted amethyst Attallah cross pendant once worn by the late royal, for \$197,453 (160,000) at Sotheby's annual Royal and Noble auction.

MADONNA ADMITS TO 'STRUGGLING' WITH UNDERSTANDING MOTHERHOOD

The Queen of Pop, Madonna has opened up on the struggles of motherhood, confessing it's been "the most difficult battle". The *Hung Up* hitmaker admitted that it must be difficult for her kids to grow up "with a mother like me", reports *Mirror.co.uk*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Today, you will turn an attentive ear to your inner voice. As a result, you will be able to execute all your plans with precision. Besides being cheerful, you will even take disappointments with a pinch of salt. Why just today, says Ganesh, you can have this rare quality for keeps.

TAURUS

You will win the heart of your family members today, forecasts Ganesh. Try and delay auction bids or sealed tenders. Job aspirants may look forward to belated success in interviews. Ganesh advises you to take abundant precautions in all critical matters.

GEMINI

Interactions with member of the opposite sex may yield positive and pleasurable results today. Public servants will get the much-needed encouragement and moral support from bosses and family members. In academics, you will be able to solve whatever problem you set your mind to.

CANCER

Today, you are likely to remain open-minded while dealing with others. However, it doesn't mean that you will always be soft on others. Later in the day, your approach may be different and stubborn. In the evening, you will enjoy the company of family and friends.

LEO

Pack your bags, and don't forget the sunscreen and the shades. Look at the stars today — Ganesh foresees for you a strong prospect of going on a tour. If not an individual backpacking adventure, then an elaborate family holiday, but travel you shall.

VIRGO

Today, find yourself rummaging through the vast recesses of your inner self. You will make fabulous money to spend on your loved ones. Face up to work pressures by indulging in corporeal pleasures. You may warrant the company of someone special to think out loud all that is inside you, says Ganesh.

LIBRA

All things passionate seem to engulf you today. It is one of those moments when chance dictates every possibility of a new romantic love episode in your life. The last time a moment like this came by, Romeo met Juliet. Ganesh expects you to try hard to please your sweetheart. Also, you may want to spruce up and pay special attention to your looks.

SCORPIO

You shall also work like a donkey and yet be smart as hell in what you do today. It is favourable if you engage in household activities — gardening, cooking, cleaning and the likes. Work pressure will be displaced by family pleasure, predicts Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS

Amid chaos and confusion, don't forget the direction and destination, advises Ganesh. You may be running short of time today and may not find a single moment in peace. Taking a break at this point of time won't be a crime, go for it.

CAPRICORN

Money will flow in from various quarters today, but it will also find its way out of your pockets. Keep a tab on your income and more on your expenses, says Ganesh. Situation at work may get a little trying, but you will overcome all problems by means of your innate and acquired skills, and past experience. You may have to slog hard for a while, but it is all a matter of time; your efforts will pay off in the long run.

AQUARIUS

Planning to buy a house or vehicle? Then today's the day to make the booking. However, don't buy anything in haste. Deliberate, says Ganesh, especially when it involves a huge sum of money. You may even shift residence, or change a job, and it's very likely you will enjoy the whole process.

PISCES

Well begun is half done. With this in mind, you will set out to actively seek the cooperation of your colleagues and the sanction of your seniors to tackle some important projects, says Ganesh. The evening should find you heading out to watch a movie or doing something creative, like painting.

Curtains come down on 11th Ajit Natya Mahotsav

Bhubaneswar: The 11th Ajit Natya Mahotsav, a four-day long multi-lingual theatre festival, concluded here at Rabindra Mandap, Thursday. City-based theatre troupe Bidyakanak Srujanusthan presented Odia play *Ashanta* on the final day of the event. Written by Pranabandhu Kar, the play was directed by Jagadish Prasad Maharana. *Tapaswini* (Odia), *Oedipus Rex* (Bengali) and *Jhalkari Bai* (Hindi) were staged on the first three days of the festival. The event was organised to celebrate the birth anniversary of eminent drama and film actor Ajit Das.



MINISSHA CALLS SAJID A 'CREATURE'

Mumbai: Actor Minishsa Lamba recently talked about the Me Too Movement and briefly mentioned Sajid Khan as 'creature.' She appeared in films like *Bachna Ae Haseeno*, *Kidnap* and *Bheja Fry 2*.

Actor Minishsa Lamba in a new interview talked about the Me Too movement. Talking along the lines of the movement in India and elsewhere in the world, the actor called Sajid Khan a 'creature.' Sajid made his first television appearance on *Bigg Boss Season 16* after multiple women accused him of sexual harassment during the Me Too movement.

Minishsa made her acting debut with Shoojit Sircar's *Yahaan* in 2005. She later appeared in films like *Honeymoon Travels Pvt Ltd*, *Bachna Ae Haseeno*, *Kidnap* and *Bheja Fry 2*. Minishsa was also a part of the reality show *Bigg Boss 8*.

During a recent interview, Minishsa was asked about the ongoing season of *Bigg Boss*, Sajid Khan and the Me Too movement. She said, "The Me Too movement is and has been so important in changing the conversation around the world about women. It was just a revolution that was on the brink that was waiting to happen. It just needed that one boiling point, that one catastrophe to change the world and that is what revolutions are all about. Regarding the creature (Sajid Khan) you are talking about, the less about the person the better." AGENCIES



When Madhuri dances 'better' than Anushka

Mumbai: Actor Madhuri Dixit took to Instagram and shared a video as she grooved to *Ghodey Pe Sawaar*. She left fans impressed with her dance moves Wednesday as she danced to the popular song, *Ghodey Pe Sawaar* from Tripti Dimri, Babil Khan and Varun Grover's movie, *Qala*. The original dance video featured Anushka Sharma in special appearance. Reacting to Madhuri's dance, fans felt that she danced better than Anushka. Many fans reacted to her dance post.

In the video, Madhuri decked up in green ethnic outfit with white embroidery on it, and wore matching bracelet. She left her hair loose. She danced and gave perfect expressions while *Ghodey Pe Sawaar* played in the background. She was all smiles and lip-synced to the song as well. The song is sung by Sireesha Bhagavatula and penned by Amitabh Bhattacharya, and music is directed by Amit Trivedi. Sharing the clip, Madhuri wrote, "Balma ghodey pe kyuu sawar hai (why is my lover in a hurry)?" She used 'Wednesday', 'wednesday mood', 'ghodey pe sawaar', 'trending reels', 'reels instagram' and 'explore page' as the hashtags. Reacting to Madhuri's dance video, one of her fans wrote, "She did it better than Anushka." Another fan commented, "The queen of Reels is back." Other fan wrote, "You are made for this song (smiling face with red heart eyes emoji)." A fan commented, "No one can defeat you." "The epitome of grace and beauty", added one. AGENCIES



Nora's startling revelation

Mumbai: In a shocking statement, actress Nora Fatehi revealed how Sukesh Chandrashekhar promised to take care of her family if she agreed to be his girlfriend.

In the recent turn of events, the actress registered her statement with the Delhi police, in which she claimed that Sukesh's alleged aide Pinky Irani had approached her with an offer of being Sukesh's girlfriend.

Nora explained in detail that she met Sukesh Chandrashekhar through a charity event where she was invited as the Chief Guest.

Considering the generous nature of the organisers, Fatehi revealed that she decided to attend the event free of charge. As per her statement, later, Sukesh's alleged accomplice Pinky Irani contacted Fatehi's cousin and reached out to the Dilbar actress with an offer where she claimed that if Nora agrees to be Sukesh's girlfriend, he will take care

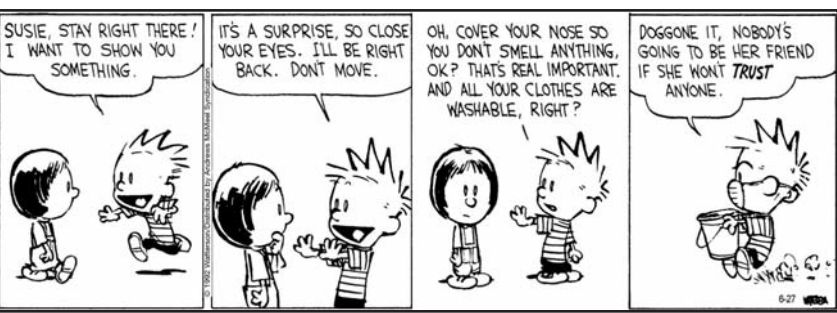
of her entire family. In the same statement, Nora also added that she was left aghast when Irani went on to claim that 'Jacqueline Fernandez was waiting in line' but Sukesh is more interested in Nora. Talking about how much she knew Sukesh, Fatehi asserted that she never met him in person. She also maintained that she saw him for the first time when the Enforcement Directorate summoned her at their office.



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

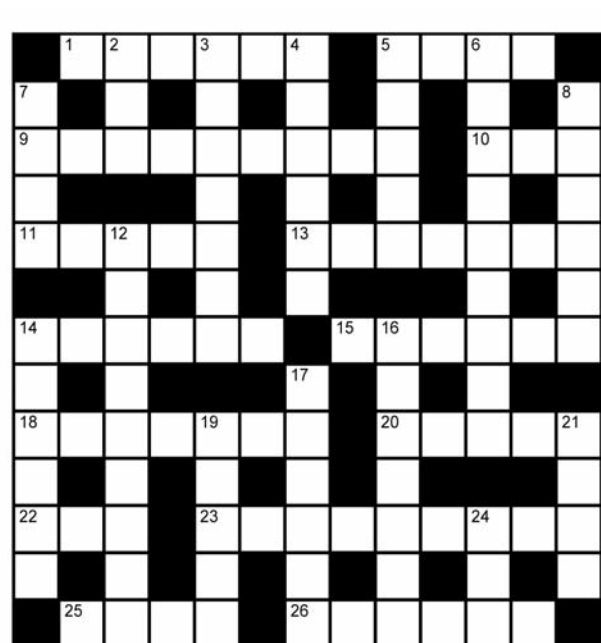


BREVITY



FUN post

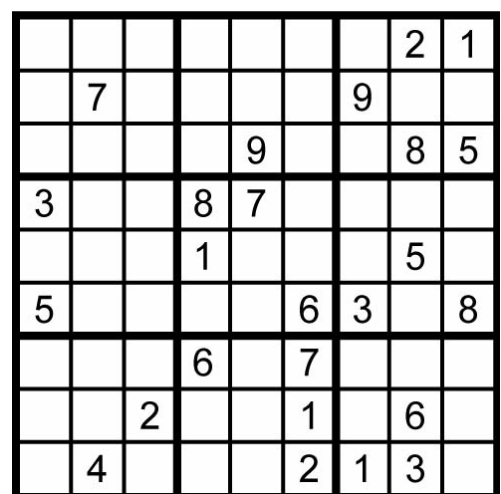
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Grapevine information
 - 5 ___ Gaga
 - 9 Celestial surface
 - 10 Pinch
 - 11 Automobile type
 - 13 Put in effect
 - 14 Negligible
 - 15 Tranquil
 - 18 Large hunted animals (3,4)
 - 20 Low-water mark
 - 22 Allow
 - 23 Ruthless competition words (3,3,3)
 - 25 Brink
 - 26 Wobble
 - Down**
 - 2 Rowboat item
 - 3 Hand tool
 - 4 Separate parts of a whole
 - 5 Espresso variation
 - 6 Condemned
 - 7 Flying saucers (Abbr.)
 - 8 Tack on
 - 12 Greatly pleased
 - 14 Small stone
 - 16 Bloodline
 - 17 Elevation
 - 19 Muddle
 - 21 Furor
 - 24 Owing

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

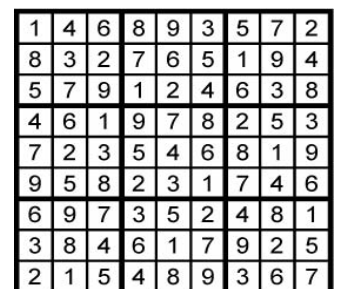


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



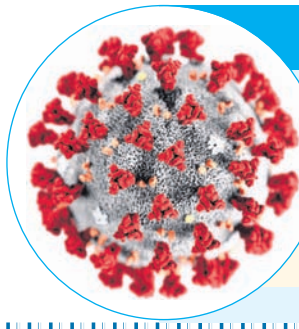
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



INOCULATION DRIVE

A girl takes the booster dose of Covid-19 vaccine at City Hospital in Cuttack, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	67,23,48,884	64,38,13,127	67,37,316
India	4,46,81,505	4,41,48,815	5,30,728
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

Idco slum murder case accused held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Commissionerate Police Thursday arrested an accused involved in the murder of a 35-year-old youth at Idco slum under Maitree Vihar police limits here in the wee hours of Tuesday. The arrested was identified as Sunaram Murmu, 22, a resident of Khunta area in Mayurbhanj district. Sunaram was absconding since the incident.

As per police sources, the deceased Sushil Hembrum, a resident of Salia Sahi, had a fight with Sunaram, his neighbour, over some trivial issue a few days back.

Later, Sunaram informed his distant cousin Biswanath Kisku, the prime accused in the case, about the brawl. Subsequently, they hatched a plan to eliminate Sushil.

During the wee hours on Tuesday, Kisku along with Sunaram came to Sushil's house when he was fast asleep. They first woke up Sushil and then Kisku attacked him with a wooden plank. Sushil sustained severe head injuries and was sent to Capital Hospital for treatment where the doctors declared him dead.

When informed, police reached the spot and arrested Kisku after registering a case (11/23). However, Sunaram, who had fled the spot after the incident, was arrested by cops near the slum Thursday.

He was later produced before the court that sent him to judicial custody.

Cops counsel singer Humane, his wife over marital discord



Humane Sagar (R) and his wife Shriya at Mahila police station in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 19: Popular Odia playback singer Humane Sagar, who has landed in trouble for allegedly harassing his wife, appeared before the Mahila Police here, Thursday. Sagar's wife Shriya Mishra also reached the police station for counselling.

Although counselling was conducted in the presence of Zone-2 ACP, Mahila Police, Shriya's father and Sagar's mother, it was inconclusive, said sources. Both the parties will be summoned again two days later.

As per Shriya's complaint, she has been residing with her parents in Balasore for the past five months due to marital discord with Sagar. She also alleged that Sagar used to beat her up under the influence of alcohol and even tried to kill her.

Sagar, however, said he was unaware of the allegations against

him. "I heard about the allegations following which I came here for a discussion with the police. I have never attempted to murder Shriya," Sagar told reporters after reaching the Mahila police station in Cuttack. He also rubbished the allegations of dowry harassment.

"When the IIC had called Humane Sagar for appearance at the police station yesterday, he was in Kalahandi for a programme. He is cooperating with the police. Let him come out of the police station and then he will reveal about the case," said Sagar's lawyer Satya Ranjan Mullia.

Shriya's father Shrikant Mishra said, "Sagar was forcing my daughter for religious conversion. He has been assaulting Shriya and trying to eliminate her. He had extramarital affairs. Sagar was unhappy after Shriya gave birth to a girl child. The torture on Shriya grew after she became a mother of

Sagar was unhappy when Shriya gave birth to a girl child, said Shriya's father Shrikant Mishra

He also alleged that her daughter was subjected to dowry torture

Sagar's mother, however, rubbished the charges and said Shriya was an alcoholic

the baby girl. He was also demanding dowry following which ₹15 lakh was given in two phases."

Regarding Shriya's stay at his home, Mishra said that they had to bring her to their place when she informed about physical assault by Sagar. "Both Sagar and his mother were torturing my daughter," Shriya's father alleged.

He further revealed about their unsuccessful attempt to de-addict Sagar.

However, Sagar's mother Sephali Suna said, "Shriya is an alcoholic. Her father and brother used to visit our place once in a week. They drink and force Sagar to join them."

Rubbishing allegations of forcing Shriya to adopt Christianity, Suna said these are baseless charges. Both have mistakes which they should realize and start a new life, she added.

Zone-2 ACP Amitabh Mohapatra said, "We have made an attempt for reconciliation between them. They have taken two days time for mutual understanding following which they will turn up at the police station again. A case will be registered if they fail to reach a consensus."

7 mini parks unveiled in City under MUKTA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Seven mini parks under the state government's flagship programme 'Mukhyamantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyan (MUKTA)' were inaugurated at Kalinga Nagar under Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Thursday.

Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Minister Ashok Chandra Panda and City Mayor



Sulochana Das graced the occasion along with other BMC officials.

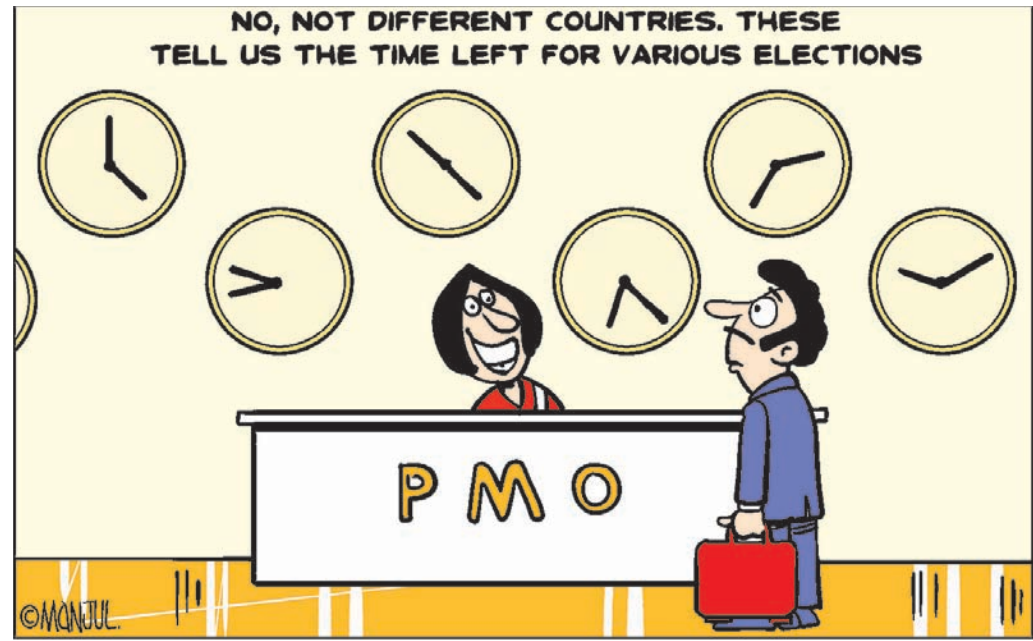
The parks have been built to add to the City's green cover and cre-

ate more recreational spaces for children, youths and elderly. "Each park has been built in an area of about 0.5 acre and the total cost of all seven parks is around ₹3 crore,"

said a BMC official.

Each park has a boundary wall, guard room, yoga platform, jogging track, paved path, urinals, illumination, cement and fibre reinforced plastic (FRP) benches and irrigation system. For the enjoyment of children, the parks have arch swing, see-saw, spiral ride, while for adults there is gym equipment, push-up bar, shoulder exerciser, big shoulder wheel and twister. There is drip irrigation facility for watering the plants.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Tusker carcass found; electrocution suspected

Bhanjanagar: There is no let-up in elephant deaths in North Ghumusar forest division here in Ganjam district as another tusker was found 'electrocuted', Wednesday night. Locals informed the forest officials about the carcass of a tusker lying in a jungle on Manpur-Baradanda roadside under Tarsingh forest range. Forest officials rushed to the spot and conducted an investigation. A veterinarian conducted a post-mortem of the carcass. Preliminary inquiries indicated that the tusker might have died due to electrocution. But the actual reason behind the animal's death can be ascertained after the post-mortem report comes.

ORSAC bags Gold Skoch Award for e-Governance

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: The Odisha Space Application Centre (ORSAC) under Science and Technology department has bagged Gold Skoch Award (e-Governance) on behalf of the state government.

Odisha has implemented an innovative project of 'Village-wise Plot level Analysis of Paddy Crop Growing Areas'. ORSAC was roped in for mapping crop areas through satellite images. The digital images used for geo-reference of the cadastral maps uploaded with Aadhaar updated records of rights data to identify the actual land owners.

This innovative project facilitates the state government to procure paddy from the genuine farmers, those who have registered themselves through P-PAS (Paddy

Procurement Automation System) of Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare System.

This Artificial Intelligence (AI) - Machine Learning (ML) backed Remote Sensing & GIS project has eliminated fake paddy growing farmland in the inclusion of minimum support price (MSP) programme of government and saved more than ₹1,500-crore revenue.

The project aims at creating a database of actual cultivators and surplus paddy for sale under MSP. It also envisages addressing the issue of fake farmers' registration.

After facing frequent farmers' agitation over alleged irregularities in paddy procurement, the state government had started an estimation of paddy crop area and production through remote sensing in several districts in 2021.



MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	60858.43 ↓ 187.31
NIFTY	18107.85 ↓ 57.50
DOLLAR	81.67 ↑ ₹0.14
EURO	87.9720 ↑ ₹0.08
GOLD	₹56,486 ↑ ₹200
SILVER	₹67,939 ↓ ₹288

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	28.7°C	28.0°C
TEMP. MIN	18.0°C	17.5°C
Humidity	73%	78%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Foggy weather mostly

85% organisations hit by ransomware: Report

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 19: Nearly 85 per cent of organisations were attacked by ransomware at least once in the past 12 months, up from 76 per cent, a report said Thursday.

Specifically, recovery is a main concern as organisations reported that only 55 per cent of their encrypted/destroyed data was recoverable from attacks, according to Veeam Software.

The survey found that companies are challenged with more complex hybrid IT environments and are raising budgets to fend off cyberattacks as well as keep up as production environments continue to diversify across various clouds. Globally, organisations expect to

increase their data protection budget in 2023 by 6.5 per cent.

Of the 85 per cent of organisations planning on increasing their data protection budgets, their average planned increase is 8.3 per cent and often in concert with increased investments in cybersecurity tools.

"IT leaders are facing a dual challenge. They are building and supporting increasingly complex hybrid environments, while the volume and sophistication of cyber attacks is increasing," said Danny Allan, CTO and Senior Vice President of Product Strategy at Veeam.

This is a major concern as leaders think through how they mitigate and recover business operations from any type of disruption.



"Legacy backup approaches won't address modern workloads - from IaaS and SaaS to containers - and result in an unreliable and

slow recovery for the business when it's needed most. This is what's focusing the minds of IT leaders as they consider their cyber

The survey found that companies are challenged with more complex hybrid IT environments and are raising budgets to fend off cyberattacks as well as keep up as production environments continue to diversify across various clouds

Globally, organisations expect to increase their data protection budget in 2023 by 6.5%

Of the 85% of organisations planning on increasing their data protection budgets, their average planned increase is 8.3 per cent and often in concert with increased investments in cybersecurity tools

resiliency plan," said Allan.

Due to its burden on budgets and manpower, ransomware and the current volatile cyber security landscape are taking priority for IT teams.

This is causing IT resources and budgets originally allocated towards Digital Transformation ini-

tiatives to pivot to cyber prevention.

"Not only do cyberattacks drain operational budgets from ransoms to recovery efforts, but they also reduce organisations' ability to modernise for their future success; instead, they must pay for prevention and mitigation of the status quo," said the report.




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Youth commits suicide during live video call

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: A day after one engineering student committed suicide live on video call in Cuttack, another youth in Capital city has hanged self during a video call to his girlfriend here Wednesday evening. The deceased, Sarbeswar Parida alias Pinku, belonged to Khandapada area in Nayagarh district.



friend's marriage has been fixed elsewhere. Wednesday evening, Sarbeswar, after returning from duty called his girlfriend and allegedly committed suicide on live video call. Shocked by the sudden development, the girl rushed to his rescue and informed the landlord about the incident.

They broke into the room and found Sarbeswar hanging from the ceiling of his room with a rope. He was immediately taken to Capital hospital where the doctors declared him 'brought dead'. On being informed, police

Wednesday evening, Sarbeswar, after returning from duty called his girlfriend and allegedly committed suicide on live video call

reached the hospital and sent the body for post-mortem.

Police are yet to confirm the claims about Sarbeswar committing suicide during video call to estranged girlfriend. The cops are awaiting the post-mortem report and Call Detail Records (CDR) of the deceased mobile phone for confirmation.

Notably, a first year MCA student of Sri Sri University, Manoj Kumar Behera, ended his life during the live video chat with his girlfriend on his laptop at Sandhapur under Barang police station here Tuesday afternoon.



MUSICAL NITE: Singer Chhanda Mishra performs during a programme organised by Sambhabana on the occasion of Pranab Jayanti at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

CONTINUED FROM P1

State nod...

The two other green energy projects will be set up by Renew E-Fuels Private Limited (REFPL) with an investment of ₹20,000 crore and Ocor Energy Private Limited with an investment of ₹7,200 crore. These two projects will provide employment to more than 3,300 people. The REFPL intends to set up a green ammonia plant with a capacity of 1.09 million MT, while the Ocor Energy proposed to install a green ammonia plant of 1million MT capacity.

In the paper sector, the Committee gave a nod to two projects, namely Bank Note Paper Mill India Private Limited and

Deevyashakti India Private Limited. With an investment of ₹2,500 crore, the Bank Note Paper Mill India Private Limited, (a joint venture of the government of India and the RBI) proposes to set up a bank note paper unit at Balasore, which will provide employment opportunities to more than 800 people of Odisha.

On the other hand, Deevyashakti India Private Limited proposes to set up an integrated pulp and paper mill at Dhenkanal, which includes an investment worth ₹1,000 crore, is expected to furnish employment opportunities to around 3000 people of the state.

In the metals and minerals sector, the authority approved two large projects which are expected to provide employment to around 12,500 people. The proposal of ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India Ltd includes the setting up of 7 MTPA steel plant in Jagatsinghpur district with an investment of ₹38,000 crore, and is expected to churn employment opportunities for 11,000 people.

The second project in the sector from Rungta Metals Private Limited (RMPL) is for the expansion of its Integrated Steel Plant from 0.5 MTPA to 1 MTPA in Rairangpur of Mayurbhanj district with an investment of ₹1,140 crore. In the IT & Infrastructure sector, the proposal by My Home Constructions Private Limited has been approved by the HLCA, which involves the development of IT infrastructure with modern amenities at Bhubaneswar. With an investment of ₹1,525.50 crore, the project is expected to provide employment opportunities to 2500 people.

As India debates...

India's total fertility rate (TFR) - children per woman - fell to 2 in the latest assessment period, for 2019-2021, from 3.4 in 1992-93, according to a government report issued in October. It estimated that the average must be 2.1 for the population to reproduce itself.

Of India's 36 states and Union territories, only five have a TFR of above 2.1, the highest being in Bihar with a TFR of 3 as of 2019-20. Sikkim, with a TFR of 1.1, is at the risk of seeing its population shrinking.

The population of at least two of Sikkim's 12 indigenous communities - Bhutia and Limbu - has been declining in recent years, Dhakal said, without providing any data.

Under the proposed three-child policy, Sikkim government employees would get financial and other benefits if they plan to have a third child, Dhakal said, adding that the details of the policy were being worked out.

Still, it is unlikely that many Indian states will rush to encourage large families any time soon, said economist Jean Dreze.

"Between the time when you reach replacement level and the time when the population stops growing, it takes a long time," Dreze said. "India as a whole country will take at least 25 years."

Increase IEC activities on BSKY: H&FW secretary



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Health and Family Welfare secretary Shalini Pandit, while reviewing activities of the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) team Thursday, directed the team to intensify information, education and communication (IEC) activities at the ground level and build awareness by forming an action plan that's people-centric.

Pandit, who is also the chairperson of State Health Assurance Society (SHAS) gave the direction while attending a meet in the SHAS

conference hall.

Pandit also directed the team to ensure hundred per cent compliance with feedback from people received through the Mo Sarkar mechanism in time bound manner. Redressal of the grievances received through toll free numbers like 104 (call centre) and 155,369 (card related issues) was also emphasized by the chairperson, informed an official present in the meeting.

"Review showed that more than 95 per cent of grievances received through different windows including social media were attended

and appropriate actions were taken. Matters relating to ranking of hospitals as per BSKY performance also figured in the meeting," informed the official.

Categories and criteria for ranking of the empanelled hospitals, both inside and outside the state, were also deliberated and worked out. It was decided to take up patients' satisfaction level as the principal criterion for ranking along with other service-centric allied criteria, added the official.

"Pandit also emphasised placing of prominent signage at conspicuous places of the hospitals for convenience of patients. The functional issues relating to the speed of internet connectivity, strengthening of human resources, and up-gradation of BSKY software for online raising of claims, scrutiny and approval were also discussed in the meeting, where the SHAS chairperson set timelines for completion of different tasks," said the official.

SOA inks MoUs with 2 startups



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Siksha 'O' Anusandhan Deemed to be University signed an MoU with two private startups Wednesday to generate and share knowledge in areas of robotics, artificial intelligence, machine learning and drone technology.

One MoU was signed between SOA and SPK MAK Technologies Private Limited for familiarisation with industrial exposure for industry ready problems, live training programme for students and faculties and lab development. SPK MAK, on the other hand, would receive student and faculty support for various projects.

The other MoU was inked between SOA and FxUAV Technologies Private Limited with the objective of generating and sharing knowledge in the area of drone technology. The signatories to the MoU were Pradipta Kumar Nanda, Pro Vice Chancellor, SOA and Subhajt

Nayak and Dhruvidhar Behera who signed on behalf of SPK MAK Technologies Private Limited.

Nanda also signed the other MoU, while Partha Sarathi Das, Subham Acharya and Ashutosh Mohapatra were the signatories on behalf of FxUAV Technologies Private Limited. Incidentally, Ashutosh Mohapatra is a 2019 graduate in mechanical engineering from SOA.

Nanda said it was for the first time that SOA had signed MoUs with two startups.

FxUAV Technologies Private Limited designs and manufactures drones using advance projectile extinguisher in fire fighting.

The university's Chief Administrative Officer Pramod Kumar Panda, Additional Dean (Academics), Institute of Technical Education and Research, DN Thatoi, Head, Department of Mechanical Engineering, SK Acharya and Associate Professor, Mechanical Engineering, SP Jena were present on this occasion.

TAVI performed on 83-yr-old patient at AMRI Hospitals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: An 83-years-old man was admitted to AMRI Hospitals here with recurrent fainting (loss of consciousness) and breathlessness. On evaluation he was found to have severe calcific aortic stenosis.

A cardiac team led by Cardiologist Dibya Ranjan Behera did Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation (TAVI) successfully using balloon expandable valve-

MyVal in the old patient. He was discharged home within 2 to 3 days of the procedure. Now he is able to do all his works without any symptoms.

The patient and the patient family expressed their gratitude to AMRI Hospitals management as well as the treating doctors Biswajit Mohapatra (CTVS surgeon), Vivek Chowdhury and B Rath, Cardiac anesthesiologists and entire Cathlab team and CCU team for this remarkable accomplishment.



Cardiologist Behera said, "This is a heart disease where the exit gate of the left side of heart was almost blocked so that oxygenated blood was unable to go the major blood pipe at the speed which is re-

quired. When such patient do slightest exertion, blood flow to the brain decreases and he will get fainting attack, which is sometimes deadly. The blood in the lungs gets stuck and causes breathlessness."

Nilanjana Mukherjee, Vice President & Unit Head, AMRI Hospitals Bhubaneswar said "AMRI Hospitals Bhubaneswar is doing very high-end and advanced surgeries with the state-of-the-art technologies and facilities."

TN minister, officials visit WSC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: As part of their official visit to Odisha, Tamil Nadu Youth Welfare and Sports Development Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin along with senior officials from Tamil Nadu government visited the World Skill Centre Thursday.

At the WSC, they were hosted by OSDA chairman Subroto Bagchi, principal secretary Usha Padhee, WSC CEO Alka Misra, WSC principal Sangaran Gopal and other officials of senior management.

Bagchi briefed the visitors on the state's skill development ecosystem and the transformation journey the system has undergone in the recent years. "The visitors were taken on a tour of the facilities like the advanced air conditioning and refrigeration lab and the robotics lab at the centre," informed an official.

After touring WSC and interacting with the management and faculty of the center, the Minister



expressed his admiration for the state-of-the-art facilities and commended the enthusiasm and commitment of the staff and leadership, added the official.

It should be noted that World Skill Center (WSC) is a type of advanced skill training institute that the Odisha government and the Skill Development and Technical Education department established under the banner of the Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA).

"ITEES Singapore is the knowledge partner for WSC and is play-

ing a guiding role in the system through its five experts in the key leadership roles at the centre. The Chief Minister had inaugurated the centre March 5, 2021 with an aim to enhance the whole skill development ecosystem of the state," said the official.

In the end, the visitors praised the efforts of the Odisha government under the vision of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to elevate the skill ecosystem of the state to a global level under the 'skilled-in-Odisha' brand.

HC's proposal pending with Union, state govt

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, January 19: Proposals sent by the Orissa High Court for construction of new court rooms in the state have been lying pending with the Union and the state government, amicus curiae Vijay Hansaria submitted in the Supreme Court.

Hansaria, in a case filed in the apex court on judicial infrastructure, submitted an affidavit in the apex court stating that there are 174 vacancies in the sub-ordinate courts in Odisha. He also submitted that there is a shortage of 123 court rooms in the state. The affidavit also highlighted the shortage of 503 residential quarters for the judicial officers.

It was submitted in the affidavit that the assistance for construction of new court rooms under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) have not been released by the Union government for the years 2020-21 and 2021-22. The Orissa HC has also



submitted a detailed action plan under the CSS for the financial year 2022-23 amounting to ₹60.40 crore (₹36.24 crore as Central share + ₹24.16 crore as State share) to the Union government and the state government. The amount hasn't been released for the year 2022-23 till January 14, the affidavit revealed.

Significantly demand for funds amounting to ₹722.4868 crore (₹600.506 crore for non-residential + ₹121.98 crore for residential) have been made under the State Sector Scheme (SSS) for the financial year, 2023-24 for infrastructure development of subordinate Judiciary to the state government, the affidavit reads.

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Government of India



Strengthening the Nation during Amrit Kaal with Youth Power

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through

Rozgar Mela



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- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

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appointment letters to

71,000

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across 45 venues

by

Prime Minister
Narendra Modi

20 January 2023, 10:30 a.m.

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We must watch over our thoughts. A bad thought is the most dangerous of thieves.

THE MOTHER



Breathing Life

After three long years, the pandemic shows no signs of slowing down. Unfortunately, public resistance and fatigue toward COVID-19 interventions and restrictions are at an all-time high. Even China, which was once considered a leader in virus control, has rapidly dispensed with most mitigation strategies.

But make no mistake: COVID-19 still poses a clear and present danger. Research shows that two or more COVID-19 re-infections doubles the risk for death, blood clots, and lung damage, among other negative health outcomes. The risk of cardiovascular events has been found to increase by 4.5 per cent up to 12 months after infection, regardless of age, race, sex, obesity, smoking, or other factors. Moreover, the latest waves of infection are being fueled by new variants that evade immunity from both vaccination and previous infections.

The good news is that we still have powerful prevention tools at our disposal. In fact, there is one widely underused strategy that doesn't require behavioural change or restrictions, that can be used just about anywhere, and that would also help protect us against other airborne viruses, such as RSV and influenza. It requires investing much more in basic measures such as ventilation, air filtration, and ultraviolet germicidal light, and accelerating the exploration of newer discoveries, such as the potential use of aerosol acidity levels to inactivate certain airborne viruses.

Vaccines are highly effective in reducing the risk of death and serious illness, but they are generally not as effective in preventing transmission. Mask-wearing has become so highly politicised and stigmatised in many Western countries that even some health-care workers are neglecting to wear them. Yet aerosols carrying viruses can linger for hours in the air after they have been exhaled, making it difficult to judge what counts as a high-risk situation. Given all these factors, the best way to reduce the risk of transmission is to decrease the concentration of airborne viruses that are available to be inhaled in the first place.

We need to challenge the prevailing attitude that treats the spread of airborne pathogens in indoor spaces as an inevitable part of daily life. Unlike our ancestors, we spend almost 90 per cent of our time indoors. For decades, governments around the world have invested heavily in food safety, sanitation, and clean drinking water – all in the name of protecting public health. In developed countries, food and waterborne disease have largely been eliminated through a combination of research, legislation, the development of authoritative public-health agencies, and infrastructure funding. Why shouldn't we give the same priority to achieving clean, pathogen-free air in public and private spaces?

Taking the fight to pathogens before they can infect us will require a multi-pronged strategy. Professional engineering bodies need to develop comprehensive ventilation standards, and new measures will be needed to ensure that these standards are met. That means establishing regulatory bodies to oversee monitoring and enforcement, not just for new construction but also in the retrofitting of existing buildings. To that end, governments should help to provide specialised training for building operators and owners. The goal for all buildings should be to recirculate the air supply of occupied spaces at a rate of at least six air changes per hour.

This may sound like an enormous task. But improvements can be rolled out gradually, and strategically, across different sectors. The immediate priority is to ensure pathogen-free air in hospitals and health-care settings, to protect vulnerable patients, and in airplanes, to stop the rapid spread of new variants around the world.

After that, our focus should shift to public transportation, including trains and buses, and then to offices, schools, and daycare facilities. In addition to preventing viral transmission, better-ventilated areas have been shown to improve children's cognitive performance and reduce illness-related absenteeism. Finally, we should address ventilation in individual homes and residential buildings.

Critics of such proposals will cite the up-front cost as a barrier. Yet even an average flu season is known to cost the United States \$11.2 billion, owing to the resulting absenteeism and reductions in productivity. According to an August 2022 Brookings Institution report, long COVID may be "keeping as many as four million people out of work" in the US, at an annual cost of \$170-230 billion per year in lost wages.

Having a workforce that is repeatedly getting sick means that we are accepting continued disruptions across all industries. But this is unsustainable. Parents are already exhausted and overwhelmed by the "triple-demic" (influenza, RSV, and COVID-19) that has been tearing through schools and daycares.

Beyond the direct financial costs, the trauma and turmoil inflicted by the pandemic make it clear that investing in pathogen-free indoor air is not only the most economically sound option but also the most ethical one. Like other effective investments in public health, this one would soon pay for itself.

The writer, a scientist, biotech entrepreneur, and infectious disease expert, is Chair and President of the global health think tank ACCESS Health International.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
- Never was anything great achieved without danger. NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI
- Nothing is permanent in this wicked world - not even our troubles. CHARLIE CHAPLIN

WORDSWORTH

Fashionista

This is a gently sarcastic term for a person who is an enthusiast for fashion. It covers not only the dedicated followers of fashion who wear the clothes, but also those who write about them. And it can refer to those who design, make, model and publicise clothes, and the fashion buyers whose decisions determine the success of a collection. According to researchers at the Oxford English Dictionary, it goes back to 1993, to a book by Stephen Fried entitled *Thing of Beauty: the Tragedy of Supermodel Gia*. The word began to become more widely popular from about 1998 onwards, has just started to appear in dictionaries, and looks set to become a permanent part of the language. It's formed from fashion by adding the suffix -ista from Spanish, equivalent to our -ist ending. English has only comparatively recently borrowed this from familiar Spanish-language terms such as Sandinista and Peronista. Such words have often had negative associations in English and new words using the suffix are usually derogatory, like Blairista for a supporter of the British prime minister, Tony Blair. Fashionista was one of this type, and it has not yet entirely lost its disparaging associations with triviality. Last week I finally realized that no matter how hard I try, I'll never be a true fashionista – one of those guys and gals who can stumble out of a swamp covered with leeches and still look like a million bucks (Denver Rocky Mountain News, Sept. 1999). As founder and editorial director of *Wallpaper* magazine, the style and design bible for the fashionista, he is a man on first-name terms with good taste (Daily Telegraph, Feb. 2000).



Satya Narayan Misra

AN INCLUSIVE INDIA NEEDS A SHARP DEPARTURE FROM PRO-RICH TAX POLICY AND CRONY CAPITALISM

The recent OXFAM report with the headline: "Survival of the Richest" makes an interesting reading and is a timely pointer to our Finance Minister to contain growing income inequality, improve tax collection and reduce market borrowing. There have been two ideological perspectives on taxation. While Arthur Laffer has championed the cause of low taxation as the forerunner of better tax collection, economists like Thomas Piketty and the OXFAM report clearly bring out how this is not the case in actuality. Reaganomics thrived in the 70s when the tax rate on the super-rich was reduced from 60% to 30% and income inequality increased sharply in the USA thereafter. In India also, the tax rate on the rich was reduced significantly by P Chidambaram in 1997. As per the World Inequality Report (2022), the bottom 50% of the population in India which accounted for 21% of national income share in India in 1991 witnessed its share coming down to only 15% of the national pie by 2015. In contrast the top 10% who accounted for 32% of national wealth in 1991 now account for 57%. Ironically the 40% middle class who accounted for 43% of national wealth, today account for only 30%. Quite clearly the soft taxation policy after economic liberalisation has made the bottom 50% and middle 40% poorer while the top 10% has harnessed unusual spurt in prosperity.

On the global scale, the bottom 50% today account for 8.5% of income while the top 10% account for 52%. The findings are even more disturbing in terms of wealth inequality where the 50% own only 2% of global assets while the top 10% account for 76%. Cutting across all continents, the poorest half lags behind significantly. The SDG in its target 10.1 therefore advises that every country should focus on the poorest 50%. Thomas Piketty in a seminal book "Capital in the 21st century" (2015) was the first to demolish Simon Kuznets' grand proposition that inequality would reduce when countries grow richer. For him inequality is not an accident of history but a feature of capitalism that can be reversed through state intervention. Walter Schedel in another path-breaking work "Great Leveller" (2017) also found that the average tax rate on top 1% households has come down from 42% to 27% during 1980 to 2013. While agreeing with Piketty's finding, he was not very sanguine whether the government would have the requisite political will to increase the personal income tax rate on the super-rich and impose wealth tax. However, he was prescient enough to conclude that "peaceful policy reforms will prove unequal to the growing challenge of inequality."



Quite clearly the soft taxation policy after economic liberalisation has made the bottom 50% and middle 40% poorer while the top 10% has harnessed unusual spurt in prosperity

It is a reiteration of concerns raised by Piketty and Schedel but raises interesting insight on the post-pandemic situation, globally. It brings out that for the first time poverty has increased in 25 years. Besides since 2020, the richer 1% have captured 66% of the new wealth created. While the fortune of the billionaire increased by 2.7 billion dollars per day, inflation outpaces wages of 1.7 billion workers. Food and energy component doubles the profit of the suppliers in 2022 while 800 million people went to bed hungry.

The report recommends wealth tax up to 5% on multi-millionaires and billionaires which will fetch 1.57 trillion dollars per year which will be enough to lift 2 billion people out of poverty. As an interesting aside, it brings out that if 5% wealth tax is imposed on Ambani and Adani, it will fetch \$9.1 billion which will be sufficient to cover a scheme like MNRGA which supports 100 days' work to nearly 5 crore unskilled men and women. It also recommends that the highest tax rates on millionaires should be increased to 50-60% based on an IMF study. The tendency of the rich corporate to hide their money in tax havens can be stopped by bringing in legislation like GARR which has been working very effectively in countries like Australia and Germany. The report also calls for taxing capital gains at 18% rates and remove the plethora of tax exemptions that principally benefit the rich.

As Nirmala Sitharaman inches towards the new Parliament building to present her budget, quite clearly she will look for a continuance with her strategy to increase capital expenditure, and continue with support for the PLI scheme and SMEs. However, the most disquieting aspect of India's

budgeting trend has been the significant drop in the tax to GDP ratio from 13.2% in 2018-19 to 10.9% in 2021. This is significantly lower than most emerging market economies like China where it is around 10%. In developed countries the tax to GDP ratio hovers between 20-30%. On the fiscal deficit front the figures are far more alarming. As against 2018-19 where it was 3.4%, it went up to 9.5% in 2021 and the expectation is that it will go up to 6.4% in 2022-23. The total debt to GDP ratio which was around 48% in 2018-19, is likely to touch 60% for the Centre and 40% for the states. Kenneth Rogoff and Reinhart had brought out that if the debt to GDP ratio is more than 90%, a country is more likely to witness low or negative growth.

The challenge before the Finance Minister is twofold: how to increase capital expenditure and bolster employment; and ensure economic stability by containing deficit. Instead of a debt propelled policy strategy (higher market borrowing) with inflationary potential, it would make eminent sense if she takes the initiative to increase tax collection, particularly of direct taxes. It is time for the FM to turn upside down the pro rich policy of late Arun Jaitley of abolishing wealth tax in 2017 and bring in 5% wealth tax and increase tax on the super-rich to 40%. This should collect enough revenue to spend on most of our social sector programmes. The critical needs of the nation are quality education, basic health-care, minimum nutrition for children and anaemic adolescent girls and women. An inclusive India needs a sharp departure from pro rich tax policy and crony capitalism. Joseph Stiglitz constantly harps on the importance of shared prosperity in a liberal democracy like ours. Reducing income inequality is a Constitutional mandate (Art 38(2)). The FM must take a definitive initiative in the upcoming budget.

The writer teaches Macro Economics.

SPECTRUM HEALTHCARE

MMR on decline: An accomplishment?



Udaya S Mishra & William Joe

THE REGIONAL DIVIDE OFFERS A RANGE OF EXTREMES WITH 11 STATES HAVING AN MMR OF MORE THAN 100 AND ONLY FOUR STATES HAVING AN MMR OF LESS THAN 50

Another edition on the state of maternal mortality released by the Sample Registration System generates a sense of accomplishment with a trend closing towards the SDG target of reaching 70 by 2030. However, there are major concerns relating to the regional pattern of this outcome as well as its ideal feature when linked to the kind of fertility decline attained in recent times. While maternal mortality comprises of fatality associated with any complication involving pregnancy and not necessarily child birth, a serious introspection is needed in terms of its response to decline in levels of fertility. Further, if one assumes the declining trend in this rare event, then should one trust this trend generated based on a sample estimate with wider and wider confidence intervals.

An immediate inspection of maternal mortality level indicates a 33 unit reduction in maternal mortality ratio in a span of five years with its intensifying regional divide that is a matter of concern. This sharp decline is perhaps largely contributed by the pace of decline manifested in the five southern states. The regional divide presented in terms of Empowered Action Group (EAG) states, southern states and the rest offers a range of extremes (137 and 49) with 11

states having an MMR of more than hundred and only four states having an MMR of less than fifty. Such a divide undoubtedly should deter us from celebrating a national level decline in expected trend and the optimism of achieving the SDG goal of 70 in due time. The larger concern of relying and comparing the estimates obtained for this rare event relates to the kind of confidence interval associated with these estimates. For instance, Kerala obtains an estimate of 19 with a confidence interval of (0-42) as against the national figure of 97 with a confidence interval of (88-106). What is apparent from the estimates offered is that the lower the level of MMR the wider is the confidence interval. Reliance on these estimates can very much be doubted given the wild range of confidence intervals which hint at the basic premise of obtaining such estimates without an adequate sample of births on one hand and the increased size of the sample given the rarity of the event. Considering the southern region, the estimates are much below the SDG target of 70 by 2030, but one wonders as to whether these estimates are anywhere near reality. Hence presentation of such estimates in a periodic manner with regional divides needs scrutiny before comparing them as that would be comparing

the incomparable. Estimates obtained for smaller states like Telangana, Jharkhand, Haryana and Punjab obtain estimates with the range of confidence intervals that clearly make the estimates untrustworthy.

The two other alternative indicators of MMR and lifetime risk of maternal death are 6 per lakh women of reproductive ages and 0.21% respectively. This figure too is very much responsive to the magnitude of reproductive-age women wherein this number would be reasonably lower in southern states vis-à-vis the northern states which needs to be accounted for in the comparison. Alternatively, the lifetime risk needs to be responsive to the levels of TFR that seems to be in place as it is very much in keeping with the pattern. For instance states like Bihar, UP, MP have greater life time risk of maternal death in comparison with other states.

Another verification of this outcome could be in terms of split share of deaths in reproductive years of life due to maternity and non-maternity. Here too there is a pattern match of this split share in peak ages of fertility which subscribes to the fact that maternal deaths are responsive to declining levels of reproduction. This engagement with produc-

tion of indicators concerning rare events like maternal mortality needs more caution given the rarity of the event and impracticality of increasing the sample size towards obtaining reasonable and trustworthy estimates. An obsessive, indiscriminate drive behind generating indicators in the current SDG environment has an oversight of evaluating indicators in terms of quality. A whole host of indicators generated are head-count indicators which are read temporally overlooking whether the trend emerging is owing to the change in the numerator/denominator. Such indicators being constructed based on a likelihood principle may well be in confrontation with magnitude of the phenomenon raising a debate on whether size or proportion matters? While indicators are ideally desirable to monitor progress, multiple indicators inform more but at the same time need mutual consistency as well, something which is largely overlooked in the race of generating indicators.

Udaya S Mishra, is Professor, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai. William Joe is Asst. Professor, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST
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Poll bugle

Sir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sounded poll bugle of sorts for the 2024 general elections through his road show in Delhi and through his address at the BJP national executive. The BJP cannot take things for granted and that's exactly what Modi seemed to convey in his address to the party executive. Asking the party to focus on the marginalised sections and minorities is, however, easier said than done, as seen in the backdrop of the party's record in taking these sections into confidence. The 15-25 age group, as one would expect, is Modi's favourite. One cannot dispute that the BJP government did plan big for the youth, but one has to search with weary eyes whether the paperwork has translated into action on the ground. The PM knows every seat will be hard work, and will be fought on his name. However, he has every reason to smile because the Opposition is neither here nor there. The BJP seems to tick two boxes vital for a political party to forge ahead: leadership and organisation through the third - Hindutva is debatable. Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Govt vs judiciary

Sir, The row over the appointment of judges is back on table. Ever since the proposal for NJAC (National Judicial Appointments Commission) was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2015, the contours of strained relationship between the government and the judiciary are visible. The argument of Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju that if the government is just to sign the file sent by the court vis-à-vis appointment of judges where is the need to send such files to the government is not untenable. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar has backed the contention of the law minister. The law minister has been asking for a representative from the government side in the collegium system. The Supreme Court judgment in the Keshavananda Bharati case that the basic structure of the Constitution should not be altered has been contested by the law minister. A full-fledged debate on the basic structure is necessary even though a good chunk of the 22 features of basic structure are not negotiable. The government is of the view that the Parliament can amend the basic structure of the Constitution. The government places sovereignty of the Parliament supreme in democracy and is also of the view that the Parliament cannot pass judgments and courts should not make laws. Making laws should be left to the Parliamentarians and the interpretation of the laws must rest with the courts. KV Seetharamaiah, BANGALORE

of the day quote

India can be developed when there are good crops in the fields and industries expand too



NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER

Judiciary works for the country and the Legislature and Executive also work for the nation. Without cooperation and coordination among them we cannot make the country a great nation



KIREN RIJU
UNION MINISTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE

However, I will request the NDRF that like in the past you have shown courage during disasters by even not caring for your comfort, not caring for your respect, you have gone beyond your call of duty, especially during Amphan and we saw the NDRF did so much to save Bengal, probably in the face of negative support it was getting



NITYANAND RAI
UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR HOME



Seeing the Bharat Jodo Yatra's success, the BJP is feeling scared. They keep saying one thing or the other against the Congress

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE
CONGRESS PRESIDENT

HIGH SPEED VANDE BHARAT TRAIN

The sleeper version of the Vande Bharat Express train, which has become a centre of attraction among railway passengers, will be designed to travel at a speed of 220 km per hour, officials said Thursday. These aluminum-made sleeper version trains, however, will run at a speed of 200 km per hour on the tracks, they said



Maliwal molested, dragged by car

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: Delhi Commission for Women chairperson Swati Maliwal Thursday alleged she was molested by a drunk man while she was on an inspection at night, and dragged by his car for 10-15 metres outside AIIMS here with her hand stuck in the vehicle's window.

The DCW chief said she inspecting the state of women security in Delhi along with her team, in the wake of the Kanjhawla hit-and-drag incident in which a 20-year-old woman was dragged to death while trapped under a car in the national capital.

Maliwal's team that was with her during the inspection was stationed at some distance. "Last night, I was inspecting the situation of women safety in Delhi. A car driver, in an inebriated condition, harassed me and when I caught hold of him, he rolled up the windowpane on my hand and dragged me along. God saved my life. If the chairperson of the women's commission is not safe in Delhi, one can then imagine the situation," she tweeted about the



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal targeted Lieutenant Governor Vinal Kumar Saxena over the issue while the National Commission for Women sought a report from police. A 47-year-old man living in south Delhi's Sangam Vihar has been arrested following the incident which took place in the early hours of the day

incident in Hindi. Later, the DCW issued a statement saying Maliwal was standing at a busstop on the Ring Road opposite AIIMS when the driver rolled down the window and asked her to sit in the car but she refused. The man stared at her for some time and left the spot but again approached her after a while. He again asked her to sit in his car but she again refused. He started making

lewd gestures towards her," it said. "When she approached him to reprimand him, he made a vulgar gesture towards her. When she tried to catch hold of him, he rolled up the window due to which Maliwal's hand got stuck in it. He then pressed the accelerator to drag her for several metres with the car. She somehow managed to escape," the statement added. Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Chandan Chowdhary said a patrol vehicle spotted her on the pavement opposite AIIMS around 3.05

SC Collegium okays elevation of judicial officers, advocates



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: The Supreme Court collegium has recommended the elevation of 17 advocates and three judicial officers as judges of three high courts - Madras High Court, Allahabad High Court, and Karnataka High Court.

A statement uploaded on the apex court website said: "The Supreme Court collegium in its meeting held January 17, 2023 has approved the proposal for elevation of the following advocates as Judges in the Madras High Court: Venkatachari Lakshminarayanan, Lekshmana Chandra Victoria Gowri, Pillaipakkam Bahukutumbi Balaji, Ramaswamy Neelakandan, and Kandhasami Kulandaivelu Ramakrishnan."

In another statement, the collegium said in its meeting held on

January 17 has approved the proposal for elevation of the following judicial officers as judges in the Madras High Court: Periyasamy Vadamalai, Ramachandran Kalaimathi, and K. Govindarajan Thilakavadi.

The collegium also approved the proposal for elevation of the following advocates as judges in the Allahabad High Court: Prashant Kumar, yed Qamar Hasan Rizvi, Manish Kumar Nigam, Manjive Shukla, Anish Kumar Gupta, Nand Prabha Shukla, Arun Kumar Singh Deshwal, Kshitij Shailendra, and Vinod Diwakar. "The Supreme Court Collegium in its meeting held on 17 January 2023 has approved the proposal for elevation of the following advocates as judges in the Karnataka High Court: Vijaykumar Adagouda Patil, Rajesh Rai Kallangala, and Tajali Moulasab Nadaf," said another statement.

All govt vehicles older than 15 yrs to be scrapped

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: From April 1, all vehicles owned by central and state governments, including buses owned by transport corporations and public sector undertakings, that are older than 15 years will be de-registered and scrapped, according to a notification by the Road Transport and Highways Ministry.

The rule shall not apply to the special purpose vehicles (armoured and other specialised vehicles) used for operational purposes for the defence of the country and for the maintenance of law and order and internal security, the notification said.

"Disposal of such vehicles shall, after the expiry of the fifteen years from the date of initial registration of the vehicle, (should) be ensured through the Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility set up in accordance with the Motor Vehicles (Registration and Functions of Vehicle Scrapping Facility) Rules, 2021," it said.

Announced in the Union Budget 2021-22, the policy provides for fitness tests after 20 years for personal vehicles, while commercial vehicles will require it after 15 years.

Under the new policy which is effective from April 1, 2022, the Centre has said states and Union Territories will provide up to 25 per cent tax rebate on road tax for vehicles that are purchased after scrapping old vehicles. Last year, Union minister Nitin Gadkari had said his aim is to develop at least one automobile scrapping facility within 150 kilometres from each city centre, while asserting that the country has the potential to become a vehicle scrapping hub of the entire South Asian region.



BJP supporters during the foundation stone laying ceremony of various development projects, in Yadgiri district. Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the projects

LAKHIMPUR KHERI VIOLENCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: An accused should not be incarcerated for an indefinite period unless he is proven to be guilty of an offence, the Supreme Court said Thursday while hearing the bail plea of Union Minister Ajay Kumar Mishra's son, who is one of the accused in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence case.

The top court said the worst victims in the case are those farmers languishing in jail and if Ashish Mishra is not granted anything, then they are also likely to remain in jail. Reserving its order on the bail plea, a bench of Justice Surya

An accused shouldn't be in jail for indefinite period: SC

Kant and Justice J K Maheshwari said it is a case of balancing the rights of the parties.

According to Uttar Pradesh Police FIR, four farmers were mowed down by an SUV, in which Ashish Mishra was seated. Following the incident, a driver and two BJP workers were allegedly lynched by angry farmers.

A journalist also died in the violence. "The state has a right to ensure there is a fair trial uninfluenced by extraneous circumstances. The state has a right because society has a lot of stakes involved. The accused has a right that unless he is proven to be guilty of the of-



fence, he should not be incarcerated for an indefinite period." "To us, this is not one petitioner before us. My principle has been for the last 19 years that I never see the victim who is before me, I also see the victims who cannot come to court and they are the worst victims. You want us to open our

mouths. The worst victims are those farmers who are also languishing in jail. Who is going to look after them? If this man is not granted anything, then nobody is going to grant them. They will remain in jail for times to come. The trial court has already rejected their bail," Justice Kant observed orally.

Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for those opposing the bail plea, said he was surprised and disappointed at this comparison by the court. The top court said this is a case which requires further monitoring by this court and it was inclined to do that.

CBI conducts raids in J'khand, Bengal

New Delhi: The CBI Thursday conducted searches at the premises of businessman Amit Agarwal after booking him for allegedly registering a false case against a petitioner who had levelled money laundering charges against him and Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, officials said. The searches took place in Jharkhand, and Kolkata in West Bengal, they said.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice No.: Sr.DMM/SBP/Stores/
Tender Publication/07, Date: 18.01.2023

Tender No. 40235034

DESCRIPTION OF ITEM : SUPPLY, INSTALLATION & COMMISSIONING OF UTS CUM PRS (WITH MODERNISED PRS) THIN CLIENTS WITH 18.5 INCH MONITOR OR HIGHER ETC.

Tender Value : ₹29,73,600/-, EMD @ 2% : ₹59,470/-

Tender Closing Date & Time : At 1500 hrs. of 13.02.2023.

E-Tender is not transferable and the same is to be submitted with DSC by the pre authorized personnel of the tenderer who are already registered in the website. The Railway deserves the Right to cancel the tender or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Complete details available at : www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Materials Manager / PR-923/N/22-23 | Sambalpur

JOSHIMATH CRISIS

Land subsidence shatters many business dreams

As per hoteliers and tour operators, since the crisis of "sinking Joshimath" occurred, tourists have stopped coming to the picturesque locale

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Joshimath (Uttarakhand), Jan 19: The hotel owner, the shopkeeper, the laundry owner, the roadside vendor... Hundreds of people watch in dismay as rapidly deepening cracks write the epitaph of their businesses and homes in a sinking town that was bustling till just a few weeks ago. Their dreams for the future shattered, small businesspersons in the Himalayan town of Joshimath wonder how their lives could have been

upended so completely - and so fast. Suraj Kapruwan, a hotel management graduate who left his well-paying job in Mumbai and returned to Joshimath a few years ago to set up a laundry business, remembers the exact moment his plans for the future crumbled.

It was January 2 when land subsidence led to hairline wall fissures widening with a distant rumbling noise heard in some places, leading to gaping cracks in houses, streets and other establishments of the town of nearly 23,000 people. "The disaster shattered my dreams. Tourists have stopped coming here, and bookings have been cancelled. I had to let go of my staff of nine people," an emotional Kapruwan told PTI.

He set up a laundry to cash in on the booming tourist business of the town, which acts as a gateway to sev-



eral Himalayan mountain climbing expeditions, trekking trails, and pilgrim centres such as Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib, and also the Valley of Flowers, a UNESCO world heritage site.

Carefully calibrated plans for the future have collapsed into nothingness, said residents of this picturesque town. Suraj Singh, who moved to Joshimath from a village about 30 km away so his children could go to a better school, had set up a shop near the Joshimath-Auli ropeway selling trekking shoes, jackets and other equipment to

tourists. But as the land sank, wide cracks appeared near the ropeway to the ski destination, thronged by visitors in this season. Operation of the ropeway was suspended last week when land subsidence aggravated.

Vivek Rawat, the owner of a restaurant near the two hotels dangerously leaning towards each other, said tourists have stopped coming since word spread about the land sinking.

The hotels, Malari Inn and Mount View, have been declared unsafe and are being dismantled.

After the January 2 subsidence, his house was one of those totally damaged. His family of six have shifted to a shelter home provided by the authorities. "We didn't bring this upon us. The government allowed the NTPC to dig a tunnel here," said Vyapar Mandal Sangh's Bhandari.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

NATIONAL HIGHWAY DIVISION, BERHAMPUR

E-mail id: eenhbam@gmail.com

INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) e-Procurement

Bid Identification No.EE-NH-BAM/09

No.219 Date:18.01.2023

No.4-41:1. Executive Engineer, N.H. Division, Berhampur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in Single Cover System in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for construction of Road/Building work as detailed in the table below.2) Nature of Work: Road, 3) No. of Work: 1 No., 4) Tender Cost: Rs.6000/-, 5) Class of Contractor: B' Class and C' Class, 6) Availability of Bid document in portal: 24.01.2023 to 05.00 PM of 31.01.2023, 7) Date of Opening of Bid: 01.02.2023 at 11 A.M. 8) The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>. 9) Any Corrigendum/ Addendum/ Cancellation of will be displayed in the e-tender website only.

Sd./- Executive Engineer
N.H. Division, Berhampur

OIPR-34082/11/0001/2223

LIVING WITH DISABILITY

High fluoride in water takes its toll on villages

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambhar (Rajasthan), Jan 19: Two cousins, one 18 and the other six, struggling with deformed limbs and stunted growth, and several others, including toddlers and elders, in the joint family coping with frequent joint pains – knowing the water they drink could be the reason but doing so anyway because there are no options.

That's the story of not just Singh family but others as well in the villages of Devpura and Moondwara in Rajasthan's Sambhar block, about 80 km from the Sambhar salt lake, India's largest inland salt lake. The villagers, many of them unlettered, blame the lake water that has contaminated the groundwater as the main reason for high salinity and fluoride content in drinking water.

According to Om Prakash Sharma, head of the NGO Gram Chetna Kendra that works in the area, disability in the two villages about 50 km from Jaipur averages about 10 in 1,000. The national number is 5 in 1,000 people. That is almost double the normal average, he pointed out.

The disability is directly linked to high fluoride content in the area, a fact backed by studies, he said. Long term effects of skeletal fluorosis takes place if the fluoride level in water is more than 1 mg/litre, said Dr Aman Dua, director, joint replacement and orthopaedics, at Delhi's Fortis Escorts hospital.

"So there is widening of bones, deformities in joints and the symptoms are specially marked in the



IN 2019, THOUSANDS OF MIGRATORY BIRDS OF ABOUT TEN SPECIES WERE FOUND DEAD AROUND SAMBHAR LAKE WITH OFFICIALS ATTRIBUTING WATER CONTAMINATION AS ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THE DEATHS

THE SITUATION HAS WORSENERD IN THE LAST TWO DECADES, SAID HARISH SINGH, A PHOTOGRAPHER WHOSE TWO CHILDREN SUFFER FROM DISABILITIES

spinal column where they may lead to nerve compression and weakening of limbs because of long term use," he said.

According to a Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) report, high fluoride in groundwater in Jaipur district where the villages are located is a matter of great concern with fluoride concentration going up to 16.4 mg/litre in some places at Sambhar block against the permissible 1mg/l. In the Sambhar lake itself, it is 2.41 mg/l.

The signs are there for all to see. In the Singh household in Devpura village, Lalita, who is now 18, said she was just five when her mother noticed she could not straighten her hand. The disability soon spread and her leg, too, got deformed over the years. Her speech also started slurring.

"Doctors were not sure what happened to me. There was something wrong with my bones and

muscles," Lalita, who struggles to speak, said.

Her mother Shanti Devi points to the pump from where the family gets their water. It looks clear to begin with but collect it in a container and the salt soon settles at the bottom. "The drinking water we get here is saline. This is leading to pain in different parts of the body – hands, legs. Our children are becoming disabled at different ages, some at six months, some at 12 months, some at five years," Shanti Devi said.

The government, she added, started a pipeline to connect them to a different source but did not finish work on it so they continue to be dependent on groundwater. The joint family of 13 lives in Devpura, about 50 km from Jaipur. And nothing has changed for them since Lalita's disability was first noticed 13 years ago.

Erode bypolls to be testing time for AIADMK

The AIADMK which is battered and bruised following successive defeats since the 2019 general elections has a chance to prove its mettle by wresting the Erode Assembly seat from the Congress

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 19: With the Tamil Nadu Assembly secretariat notifying vacancy in Erode Assembly constituency, political parties have commenced preparations for the ensuing bypolls.

The Assembly secretariat issued the vacancy notification on January 11 and by-elections have to be mandatorily held for the seat within six months of notification. Demise of the sitting Congress MLA Thirumagan Evera following a massive heart attack necessitated the by-election. It may be noted that the deceased Congress leader was the son of former Union min-

ister and senior Congress leader E.V.K.S. Elangovan and closely related to the Dravidian ideologue, late E.V.Ramasamy Periyar or Thanthai Periyar who is held in high esteem by the Dravidian political parties of Tamil Nadu.

The AIADMK which is battered and bruised following successive defeats since the 2019 general elections, has a chance to prove its mettle by wresting the Erode Assembly seat from the Congress.

In the 2021 Assembly polls, it was A. Yuvaraj of the Tamil Mania Congress who contested the polls against Thirumagan Evera in the two-symbol ticket of AIADMK but lost. However, the AIADMK will



work hard to ensure victory for the NDA candidate, and the possibility of the party itself contesting the poll is higher.

The Erode assembly by-election will be a major opportunity for the AIADMK interim general secretary, Edappadi K. Palaniswami (EPS) to prove his mettle as he has been in negative news following the removal of former Chief Minister, O. Panneerselvam (OPS) from the party.

Dr Ayub Khan, Director of Socio-Economic Development Foundation, a think tank based out of Madurai while speaking to IANS said, "Erode by-election is significant for AIADMK and more particularly for EPS as he has to prove his worth within the party as well as with OPS, Sasikala and TTV Dhinakaran who were all expelled from the party. With the estranged leaders trying to make a comeback and to capture the AIADMK, it is for EPS to prove that the party and the front would wrest the Erode seat from Congress."

He said that the powerful leaders of the AIADMK, the late M.G. Ramachandran (MGR) and J. Jayalalithaa had taken challenges and turned the tide in their favour thus making them immortal. The social scientist also said that if EPS can wrest the seat from the DMK-led front, then he can emerge as a powerful leader in Tamil Nadu politics.

High pollution levels in Chennai rivers: TNPCB

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 19: The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB), in its water analysis study report, said that the three major rivers of Chennai - Cooum, Adayar, and Buckingham Canal - have high levels of pollution and are unfit for any kind of life form.

The TNPCB study report stated that in a study carried out in 41 locations of these three rivers, dissolved oxygen was not found. The analysis states that dissolved solids every month is between 700 and 500 mg per litre, and faecal matter was found to be between 70-300 mg per litre in every sample. The coliform presence is between 300 and 1500 mg per litre.

TNPCB Member Secretary R. Kannan told media persons that they have been collecting samples and testing them and sending the sample reports to the departments concerned. The state government had commenced the river restoration project with a huge budget of ₹3,400 crore in 2015 and the Chennai River Restoration Trust is coordinating the work.

Chennai-based think tank Centre for Policy and Development Studies Director C. Rajeev said: "The report clearly indicates that sewage is a major cause of pollution in the rivers and this has to be accounted for to



reduce pollution of rivers and prevent these rivers from dying. The government should install online monitoring systems to have a vigil on pollution."

He also said that heavy penalties must be levied on polluters. According to environmental sci-

entists, the biological oxygen demand (BOD) in treated water must be below 20 to ensure that more organic matter is not let into the rivers. The BOD is much above 56 near the Nesapakam and Perungudi sewage treatment plants.

No end in sight to Cong, BJP leadership muddle

THE TUSSELE BETWEEN GEHLOT AND PILOT OVER THE CM'S CHAIR IS AN OPEN SECRET NOW, WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON CONTINUOUSLY SINCE THE JULY 2020 REBELLION BY THE PILOT CAMP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Jan 19: As Assembly elections near in Rajasthan, the confusion over leadership seems to be growing for both the ruling Congress and opposition BJP in the desert state.

While former CM Vasundhara Raje is maintaining a distance from BJP's much-talked about 'Janakrosh Yatra', the Congress too is battling the confusing situation arising post the September 25 (2022) incident, when MLAs from Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's camp convened a parallel meeting after the Congress high command called an official meeting to decide on the leadership change issue in the state.

Due to lack of clarity from the high command of both the parties, there is confusion and tussle at the internal level of the two outfits. And its effects can be seen in the programmes and preparations of the Congress and the BJP in an election year.

The tussle between Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot over the CM's chair is an open secret now, which has been going on continuously since the July 2020 rebellion by the Pilot camp. At the same time, after the resignation politics on

September 25, when 91 Congress MLAs submitted their resignation letters to the Assembly speaker, the cracks seem to have widened.

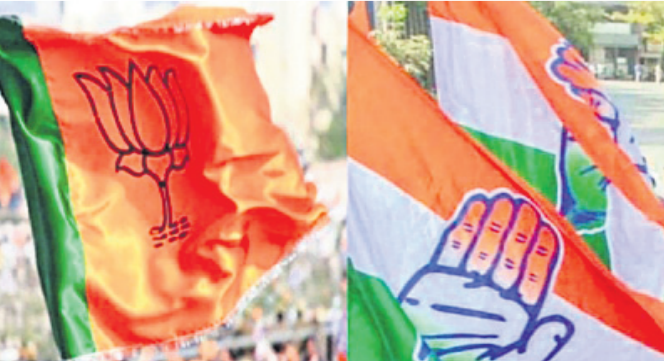
In the meantime, Assembly elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh have ended and the Bharat Jodo Yatra too has passed through Rajasthan. But the party high command did not take any decision on the leadership issue. Even till date, no clarity has been given by the top Congress leadership to resolve the Gehlot-Pilot issue.

Senior Congress leaders have been continuously making statements, describing both Gehlot and Pilot as assets for the party. However, none has confirmed that Gehlot shall stay as the CM till the time the state goes to the polls at the end of this year, or if Pilot can be made the Chief Minister before the elections.

Congress sources say that the party is studying the circumstances and shall take a decision accordingly. The tussle and confusion at the upper level of Congress is affecting the leaders and workers at the lower level. In an election year, leaders are confused about asking for tickets and other responsibilities. This is because the workers still feel that the CM can change.

On the other hand, if the CM does not change, the post of state president or chairman of the campaigning committee can go to the Pilot camp. Similarly, due to the lack of clarity regarding leadership in the BJP, the party workers at the lower level are not able to clear their mindset.

In view of the upcoming elections, there is already a lot of confusion over BJP's CM face. Many contenders, including former CM Vasundhara Raje, Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, state unit chief Satish Poonia, leader of opposition Gulabchand Kataria are in the fray for the top post.



Chennai policemen launch crackdown on drug peddlers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 19: The Greater Chennai Police have commenced operation to detect and prevent drug smuggling in the city and surrounding areas after arrest of a man who used to sell ganja-laced chocolates.

On Wednesday, the police have arrested Surendra Yadav, who used to sell ganja-laced chocolates to even children from his shop in Triplicane and recovered seven kg contraband from his shop.

After Yadav's arrest, the police formed several teams and commenced a crackdown on the ganja and other drug peddlers in the city. There has been an increase in the usage of drugs in Chennai city and this has led to the arrest and counselling of those who have been using the drug.

A senior officer of the Chennai police said that highly-toxic synthetic drugs are in circulation in Chennai and the police is trying to unearth the source of these drugs.

The arrest of peddlers is only the tip of the iceberg and the real



culprits are sitting somewhere else and managing the show in Chennai city.

The source of most of the synthetic drugs like MDMA is reaching Chennai from states as far as West Bengal and Bihar.

However, with the arrest of the peddlers, most of these drug seizures are forgotten leading to new peddlers arriving at the market.

The special police teams have

arrested a few drug peddlers and are questioning them to ascertain the source of these drugs.

While there are reports of the former operatives of LTTE being involved in the smuggling of these drugs, after the arrest of Satkunam alias Sabesan, a former top intelligence operative of the LTTE, police said that the former LTTE operatives were not directly involved in drug smuggling.

Kota factory a high-paying consumer of its own products

Annual packages ranging from ₹50 lakhs to over ₹2 crore, a fast career growth, a stable job and work-life balance are among the forces that attract fresh engineering and medical graduates to the top coaching institutes rather than to big corporates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kota (Rajasthan), Jan 19: From aspirants to students to teachers! The coaching hub of Kota is not only transforming JEE and NEET aspirants into IIT, NIT and medical students, but also hiring some of them back as teachers once they complete their education, giving them salaries that many in corporate jobs in big cities would envy.

Annual packages ranging from ₹50 lakhs to over ₹2 crore, a fast career growth, a stable job and work-life balance are among the forces that attract fresh engineering and medical graduates to the top coaching institutes here rather than to big corporates.

RK Verma, Managing Director and Academic Head at Resonance, a prominent coaching institute, said his institute runs an extensive training programme for fresh graduates who are hired from IITs and NITs.

"We hire around 150 fresh graduates in a year, mostly from IITs and some from NITs. This is not a new experiment but a very successful model. The candidates have different driving forces – a handsome salary, a good career growth and a stable life," Verma said.

He said when they go to colleges for hiring they look for teaching aptitude. "Many of these graduates had already begun teaching when they were in college. With the boom



of the online medium, many of them upload their videos explaining certain concepts. We look for these factors while hiring," Verma said.

Verma said the coaching institute then take them through a rigorous training programme to prepare them the challenges ahead. "They don't start teaching from first day," Verma said. "They are trained to match up with the standards of those already teaching. Mock sessions, doubt classes,

individual mentorship – the fresh graduates work on these areas during one year of training."

The trainees are paid a stipend of ₹6-8 lakh per annum. But once they complete the training, the salaries offered ranges anything from ₹25 to ₹50 lakh which can go up to ₹2 crore within a span of two-three years, depending upon the performance and results, he said.

A spokesperson for coaching giant Allen Career Institute said the

majority of fresh graduates hired by them are their former students. "We hire fresh graduates as trainees and retain them after successful completion of the training. Majority of them are our former students only and they like the city," he said.

Once an industrial hub, Kota is now home to a ₹6,000-crore coaching industry. Over two lakh students move to Kota annually for preparing for competitive exams such as the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE) for engineering and the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to medical colleges.

According to Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras, 13 of their students have already been hired by various coaching institutes during the ongoing placement drives. Similarly, 22 students from IIT Guwahati were hired by coaching institutes last year (2021-22). The numbers for 2022-23 session aren't available yet, the institute said.

708 Mohalla clinics soon

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 19: Based on Delhi model, the Tamil Nadu health department plans to set up a total of 708 Mohalla clinics across the state by February.

State Health Minister, Ma Subramanian, in a statement said that the work for 500 such clinics is over and the rest are nearing completion. Each Mohalla clinic will have a doctor, nurse, and pharmacist.

The clinics will provide 12 services that include maternal and child health, communicable and non-communicable disease services, Ophthalmic care, palliative care, and ear, nose, and tongue treatment among other services. These Urban Health and Wellness Centres planned on the line of Delhi's Mohalla clinics have been completed in a period of ten months.

It may be recalled that Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had visited the Mohalla clinics in New Delhi in April 2022 and was highly impressed by the reach of these institutions for serving the public. He had announced the opening of such clinics in Tamil Nadu and within a year of his announcement, 500 clinics are ready in Tamil Nadu to com-



These Urban Health and Wellness Centres planned on the line of Delhi's Mohalla clinics have been completed in a period of ten months

mence operations.

Other than the Mohalla clinics, the Tamil Nadu health department has been actively involved in health to door steps scheme as well as trauma and accident care schemes in full swing.

The state government is providing an amount of ₹1 lakh for treatment in the first 48 hours at designated hospitals, to accident victims irrespective of their domicile status under the "Innuvir Kappom Thittam-Nammai Kakkum 48" scheme launched in 2021.



The central government has stopped scholarships for students of OBC and other minorities. But don't be worried. We will be providing the same grant to them

SLIGHT RELIEF

Cold wave conditions abated in some parts of north India Thursday and another bout of intense cold is unlikely during the next five days, the India Meteorological Department said.



of the day quote

You sat with me in Lok Sabha (when Mann was an MP). There is a huge difference between you and Arvind Kejriwal ji. I respect you and I am saying this from the stage of the Congress party. But Punjab should not be run from Delhi

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Wherever I go, I see smiles on faces of people as they have received the benefits of the BJP's double-engine government (in the state and at the Centre). The kind of response we are receiving from the people, I am sure that the BJP will win over 50 seats

MANIK SAHA | TRIPURA CM

We had promised that after coming to power, a probe into the scams will be done and the guilty will be punished so that trust of people in the system is maintained

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM

SHORT TAKES

Tribals clash with police

Ranchi: Five security personnel including Mahagama's SDPO Shivshankar Tiwari and about a dozen villagers were injured in a clash between security forces and local tribals Thursday during the demarcation of land for the ECL coal project in Godda district.

Major fire breaks out in 5-storey building

Hyderabad: A major fire broke out in a five-storey building in Secunderabad here Thursday and authorities evacuated residents of the adjoining buildings as the blaze did not subside even after five hours of fire-fighting.

Farooq to join Rahul during BJY

Jammu: Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and president of National Conference, Farooq Abdullah Thursday travelled to Lakhapur in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district to receive Rahul Gandhi during the Congress' Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Partha's judicial custody extended

Kolkata: A special Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court here Thursday extended the judicial custody of former West Bengal Education Minister and Trinamool Congress secretary general Partha Chatterjee till February 2 in connection to the multi-crore teachers' recruitment scam in the state.

WFI SEXUAL HARASSMENT ROW

THE OPPOSITION PARTY'S ATTACK CAME AFTER STAR WRESTLER VINESH PHOGAT WEDNESDAY ALLEGED THAT THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD SEXUALLY HARASSED WOMEN WRESTLERS FOR YEARS, A CHARGE VEHEMENTLY REJECTED BY THE SPORTS ADMINISTRATOR

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi should break his "silence" on the allegations of sexual harassment against BJP MP and Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the Congress said Thursday.

Several leaders, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Jairam Ramesh and Pawan Khera, spoke on the issue.

"Our players are the pride of the country. They bring laurels to the country by their performance at the world level," Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

'BBC documentary a propaganda piece'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 19: The government Thursday criticised a BBC series on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, terming it "a biased propaganda piece".

"The documentary is a reflection on the agency that has made it. We think it is a propaganda piece designed to push a particular discredited narrative. The bias, lack of objectivity and continuing colonial mindset are blatantly visible.

Last year in June, the Supreme Court dismissed a plea filed by Zakia Jafri, widow of former Congress MP Ehsan Jafri, challenging a clean chit given by the Special Investigation Team to then

AAP MLAs hold protest, demand suspension of CS, other officers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: AAP MLAs held a protest in the Delhi Assembly premises Thursday demanding the suspension of the chief secretary and the secretaries of the health and finance departments for allegedly sabotaging the works of Delhi government at the behest of Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena.

The MLAs gathered under the Gandhi statue inside the Vidhan Sabha premises and raised slogans against the LG, accusing him of undermining the elected government and causing harm to the public.

Senior AAP leader and MLA Atishi said, "Today we have gathered to protest outside the Vidhan Sabha as through IAS officers

PM must speak up: Cong



Wrestlers Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia address a press conference after a meeting with officials of Union Sports Ministry regarding their protest against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) in New Delhi

NCP demands resignation of Brij Bhushan



Mumbai: The Nationalist Congress Party Thursday demanded the resignation of Wrestling Federation of India president and BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh "Women wrestlers who have won laurels for our country are protesting at Jantar Mantar in Delhi to seek justice for themselves for all the wrongdoings meted against them by the Wrestling Federation of India."

leaders committing atrocities against women is endless," added Ramesh, the Congress' general secretary in-charge communications.

"Mr PM, was 'Beti Bachao' a warning to save daughters from BJP leaders? India is waiting for an answer," he said on Twitter. Why are all those who oppress women members of the BJP, Ramesh went on to ask.

"Yesterday, you said that a better environment has been created for sports in the past eight years. Is this the 'better environment', in which even our daughters who

bring laurels to the country are unsafe?" Ramesh said. Inaugurating a sports event in Uttar Pradesh via video conferencing Wednesday, Modi said, "Many talents remained away from the field. But in the last eight years, the country has left behind this old thinking. Work has been done to create a better environment for sports, so now more children and youths are looking at sports as a career option."

proved to be hollow. "Wrestlers are staging a sit-in. Where is that senior woman minister, where is she when such a serious matter has come to light," she said, without naming anyone.

The two-part BBC documentary "India: The Modi Question" claims it investigated certain aspects relating to the 2002 Gujarat riots when PM Modi was the CM of the state

Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi and several others in the 2002 Gujarat riots. The Supreme Court had said the case was "devoid of merits" and was filed "obviously for ulterior design".

Strangers approach children online very easily: Study

According to some parents, of the children indicating cases of online solicitations and abuse 40% were adolescent girls within 14-18 years, closely followed by adolescent boys (33%) in the same age group

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 19: Nearly 33 per cent of the 424 parents who took part in a survey reported that their children were approached by strangers via online platforms soliciting friendships, seeking personal and family details and broaching up sexual advice, according to a new report.

Apart from the 424 parents from Maharashtra, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh, the participants also included 384 teachers from the four states and 107 other stakeholders from three states (West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra). According to the parents, of the children indi-

Wrestlers demand new federation

New Delhi: Three-time CWG medallist and BJP leader Babita Phogat Thursday came with a "message" from the government and assured the grapplers that their demands will be met after elite wrestlers insisted that WFI be disbanded.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here, Congress' media department head Pawan Khera said Singh's resignation should have come Wednesday itself.

PEE-GATE CASE

AI imposes 4-month flying ban on Mishra



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: Air India has imposed a four-month flying ban on Shankar Mishra, who is accused of urinating on a woman co-passenger onboard a flight in November last year, a source said Thursday.

The incident happened on an Air India flight from New York to Delhi November 26, 2022. Currently, Mishra is in jail and the case is before a Delhi court. He was allegedly in an inebriated state at the time of the incident.

On January 4, Air India said it had imposed a 30-day travel ban on Mishra but did not disclose the specific date from which the ban came into force. DGCA has issued show cause notices to the accountable manager of Air India, its director in-flight services, all the pilots and cabin crew members of that flight as to why enforcement action should not be taken against them for dereliction of their regulatory obligations.

Flight takes off without passengers

Amritsar/New Delhi: As many as 32 passengers missed their Scoot flight after its departure from Amritsar to Singapore was rescheduled Wednesday and aviation regulator DGCA has sought a report from the airline on the incident, officials said Thursday.

responsible for informing the regulator within 12 hours of landing of the aircraft in case of any incident of unruly passengers/ passenger rage/misconduct reported in their flight, the statement said.



Tents of pilgrims during month-long 'Magh Mela' in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

Maha:10 killed in truck-van collision

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 19: Ten people were killed after a speeding truck collided with their van on Mumbai-Goa highway in Maharashtra's Raigad district Thursday morning, police said.

The accident took place at 4.45 am near Repoli village in Raigad, located more than 130 km from Mumbai. The victims, all relatives, were going in the van to Guhagar town in Ratnagiri district, Superintendent of Police Somnath Gharge said.

The victims were residents of Hedvi village in Guhagar, he said. After being alerted, police rushed to the spot and started the rescue operation.



Ten people were killed, including a four-year-old boy who succumbed to injuries at a hospital, officials said.

A 12-year-old girl and three women were also among the deceased, they said. The bodies were sent to a government hospital for post-mortem, the police said.

international

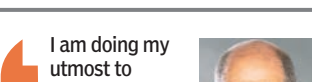
of the day quote

Defeat of a nuclear power in a conventional war may trigger a nuclear war



DMITRY MEDVEDEV | FORMER RUSSIAN PRESIDENT

The government is deeply troubled by the delays in China resolving espionage allegations against Chinese-Australian Yang Hengjun



PENNY WONG | AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER

I am doing my utmost to ensure that the free trade agreements we have successfully negotiated with Canada, Korea, Japan, New Zealand, and Chile will soon be followed by new ones: with MERCOSUR, India, and Indonesia



OLAF SCHOLZ | GERMAN CHANCELLOR

SHORT TAKES

Russia, China to hold naval drills

Johannesburg: Russia and China will conduct naval drills in the Indian Ocean off the coast of South Africa next month in another indication of their strengthening relationships with Africa's most developed country amid the war in Ukraine and global financial uncertainty. The South African armed forces said Thursday that they and the Russian and Chinese navies will engage in "a multinational maritime exercise" from February 17-27 off South Africa's east coast near the cities of Durban and Richards Bay.

15 soldiers die

Yerevan (Armenia): A fire at a military base in Armenia early on Thursday killed at least 15 soldiers, the Defence Ministry said. The fire swept through a military barracks in the village of Azat, in Gegharkunik province, eastern Armenia. The authorities said that seven soldiers were injured, and three of them remained in grave condition. Armenian Defence Minister Suren Papikyan said at a Cabinet meeting that the fire erupted because soldiers used gasoline to fuel a stove.

HK to scrap isolation rule

Hong Kong: Hong Kong will scrap its mandatory isolation rule for people infected with COVID-19 starting January 30 as part of its strategy to return the semi-autonomous Chinese city to normalcy, the city's leader said Thursday. For most of the pandemic over the last three years, Hong Kong has aligned itself with mainland China's "zero COVID" strategy, requiring those who test positive to undergo quarantine.

Germany, US at odds over tanks

REUTERS

Kyiv/Berlin, Jan 19: Western allies pledged billions of dollars in new weapons for Ukraine Thursday, but the big question of whether to send heavy tanks remained unanswered, with Berlin yet to signal whether it would lift a veto.

Fearing winter will give Russian forces time to regroup and unleash a major attack, Ukraine is pushing for German-made Leopard battle tanks, which are held by an array of NATO nations but whose transfer to Ukraine requires Germany's approval.

A German government source said Berlin would lift its objections if Washington sends its own Abrams tanks. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, a Social Democrat, has been reluctant to send weapons seen as provoking Moscow. Many of Berlin's Western allies say that concern is misplaced, with Russia already fully committed to war.

The two countries tried to resolve the stand-off as U.S. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and the new German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius met in Berlin. But there was no word on whether they had made progress ahead of a meeting of dozens of allies on Friday at Ramstein, Washington's main European air base.



German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius receives his US counterpart, Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin for talks, at the Defence Ministry in Berlin, Germany

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made thinly disguised criticism of Germany for its stance on tanks. "I am powerful in Europe, I will help if someone else outside of Europe will also help." It seems to me that this is not a very correct strategy," he said.

The Ramstein meeting is billed as a chance for the West to give Ukraine what it needs to defeat Russia in 2023 and countries including Canada, the Netherlands and Sweden have already announced armoured vehicles and air defences. But Kyiv says it needs

heavy tanks to fend off Russian assaults and recapture occupied land.

"We have no time, the world does not have this time," Andriy Yermak, head of the Ukrainian presidential administration, wrote on Telegram on Thursday. "The question of tanks for Ukraine must be closed as soon as possible," he said. "We are paying for the slowness with the lives of our Ukrainian people. It shouldn't be like that."

Berlin has so far blocked allies from sending its Leopard 2 tanks, workhorse of militaries across

- ▶ Germany's Leopard tanks seen as best suited for Ukraine
- ▶ All eyes on Germany when defence leaders meet on Friday
- ▶ Austin in Germany, to meet new defence minister
- ▶ Russia's Wagner mercenaries claim to capture village

Europe. Washington and many Western allies say the Leopards - which Germany made in the thousands during the Cold War - are the only suitable option available in big enough numbers.

U.S. officials say they have no plans yet to send the Abrams, which runs on powerful turbine engines seen as using too much fuel for Kyiv's strained logistics system to supply at the front.

Pistorius and Austin both spoke about the importance of supporting Ukraine ahead of their meeting, but neither addressed the tank issue directly. At a ceremony after being sworn in, Pistorius said: "These are not normal times, we have a war raging in Europe. Russia is waging a brutal war of annihilation on a sovereign country, on Ukraine."

NK sustains high defence spending with new budget

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul (South Korea), Jan 19: North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament has passed a budget that sustains a high level of defence spending despite the country's economic troubles as leader Kim Jong Un pushes for an aggressive expansion of his nuclear arsenal.

State media reports indicated Kim didn't attend the Supreme People's Assembly's two-day session that ended on Wednesday. Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency didn't mention any comments by assembly members toward the United States or South Korea in Thursday's report on the meetings.

The assembly convened weeks after Kim called for an "exponential increase" of nuclear warheads, mass production of battlefield tactical nuclear weapons targeting "enemy" South Korea and the development of more advanced intercontinental ballistic missiles designed to reach the US mainland.

His statements during a major political conference in December underscored an intensifying nuclear standoff with the United States and its allies in Asia after he pushed North Korea's weapons tests to a record pace in 2022.

The North fired more than 70 missiles last year, including multiple ICBM launches, and conducted a series of tests it described as simulated nuclear attacks on South Korea and US targets.



JOY IN THE AIR: A dragon dance performance is seen ahead of the Lunar New Year celebration in Bangkok

Greta visit spotlights lack of climate action

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Davos, Jan 19: Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg Thursday slammed corporate bigwigs meeting in Davos, Switzerland, for "fuelling the destruction of the planet" by investing in fossil fuels and prioritizing short-term profits over people affected by the climate crisis.

Thunberg was joined by prominent young activists Vanessa Nakate, Helena Gualinga, and Luisa Neubauer in a roundtable with International Energy Agency Executive Director Fatih Birol at the World Economic Forum's annual gathering.

Nakate, who at one point choked up, said "leaders are playing games" with people's futures. People in parts of the world most affected by climate change are "clinging to



their lives and just trying to make it for another day, to make it for another week, to make it for another hour, another minute", she said.

Gualinga, an Ecuadorian indigenous campaigner, said the world is "taking a really dangerous path". The activists brought a "cease and desist" letter calling on the heads

of fossil fuel companies to stop all new oil and natural gas projects, signed by nearly 900,000 people. Scientists say no new fossil fuel projects can be built if the world is to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) in line with climate goals set in Paris in 2015. Nakate

Macron to proceed with pension reform

ASSOCIATED PRESS



French high school students block the access to the Lycee Turgot in Paris during a nationwide day of strike and protests against French government's pension reform plan in France. The placards read 'No planet, no pension' and 'Police everywhere, pension nowhere'

Paris, Jan 19: Hundreds of thousands protested on the streets of Paris and other French cities on Thursday amid nationwide strikes against plans to raise the retirement age, but President Emmanuel Macron insisted he would press ahead with the proposed pension reforms.

Nationwide strikes severely disrupted transport, schools and other public services across France. During a news conference at a French-Spanish summit in Barcelona, Spain, Macron said that "we must do that reform" to "save" the pension system. "We will do it with respect, in a spirit of dialogue but also determination and responsibility," he added.

As Macron spoke, riot police pushed back against some protesters throwing projectiles on the sidelines of the largely peaceful Paris march. The incident appeared to quickly get back under control. French workers would have to work longer before receiving a pension under the new rules - with the nominal retirement age rising from 62 to 64.

In a country with an aging population and growing life expectancy where everyone receives a state pension, Macron's government says the reform is the only way to keep the system solvent. Unions argue the pension overhaul threatens hard-fought rights, and propose a tax on the wealthy or more payroll contributions from employers to finance the pension system. Polls suggest most French people also oppose the reform. More than 200 rallies were staged

around France on Thursday, including a large one in Paris involving all France's major unions. Jean Paul Cachina, 56, a worker in human resources, joined the march in the French capital - a first ever for him.

"I am not here for myself," he said. "I am here to defend the youth and workers doing demanding jobs. I work in the construction industry sector and I'm a firsthand witness of the suffering of employees." Many young people were among the Paris crowd, chanting "the youth is protesting. Macron you are finished."

High school student unions had urged members to join the protests. Nathan Arsac, 19, a student and member of the UNEF union, said: "I'm afraid of what's going to happen next. Losing our social achievements could happen so fast. I'm scared of the future when I'll be older and have to retire."

Sylvie Béchar, a 59-year-old nurse, said she joined the march because "we, healthcare workers, are physically exhausted." "The only thing we have is demonstrating and to block the economy of the country," she added.

The economic cost of the strikes was not immediately clear. The government worries that a big show of resistance Thursday could encourage unions to continue with protracted walkouts that could hobble the economy just as France is struggling against inflation and trying to boost growth. Police unions opposed to the retirement reform also took part in the protests, while those on duty braced for potential violence should extremist groups join the demonstrations.

Two killed, many hurt in stampede

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Baghdad, Jan 19: A stampede outside a stadium in southern Iraq Thursday killed at least two people and injured dozens, a health official said.

The deadly incident happened as spectators gathered to attend the final match in the first international soccer tournament held in the country in four decades. The official Iraqi News Agency said some of the 60 people who were injured outside the Basra International Stadium were in critical condition.

A physician at Basra General Hospital told The Associated Press that two people were killed and 38 were injured, some of whom have been discharged from the hospital. The physician spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to the media.

Iraq's Interior Ministry in a statement urged people without tickets for the final match to leave the stadium area. It said the stadium was full and that all gates have been closed. Iraq's new Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, who arrived in Basra on Thursday, urged people to help authorities in order to "show the final match of 25th edition of the Gulf Cup in its most beautiful form."

Later, the Iraqi News Agency reported that giant screens were placed in different public places, as well as another stadium in Basra, so that people can watch the match. The game in the eight-nation Arabian Gulf Cup will see Iraq play Oman later Thursday. The Oman Football Association said Omani citizens who are currently at Basra's airport will start returning home for their own safety and in order to help Iraqi authorities make the final match "successful."

New Zealand's Ardern, an icon to many, to step down

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wellington, Jan 19: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who was one of the first members of her generation elected as a national leader and became a global icon of the left, said on Thursday she was leaving office after five and a half years.

Ardern was praised around the world for her handling of the nation's worst-ever mass shooting and the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic. But she was facing mounting political pressures at home and a level of vitriol from some that hadn't been experienced by previous New Zealand leaders.

Still, her announcement came as a shock throughout the nation of 5 million people. Fighting back

tears, Ardern told reporters in Napier that February 7 would be her last day as prime minister.

"I know what this job takes, and I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It is that simple," she said. Ardern became an inspiration to women around the world after first winning the top job in 2017 at the relatively young age of 37. She seemed to herald a new generation of leadership - she was on the verge of being a millennial, had spun some records as a part-time DJ, and wasn't married like most politicians.

She notched up centre-left victories while right-wing populism was on the rise globally: she pushed through a bill targeting net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, oversaw a ban on assault

weapons, and largely kept the coronavirus out of New Zealand for 18 months, while right-wing populism was on the rise globally.

Her approach to the pandemic earned the ire of US President Donald Trump, and she ended up refuting wildly exaggerated claims from Trump about the spread of COVID-19 after he said there was a massive outbreak and "It's over for New Zealand. Everything's gone". "Was angry the world?" Ardern said about Trump's comments in an interview with The Associated Press at the time. In 2018, Ardern became just the second world leader to give birth while holding office. Later that year, she brought her infant daughter to the floor of the



UN General Assembly in New York. In March 2019, Ardern faced one of the darkest days in New Zealand's history when a white supremacist gunman stormed two mosques in Christchurch and slaughtered 51 worshippers during Friday prayers. Ardern was widely praised for her empathy with survivors and New Zealand's wider Muslim community in the aftermath.

After the mosque shootings, Ardern moved within weeks to pass new laws banning the deadliest types of semi-automatic weapons. A subsequent buyback scheme run by police saw more than 50,000 guns, including many AR-15-style rifles, destroyed.

Less than nine months after the shooting, she faced another tragedy when 22 tourists and guides were killed when the White Island

business

of the day quote

Robust mobile and internet connectivity has helped India in a big way to expand financial inclusion. Also a diverse network of banking correspondents and micro ATMs has ensured last mile reach

DINESH KUMAR KHARA | CHAIRMAN, SBI

Being the largest infrastructure player, and having been there in almost the entire spectrum of this critical segment for the past two decades or so, we're very keen on tapping the water segment by entering water purification, treatment and distribution areas

JUGESHINDER SINGH | CFO, ADANI GROUP

Expanding the product portfolio for exports has been one of the key pillars of success. By adding Grand Vitara, we now export a range of 17 vehicles

HISASHI TAKEUCHI | MD AND CEO, MARUTI SUZUKI

SHORT TAKES

Walker new CEO of Vedanta Cairn

New Delhi: Vedanta's Cairn Oil & Gas Thursday announced the appointment of Nick Walker as the new chief executive officer (CEO) of the company. In a statement, the company said the appointment is effective January 5. "Before this appointment, Walker was president and chief executive officer at Lundin Energy, one of the leading European independent E&P companies," it said. Having worked previously in companies like BP, Talisman Energy and Africa Oil, he has over 30 years of diverse international experience in technical, commercial and executive leadership roles.

Asian Paints Q3 profit rises 6.4%

New Delhi: Asian Paints Ltd Thursday reported a 6.4 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at ₹1,097.06 crore in the third quarter ended December 2022. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹1,031.29 crore in the same period last fiscal, Asian Paints said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations stood at ₹8,636.74 crore as against ₹8,527.24 crore in the year-ago quarter, it added.

M&M to set up ₹10K-cr EV plant

Mumbai: Mahindra & Mahindra Thursday said the Maharashtra government has approved its proposal to set up a ₹10,000-crore electric vehicle plant in Pune under the state's industrial promotion scheme for EVs. The two sides signed an agreement to this effect at the World Economic Forum in Davos Wednesday, M&M Ltd said in a statement. The company, through its subsidiary, will make this investment over a period of 7-8 years for setting up the manufacturing facility, development and production of its upcoming Born Electric Vehicles (BEVs), M&M Ltd said.

Havells India Q3 profit falls 7.3%

New Delhi: Electrical appliances maker Havells India Ltd Thursday reported a 7.3 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to ₹283.52 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2022, on account of higher raw material costs. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹305.82 crore in the same quarter last fiscal, Havells India said.



The idea that somehow cryptos are going to maintain value, while the fiat currencies collapse. That's nonsense

RAGHURAM RAJAN | FORMER GOVERNOR, RBI

US LEADS EXPORT MARKET FOR INDIAN GOLD JEWELLERY

The US has become India's largest export market for gold jewellery ahead of the UAE, the World Gold Council said. According to WGC, the US became the largest market for Indian gold jewellery due to additional tariffs on Chinese jewellery to the US, which made the Indian exporters more competitive



PhonePe: India's most valuable payments company

PHONEPE, THE DIGITAL PAYMENTS FIRM, RAISES \$350 MILLION AT \$12 BILLION VALUATION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: Walmart-owned digital payments app PhonePe Thursday said it has raised \$350 million at a valuation of \$12 billion in a funding round led by private equity firm General Atlantic.

With this round, the valuation of the company has more than doubled in about a two-year period. "PhonePe has raised \$350 million in funding from General Atlantic, a leading global growth equity firm, at a pre-money valuation of \$12 billion. Marquee Global and Indian investors are also participating in the round. The investment marks the first tranche of

an up to \$1 billion total fundraising that commenced in January 2023," the statement said.

PhonePe had raised \$700 million at a post-money valuation of \$5.5 billion in December 2020.

The fresh fundraising follows PhonePe's recently announced change of domicile to India and full separation from Flipkart.

PhonePe, in which the US retailer Walmart Inc took ownership in 2018, plans to deploy the new funds to "make significant investments in infrastructure, including the development of data centers and help build financial services offerings at scale in the country."

The company also plans to invest in new businesses, including



insurance, wealth management, and lending.

"The fundraising is expected to support PhonePe as it seeks to turbo-charge the next wave of growth for UPI payments in India,

PhonePe is an Indian company, built by Indians, and the latest fundraising will help in investing in new business verticals like insurance, wealth management and lending, while also facilitating the next wave of growth for UPI payments in India

SAMEER NIGAM | FOUNDER AND CEO, PHONEPE

including UPI lite and Credit on UPI," the statement said.

Founded in December 2015, PhonePe has over 400 million registered users and over 35 million merchants spread across Tier 2, 3, and 4 cities and beyond.

"Sameer, Rahul and the PhonePe management team have pursued a clear mission to drive payments digitalization and significantly broaden access to financial tools

for the people of India. They remain focused on driving adoption of inclusive products developed on the open API based 'India stack'. This vision is aligned with General Atlantic's longstanding commitment to backing high-growth businesses focused on inclusion and empowerment," said Shantanu Rastogi, Managing Director and Head of India at General Atlantic.

FPIs outflow hits over 3-mth highs

REUTERS

Bangalore, Jan 19: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) offloaded Indian equities worth ₹150.68 billion in the first half of January, the most since the end of September 2022, data from National Securities Depository Ltd showed.

The selling coincided with a slide in equity benchmarks, with Nifty 50 falling nearly 1% between January 1 and January 15, 2023.

Among sectors, foreign investors sold off ₹67.01 billion worth of shares in financials, followed by ₹34.57 billion in IT and ₹28.25 billion in oil & gas consumable fuels.

Metals was the only major sector that saw renewed interest from foreign investors, who bought ₹25.18 billion worth of equities. China is the world's largest consumer of metals, and the reopening after the lifting of stringent Covid restrictions is expected to boost metals demand in India and the world.

Analysts flagged multiple reasons for the FPI selloff - expensive valuations due to the recent outperformance of Indian equities over their global peers, reallocation of funds to China and Taiwan for their relatively cheaper valuations, the reopening trade in China and global growth concerns.

In his latest weekly GREED & fear newsletter, Christopher Wood of Jefferies noted that the larger theme in Asia was China and its reopening. Even if India's demand story remained "rock-solid", he wrote, the high valuations were a "challenge".

It had cut India's weighting in the Asia Pacific ex-Japan return portfolio by half a percentage point while raising China's weightage by one percentage point.

BUDGET 2023-24 Sectors put up their wishlists

THIS YEAR'S BUDGET WILL BE THE 11TH CONSECUTIVE BUDGET OF MODI-LED GOVT AND THE FIFTH CONSECUTIVE BUDGET OF FM NIRMALA SITHARAMAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Union Budget in the Lok Sabha February 1.

In the view of the upcoming Budget, different industry bodies have expressed their expectations and have suggested a slew of changes for better growth of their sector, eventually pushing India's growth story.

PHARMA, HEALTHCARE SECTOR
The government should take measures to promote innovation and R&D while simplifying regulations for the sector in the upcoming Union Budget, as per pharmaceutical industry bodies.

Outlining the wishlist for the sector in the upcoming Union Budget, Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (IPA) Secretary General Sudarshan Jain said the domestic pharma industry is currently around \$50 billion in size and aspires to grow to around \$130 billion by 2030 and \$450 billion by 2047.



"To achieve this vision, the Union Budget 2023-2024 should help fuel innovation and R&D, which will set the pace for propelling the pharmaceutical industry forward," he told PTI.

The budget should outline supportive policies, simplified regulations, and simple GST norms to aid in the development of the pharmaceutical industry, he added.

IPA is an alliance of 24 leading domestic pharma companies, including Sun Pharma, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Aurobindo Pharma, Cipla, Lupin and Glenmark.

STEEL SECTOR
While domestic steel prices have remained subdued, raw material costs have surged approximately by ₹6,000 per metric tonne.

Amid this scenario, Indian steel makers have sought suo moto safeguard in terms of import duty of up to 25 per cent on ad-valorem basis, in the forthcoming union budget.

In a representation to the finance ministry, the domestic steel makers have also sought reinstatement of anti-dumping measures on HR coil, sheets and plates as well as colour coated and wire rods.

The industry has also urged

upon the finance ministry to increase the basic customs duty to 12.5 per cent on ad-valorem basis for all steel products including semis, flats and longs.

ALUMINIUM, ITS PRODUCTS
Industry body FICCI has sought an increase in the import duty on aluminium and aluminium products to at least 12.5 per cent in the upcoming budget 2023-24, stating that the move will help curb dumping of aluminium products and encourage growth of the domestic manufacturing and recycling.

The present import duty on aluminium and aluminium products is 10 per cent. Aluminium, a resilient metal that retains its fundamental properties even when recycled, is widely utilised.

However, in recent years, there has been a visible surge in subpar aluminium imports, especially from China which constitutes over 85 per cent of downstream aluminium imports at present, FICCI said in a statement.

SCRAP GST ON HELMETS
International Road Federation (IRF), a global body advocating for safer roads, Thursday said that it has made a plea to the government

to do away with the GST imposed on helmets.

At present a GST of 18 per cent is levied on helmets.

"IRF...In a letter written to the Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has demanded reduction of GST on life saving device helmets for safety of the two-wheeler riders from present 18 per cent to 0 per cent in the forthcoming Union Budget 2023-24," the global road safety body said.

India accounts for about 11 per cent of the road accident deaths worldwide and the two-wheeler riders, being most vulnerable, constitute almost 31.4 per cent of road accidental deaths primarily due to head injuries.

SMALL TRADERS IN SIGHT
Traders' body, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has urged the Union Finance Minister for financial support policies for small traders in the upcoming Budget.

The body suggested that besides advising the Reserve Bank of India to ensure smooth and easy access of finance to the trading community, the Finance Minister should spell out a policy in the budget to lay special emphasis on Non Banking Finance Companies & Micro Finance Institutions for lending to small businesses and the Banks and financial institutions should strengthen NBFCs and MFIs by providing requisite finance at a lower rate of interest so that both these lending institutions should provide finance to small businesses at a lower interest rate.

Domestic air traffic skyrocketed in 2022

The data has reflected restoration of normalcy in the aviation traffic battered by the pandemic and spiraling fuel prices



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 19: Domestic air traffic continued to register growth as passengers carried by domestic airlines during January-December 2022 were 12.32 crore as against 8.38 crore during the corresponding period of previous year thereby registering annual growth of 47.05 per cent and monthly growth of 13.69 per cent.

As per the data released by the aviation regulator DGCA Thursday, nearly 1.27 crore passengers were carried by the domestic airlines during December in the country as against 1.12 crore during the same period last year.

The passenger load factor or occupancy of the airlines remained on the higher side in the range of

80 to 90 per cent. Newly launched Akasa Air marked the occupancy of 83.8 per cent during December.

Spicejet recorded the highest occupancy of 92.7 per cent while Indigo witnessed 87.5 per cent of passenger load factor during the December month. Air India had 89.3 per cent and GoFirst had 92.6 per cent occupancy during the month.

Country's major airports have witnessed a higher number of passengers in the last couple of weeks. Domestic air traffic in the country has already crossed the mark of four lakh passengers per day and during weekends it generally reaches more than 4 lakh.

Many airports during the last month had witnessed massive rush due to increased passenger traffic.

BIZ BUZZ Evos forays into international market

Bhubaneswar: Evos Buildcon Pvt Ltd, a leading and fastest growing real estate company in Odisha founded by business tycoon Kalinga Keshari Rath, is delighted to enter the international market. The firm has partnered with SHERO Properties Real Estate LLC, the only real estate brokerage and consultancy company founded by an Odia NRI, Anil Das based in Dubai, UAE. A press meet was held to announce the strategic partnership between the two companies. "While the world is eyeing Odisha, it is time to venture into the global market and bring back the Odia NRI community to invest in their homeland by providing them world-class luxury projects loaded with high-end amenities, best-in-class quality, and services to match the NRI lifestyles," said Rath.

PPL receives ASSOCHAM HR & IR leadership award

Bhubaneswar: Paradeep Phosphates Limited has received the prestigious ASSOCHAM Human Resources (HR) & Industrial Relations (IR) award. Jagannath Khuntia, Chief General Manager (HR) received the trophy from Bijaya Kumar Patnaik, IAS (Retd.) Former Chief Secretary, Government of Odisha January 18. Tapan Kumar Chand, President, Vedanta (Odisha & Chhattisgarh) and Pankaj Lochan Mohanty, Patron Member, ASSOCHAM were also present. The award will inspire PPL to scale new heights in HR management.

Fintech startups hit hard by funding winter

INDIA IS STILL THE THIRD-HIGHEST FUNDED COUNTRY IN TERMS OF FUNDING RECEIVED IN THE FINTECH SECTOR, ONLY BEHIND THE US AND THE UK

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jan 19: Fintech startups in India raised \$5.65 billion in 390 rounds last year, a massive drop of 47 per cent in terms of funding amount and 29 per cent in the number of rounds when compared with 2021, a report showed Thursday.

This drop in funding can be attributed to the decline in late-stage funding from \$8.3 billion in 2021 to \$3.7 billion in 2022, a drop of 56 per cent, according to data provided by global software-as-a-service (SaaS)-based market intelligence platform Tracxn.

Fintech startups recorded 13 funding rounds of \$100 million+ in value. This is a massive drop of 50 per cent, from 26 rounds in 2021.



FINTECH STARTUPS RAISED \$5.65BN IN 2022, A 47% DIP FROM 2021
ONLY FOUR STARTUPS RECEIVED UNICORN STATUS IN 2022, DOWN FROM 13 IN 2021
DELHI-NCR REGION RAISED MOST FUNDING FOLLOWED BY BANGALORE, MUMBAI

Y Combinator, Tiger Global Management and Lets Venture were the most active investors in

the space, with more than 20 investments in 2022. Only four startups in India's

fintech sector received unicorn status in 2022, far lower compared with 13 new Unicorns in 2021, said the report.

Among the cities, fintech companies in the Delhi-NCR region (Delhi, Noida and Gurugram) have raised a combined funding of \$14.9 billion till date, followed by Bangalore (\$10.2 billion) and Mumbai (\$4.2 billion).

India is still the third-highest funded country in terms of funding received in the fintech sector, only behind the US and the UK, said the report.

"The country is currently experiencing a funding winter. Growing inflation and macro-economic tensions have made the investors step back from making big investment decisions," the findings showed.

INDIA DOWN WALES 4-2

Dutch register record win to seal last 8 spot



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: A below-par India beat tournament debutants Wales 4-2 in their final pool match but failed to qualify directly for the quarterfinals of the FIH Men's World Cup here Thursday. India can still qualify for the quarterfinals if they beat New Zealand in their crossover match here Sunday.

Akashdeep Singh (32nd and 45th minutes) struck twice, while Shamsher Singh (21st) and Harmanpreet Singh (59th) got the other goals for India. Gareth Furlong (42nd) and Jacob Draper (44th) were the goal-getters for Wales.

Needing to win by a margin of eight goals to directly qualify for the quarterfinals, India failed to live up to the expectations as they finished second in Pool D behind England.

Both India and England ended their pool engagements on seven points each after winning two matches and drawing one but the European side topped Pool D on the basis of superior goal difference.

England, who had outclassed Spain 4-0 in the earlier Pool D match here, have a better goal difference of plus nine as against four of India. When two teams are on same points and won equal number of matches, the ranking is decided by goal difference.

India will play New Zealand – the third-placed team in Pool C – Sunday in their crossover match here. England wait one of the four qualifiers to the quarterfinals from the crossover matches. They play January 25 against the winner of the second placed team in Pool A vs the third placed side in Pool B.

Played under windy conditions with the temperature hovering just over 20 degree celsius at the jam-packed Kalinga Stadium, India played their worst match of the tournament.

India dominated all throughout but their goal-scoring woes continued for the second match in a row. The Indians got seven penalty corners and at least six other scoring chances but their forwards wasted most of them.

Mandeep Singh earned a penalty corner in the seventh minute of the second quarter. Harmanpreet's drag-flick was rebounded from a defender but Shamsher's powerful shot from top of the circle beat the Wales goalkeeper to hand India the lead. India led 1-0 at halftime.

In the third quarter, Akashdeep found himself clear on the top of Wales circle and his fierce hit beat the rival goalkeeper for India's second goal. Soon after, India's defence was breached for the first time in the tournament with Furlong sounding the board from

Wales' second set piece three minutes from the end of third quarter.

Less than a minute from the end of the third quarter, Wales stunned the vociferous home crowd as they equalised through Draper, who

beat Indian goalkeeper PR Sreejesh all ends up from his side's third penalty corner.

Akashdeep brought back the deafening roar of the home crowd again as his thunderous reverse

shot in the first minute of the fourth quarter gave India the lead again. A minute before the final hooter, Harmanpreet scored his and India's first goal from penalty corner to make it 4-2.

England seal quarters berth

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Riding on a superb defensive display, England shut out Spain 4-0 in their last league match of Pool D to top the standings and bag a direct spot in the quarterfinal of the ongoing Hockey World Cup here Thursday. England set India an uphill task of scoring eight goals to overtake them on goal difference or scoring seven goals with six field goals in their final Pool D match against Wales to finish on top of the table and claim the direct berth into the quarterfinals. The team that finishes second

and Spain will make it to the crossover matches.

Phil Roper (10th min), David Condon (21st min), Nicholas Bandurak (50th min) and Liam Ansell (51st) scored for England as they made a good start, quelled a

fightback from Spain in the second and third quarter before scoring twice in the final quarter to seal a comfortable victory. England thus finished the group phase of the 2023 World Cup unbeaten and without conceding a goal.



BHUBANESWAR 2023



AN OUTING TO REMEMBER: The Netherlands players celebrate a goal against Chile at Kalinga Stadium, Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Three-time champions Netherlands registered a record-breaking 14-0 win over debutants Chile to secure a direct qualification into the quarterfinals, while Malaysia stunned New Zealand 3-2 to finish second in Pool C at the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup here on Thursday.

With three wins from as many games, Netherlands finished at the top of Pool C with maximum nine points, while Malaysia were second with six points from two victories.

In the second match of the day, World No.3 Netherlands toyed with Chile, ranked 23rd, and scored goals at will to register the biggest margin of victory in a World Cup match. The record for the biggest margin of win in a hockey World Cup match was earlier held by World No.1 Australia, who thrashed South Africa 12-0 in New Delhi.

Jip Janssen (sixth, 29th, 34th, 44th minutes) and skipper Thierry Brinkman (25th, 33rd, 58th) scored a hat-trick each, while Koen Bijen (40th, 45th) struck a brace. Derck de Vilder (22nd), Thijs van Dam (23rd), Terrance Pieters (37th), Justen Blok (42nd) and Teun Beins (48th) were the other goal-getters for the Dutch. Janssen's all four

goals came from penalty corners. The Netherlands, who have won the World Cup thrice and finished runners-up in the last two editions, earned 18 penalty corners from which they converted six, while Chile got just two PCs in the match.

Earlier, Malaysia's star player Faizal Saari (eighth, 56th minutes) struck a brace, while Razie Rahim converted a penalty corner in the 42nd minute as World No.11 Malaysia shocked No.9 New Zealand 3-2 in another Pool C match.

Hayden Phillips (51st) and Sam Lan (52nd) scored two goals in as many minutes to raise New Zealand's hopes before Saari drew the final blood four minutes later. Lan's strike was also the 2500th goal of the World Cup.

New Zealand are third in Pool C with just one win, while Chile finished winless. While Netherlands qualified directly for the last-eight round, Malaysia and New Zealand will play crossover matches to book their place in the quarterfinals.

The top teams from the four pools qualify directly for the last-eight, while the second and third-placed sides play in the crossover matches to fill up the remaining four slots. Chile will play in the fifth to 16th place classification matches.



IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY: Malaysia players acknowledge the support from spectators after their win in Bhubaneswar
PICS: BIKASH NAYAK

Djokovic bothered by leg, heckler during win



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Jan 19: Novak Djokovic propped up his left shoe on a court-side sign so he could stretch out his bothersome hamstring. He grimaced while flexing the muscle after one point, hopped on his right leg to keep weight off the left. He took a medical timeout while a trainer re-taped him during the second set – which Djokovic would go on to drop.

As if he needed another distraction, Djokovic was flustered enough by a heckler that he asked chair umpire Fergus Murphy to have the spectator removed from Rod Laver Arena, saying: "The guy's drunk out of his mind. He's been provoking. He just wants to get in my head."

Here's what did not happen Thursday evening at the Australian Open: Djokovic did not lose his way entirely and, most importantly, he did not lose in the second round, which is what happened to both No.1 seed Rafael Nadal and No.2 seed Casper Ruud, who was eliminated by Jenson Brooksby eliminated 6-3, 7-5, 6-7 (4), 6-2. Seeking a 10th trophy at

Sania-Danilina sail into Oz Open Rd 2

MELBOURNE: Competing in her last Grand Slam, India tennis star Sania Mirza cruised into the second round of the Australian Open here Thursday. Sania and her Kazakh partner Anna Danilina prevailed over Hungary's Dalma Galfi and American Bernarda Pera 6-2 7-5 in one hour and 15 minutes in the women's doubles. A six-time Major champion (three in doubles and three in mixed doubles), the 36-year-old Indian has announced that the Australian Open is her last and she would be retiring after WTA 1000 Dubai Tennis Championships slated from February 19.

Melbourne Park, to add to his own record, and a 22nd Grand Slam title overall, to equal Nadal's, Djokovic put everything aside and beat 191st-ranked French qualifier Enzo Coucaud 6-1, 6-7(5), 6-2, 6-0.

It was Djokovic's 23rd consecutive win at the Australian Open, a streak that paused a year ago when he couldn't play in the tournament because he was not vaccinated against COVID-19.

SEN, SAINA LOSE, SATWIK-CHIRAG PAIR PULLS OUT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: Defending champion Lakshya Sen suffered a heartbreak, going down narrowly to world number 20 Rasmus Gemke of Denmark in the second round as the Indian ended at the Yonex-Sunrise India Open here Thursday.

World No.12 Sen reduced an 8-14 deficit in the decider to 13-14 after losing the second game but couldn't go the distance, losing 21-16, 15-21, 18-21 to Gemke in a match that lasted an hour and 21 minutes at the IG stadium. Gemke will now take on top seed and compatriot Viktor Axelsen, who outwitted China's Shi Yu Qi 21-16, 16-21, 21-9.

Reigning champions in men's doubles, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, who had come into the tournament after a semi-final finish at Malaysia Super 1000 last week, withdrew from the tournament after the former suffered a hip injury ahead of their second-round clash.

London Games bronze medalist Saina Nehwal also found the going tough against Olympic champion Chen Yufei, surrendering meekly 9-21, 12-21 in just 32 minutes to draw curtains on India's campaign at the Super 750 tournament.

Earlier, Commonwealth Games bronze medalists Gayatri Gopichand and Treasa Jolly lost 9-21, 16-21 to sixth-seeded Chinese Zhang Shu Xian and Zheng Yu in women's doubles pre-quarterfinals.

The rising men's doubles pair of Krishna Prasad Garaga and Vishnuvardhan Goud Panjala also was no match for China's Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang, going down 14-21, 10-21 in 33 minutes.

Also advancing to the next round were fourth seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia, third seed Loh Kean Yew of Singapore and fifth seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei in men's singles. Top seed Akane Yamaguchi of Japan, Spaniard Carolina Marin and He Bingjiao of China also made it to the quarters in women's singles.

PICTURES SAY IT ALL

1. CM Naveen Patnaik waves to crowd as Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey (3rd from L) and Tamil Nadu Sports Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin (4th from L) look on
2. An Indian fan is getting the paint of Tricolour on her cheek
3. A fan waves the Tricolour showing his support for the hosts
4. Fans of Wales hold their national flag and the Indian flag
5. Kids pose for a picture holding the national flag