

DSPL-498



Beginning of an Epoch for New Odisha

BHUBANESWAR METRO RAIL PROJECT (Phase-1)

Biju Patnaik International Airport to Trisulia

Laying of Foundation Stone by Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha

Shri Naveen Patnaik

on
1st January 2024, 11:30 AM



New Odisha - Transformed Odisha

- A 5T initiative, poised to Transform Transportation Landscape in Capital Region
- Agreement signed between Bhubaneswar Metro Rail Corporation and Delhi Metro Rail Corporation for execution of project
- First-of-its kind- fully Odisha Government funded project at an investment of Rs 6255 cr.
- Covering 26 Kms i.e. from Bhubaneswar Airport to Trisulia square
- 20 key stations including at Capital Hospital, Rajmahal square, Jayadev Vihar and Patia square etc.
- Metro rail tracks and stations will be on elevated viaducts
- Ultra-modern Coaches and signaling system
- Advanced Ticketing System

WHAT 2024 HAS IN STORE FOR YOU



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MONDAY | JANUARY 1 | 2024 | BHUBANESWAR

Aries
 21st March to 20th April

In the beginning of this year, you will have ample support of the transiting Jupiter and hence you will be able to carry out your plans, but Saturn will demand you to work hard. You need to little lower your professional ambitions. Also, you may feel that your finances have become stagnant and on a slightly downward swing. But, you must keep yourself motivated as the positive impact of Venus will begin to be felt and will start giving you good rewards as the year advances. In the beginning of the year the Sun, Mars conjunction may not allow you to enjoy your love life and the dullness may frustrate you at times. But as the year advances, Venus-Mercury conjunction will help you to make a big romantic step right away. Due to the impact of Venus-Mars conjunction, your sensuality will be very much in the forefront from around the month of February. You will get good planetary support by the conjunction of transiting Venus and Mercury in the beginning of this year. The strong support of Venus will also boost your financial strength around the year end. The Mars' impact on Venus can be a refreshing and likely to bring positivity and harmony in your love life around the month of December.

Taurus
 21st April to 21st May

Venus will bless you with success and prosperity in the beginning of this year. If you are in business, Mars will make you feel a sudden surge of energy and may also have many ideas to expand your business. Keep patience as Venus will bring successful phase for you and a good time to look for additional income around the month of March. From the beginning of the year Jupiter could prove to be a blessing for you in your studies. From around the month of March, the Jupiter will bring good times as there are chances of promotion at your work place. You will have strong positive momentum, if you are doing business. A tangible increase in profits is possible around the mid of March. Jupiter will bring some new opportunities your way around the month of April. There will be some misunderstanding, doubts or insecurity in your love life. You need to take care of your health around October as decreased sleep time and appetite, decreased mood may most likely be the consequences of some disturbances or improper diet this time around. Things will remain good for your health around the year end.

Gemini
 22nd May to 21st June

This year will remain highly productive for your career related matters. The beginning of this year will be good for your financial status. It can be the ideal time to put in action long conceived plan to push ahead your financial prospects. The impact of Jupiter will help you to make steady progress. Venus indicates that your creative vision will set you apart from the rest at your work place. If you are willing to put extra efforts, you will be fully supported by the Jupiter in your studies. But South Node can disrupt the harmony of your love life. In relationship matters, you need to find some time and space for each other regardless of your other commitments. In the beginning of this year, your health will be sensitive due to some old or existing health issues. But the impact of Mercury may keep you in good cheer and improved health status from around the month of April. Mercury will also bring positive momentum and likely to be favorable for making some important career moves from around the month of April. Change is in the air, if you are doing business. Your unique and brilliant ideas can bring strong positive growth around the end of this year.

Cancer
 22nd June to 22nd July

In the beginning of the year, the impact of North node might not allow you to break the shackles so easily. If you are in business, something may go wrong in your planning. However, there will be plenty of openings for improving your financial status as the period advances. The beginning of this year may also remain highly auspicious for you to take up higher education. Venus may also help you to achieve higher level of intimacy with your sweetheart. Mercury might bring opportunity to meet someone, if you are not involved in any relation yet. Your immune system will remain highly efficient and hence here will not be any serious health issues this time around. Around the month of February, Mercury indicates that someone could approach you with a particularly inventive idea for career growth. Venus will boost your financial strength through innovative ventures. But, the impact of North Node could bring some emotional frustration in your love life. Around the month of March, some excellent options as well as reasonable solutions will make you able to find higher elevation in your work.

Leo
 23rd July to 22nd August

In the beginning of this year, the impact of shadow planets as well as Saturn do not foretell a good time for your career but the combined impact of Jupiter and Venus indicates beginning of a delightful phase from around the mid of January. You must keep patience though. Mercury indicates that you may have many ideas and strategies floating around in your mind to strengthen your financial but, it can be misleading. If you are doing business, some impulsive actions or decisions might bring problems. The movement of South Node will not be so favourable for you around the month of February. Increments or promotions are hard to come. Also, there will be some serious differences with the elder members of the family. Mercury may however bring constructive changes from around the mid of February. It will bring plenty of good things to happen in your personal life. It will be highly romantic as well as passionate phase due to the combined impact of Mars and Venus. As the year advances, due to strong support of Jupiter, you will be able to focus better and you will have stronger chances to achieve your goals in your studies.

Virgo
 23rd August to 22nd September

The year looks progressive for you but in the beginning of this year, career related matters shall look uncertain due to the complex impact of South Node. Things shall start to fall in place gradually due to the Mercury's support. The movement of Venus will give an upward push to your finances. But there may be some issues where you may have ego clashes with your mate and disturbances due to the impact of South Node which may hamper your mood. You may be somewhat lazy and tend to ignore self-discipline in matters related to your health regimen. The positive impact of Venus will begin to be felt gradually around the month of February and hence an investment that you make during this phase will start giving you good rewards as the year advances. There will be many positive developments in your professional life around the month of October. If you are waiting to get a nod from the person of your choice may get so around the month of December. Hence the year may end on a positive note.

Libra
 23rd September to 22nd October

Your career will get positive momentum in the beginning of this year. If you are doing business, it may bring major boost to business prospects due to the impact of Mars. Mercury also indicates a good phase to carry out the business plans. Saturn might help you get some good financial gains from your past investments. But some unexpected expenses may also disturb your financial planning to an extent around the mid of January, indicates the North Node. Venus may bring scopes for a happy encounter with your beloved one. As the period advances Venus may help you hold on to old and existing relationships. Your energy level and vitality will be good but you may have fluctuations in your energy levels around the end of February. Mercury suggests that it will be good time to cross the frontiers of the mind by expanding knowledge and skills. The impact of North Node may bring some stress at your work place around the month of March. If you are doing business, you may be able to expand the customer base with some extra efforts. Uncertainty will reduce gradually and Mercury will give you a chance to deliberate and review of your career prospects. advances.

Scorpio
 23rd October to 22nd November

In the beginning of this year the impact of North Node may bring added responsibilities at your work place. Also, the impact of Mars may bring some complicated matters. If you are doing business, you must not take undue risk till mid of February. You may get financial opportunities around the month of February but not all opportunities will turn out to be promising. Jupiter however indicates that your income will be stable, meeting your expectations. The complex energy of South Node indicates that this is not the right time to propose or to express your feelings. However, if you have recently started seeing someone, there will be opportunities for developing the relationship further during the month of February. You may at times face uncomfortable situations in your health around the middle of February. Not to worry though. Mercury shows a favorable phase for your studies from around the mid of February. If you are doing business, it will be supportive to explore new territory or launch a new product around the month of March. At career front, you may feel much more supported as around the month of April. The impact of Jupiter may bring new opportunities for progress in your career.

Sagittarius
 23rd November to 21st December

The impact of transiting Sun and Mars may help you to perform well and strengthen your position at your work place in the beginning of this year. If you are doing business, you will be able to grab important projects. The period around the end of January will be a good period to make investments for financial security, indicates Mercury. But there may be some heated arguments with your mate under the influence of Mars and a certain unrest will be brewing if you are in committed relationship. Your support system will be stronger and assistance of friends or mentors will be quite helpful in your studies. Jupiter may mostly remain in your favor and hence you are likely to have good health status. As the year advances, pace of progress is likely to start picking positive momentum due to the support of Jupiter and Mars. The period around the month of March can be a good period to carry out the plans that you may have in your and if you are in business, you may be able to implement your planning which may increase growth tremendously. Saturn will however demand strict financial discipline. If you make the mistake of squandering your money, you are likely to face the results.

Capricorn
 22nd December to 20th January

Venus is likely to bring some good opportunities for growth and gain in the beginning of this year. Some complicated issues may keep bothering you due to the impact of North Node but if you have your basics right, you may eventually get the success that you always deserve. Mercury's impact suggests that you may need to review or recreate your financial plan. Gradually, your efforts might bring positive results and financial gain. But refrain from borrowing or lending as the impact of North Node indicates a somewhat tricky time around the end of February. Venus is likely to bring joy and harmony in your love life and relationship in general. If you are in committed relation, the period around the end of January will be good to take the relationship to the next level. Your love life will be exciting but, at times your stubborn approach is likely to make your relationship vulnerable during the month of February. A new relationship is likely to be formed, somewhere around the middle of February. Your creativity will be on high but, your lack of concentration may cause problems in education, indicates Mercury. Saturn indicates some unexpected expenses around the month of April which might disturb your financial planning.

Aquarius
 21st January to 18th February

The year will remain progressive but Mars indicates a hectic phase in the beginning for your career related matters. The beginning of this month may bring disruptions and may not augur well for accumulating wealth. Also, Mercury may bring some uneasy moments in your relationship. The impact of stars may remain favourable for your health though. The impact of Saturn will force you to become extra attentive to financial matters. Jupiter and Mercury are likely to help you make improvement in your performance in studies. As the year advances, Jupiter seems supportive for increasing earnings around the month of February. The combined impact of Mercury and Venus will boost your love life. However, Saturn indicates your low resistance may make you prone to some seasonal health problems. If you are in business, you could make some impressive advances around the month of March. The impact of Venus around the month of March will make you able to meet some of your old friends. Mercury may make you able to march forward in studies around the year end. It will be a good phase for future planning of your educational journey, discussing some fresh ideas with your mentors. Relaxation will help you to maintain your good health.

Pisces
 19th February to 20th March

In the beginning of this year Jupiter will open up doors for new opportunities for your career advancement. If you are in business, you may improve your level of productivity. This could be a good time for long-term financial planning and strengthening your financial status. Venus indicates that you will have joyful relationship. Gradually, Mars will bring fresh opportunity for benefits through your social network as well as new contracts. But South Node around the mid of this month might make you uncomfortable with your health. From around the month of February, Mars will be disruptive for your career advancement. Venus may bring opportunity to enter a relationship. Mercury will make you very much focused and mentally sharp in your studies. For business people the period around the end of February will be important as there will be some positive development in some of the pending matters. Jupiter will remain supportive and your income will be quite decent but may tend to feel some pressure due to some old commitments. Around the month of April, Saturn may demand you to work for extended hours to cover up your acquired commitments.

ISRO to usher in 2024 with XPoSat launch



AGENCIES

Chennai, Dec 31: India will usher in the New Year 2024 in a grand manner launching its first X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat), which would offer insights into celestial objects like black holes, along with 10 other payloads Monday morning, said the Indian space agency.

The 25-hour countdown for the launch of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle-DL (PSLV-DL) carrying the XPoSat and 10 other scientific payloads began Sunday at 8.10am and is progressing smoothly, officials of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) told IANS.

At 9.10am the Indian rocket PSLV-DL variant with the code PSLV-C58, standing 44.4 metre tall and weighing 260 tonne, will blast off from the first launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh with XPoSat and 10 scientific payloads fixed to the PSLV Orbital Platform.

At about 21 minutes into its flight, the rocket will orbit XPoSat at an altitude of about 650 km. Subsequently, the rocket's fourth stage will be restarted twice to reduce the orbit into a 350 km circular orbit to maintain in 3-axis stabilised mode for Orbital Platform (OP) experiments.

The XPoSat is the first dedicated scientific satellite from the ISRO to carry out research in space-based polarisation measurements of X-ray emission from celestial sources.

GEARING UP: Preparations underway for the launch of ISRO's PSLV-C58 carrying X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat), at the Satish Dhawan Space Station, in Sriharikota

Centre puts ban on Tehreek-e-Hurriyat

The decision stems from Centre's concern that the group, if left unchecked, would persist in advocating for the secession of J&K from India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

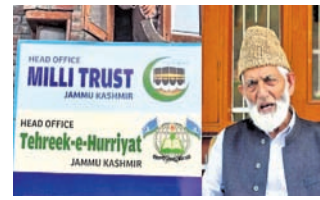
New Delhi, Dec 31: In a decisive step, the government Sunday declared pro-Pakistan separatist group Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH), founded by late hardline separatist Syed Ali Shah Geelani, as a banned organisation for the next five years.

The action, announced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, is a response to the group's involvement in fomenting terrorism and spreading anti-India sentiment within the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism, Shah emphasised that any individual or organisation found engaged in anti-India activities would face strict measures.

The Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, J&K (TeH), has been declared an 'Unlawful Association' under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). The outfit is involved in forbidden activities to separate J&K from India and establish Islamic rule, Shah posted on X.

The decision to ban the TeH was made under the UAPA, citing the group's propagation of anti-India messaging and its efforts to sustain terror activities,



TeH was formed by hardline separatist Syed Ali Shah Geelani in 2004 after he stepped out of the moderate Hurriyat faction

Several of members of Hurriyat have been charge-sheeted by the NIA for raising funds to support terror in Kashmir

signed from the Jamaat-e-Islami and formed this group, which later became a constituent of another faction of the Hurriyat, a separatist amalgam, led by the hardline separatist. Several of members of the hardline Hurriyat have been charge-sheeted by the National Investigation Agency for raising funds to support terror in Kashmir.

They include Farooq Ahmad Dar alias Bitta Karate, Altaf Ahmad Shah alias Fantoosh, Geelani's son-in-law and public relations officer of the TeH as well as secretary and strategist in the Hurriyat, Mohammad Akbar Khanday, spokesman of the Hurriyat and a fund-raiser for it, Raja Mehrajuddin Kalwal and Bashir Ahmad Bhat alias Peer Saifullah, personal assistant of Geelani as well as secretary of the TeH. Geelani died in September 2021 while his son-in-law in October 2022.

The Union Home ministry, in a notification, highlighted the group's involvement in raising funds from various sources, including Pakistan and its proxy organisations, to support unlawful activities such as sustaining terrorist acts and orchestrating stone-pelting incidents against security forces in the region.

Tripura CM: 'Mann Ki Baat' more popular than 'Ramayan'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agartala, Dec 31: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha Sunday claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' programme was more popular among the masses than 'Mahabharat' and 'Ramayan' mega TV serials of the 1980s.

His assertion came after listening to the 108th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat' at his home constituency Town Bardowali along with party leaders and workers.



"We used to see our mothers and sisters rushing towards TV screens to watch episodes of 'Mahabharat' and 'Ramayan' soaps on Doordarshan every Sunday. Nowadays, we see our mothers and sisters rushing to listen to PM's 'Mann Ki Baat' on the last Sunday of every month. This programme is more popular than the soaps of the 1980s," he said, while addressing the gathering.

In the 1980s too, people criticised women rushing to watch TV soaps and even now many criticise those who listen to 'Mann Ki Baat'. But it makes no difference as people know what is what, he added.

'Mahabharat' (1988) and 'Ramayan' (1987), two epic serials created by BR Chopra and Ramananda Sagar respectively, were telecast on Doordarshan and were widely popular.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Sorry, sir. All the anchors, editors, and reporters have shifted to Ayodhya till the general elections

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	27.6°C	26.6°C
Min Temp	16.0°C	15.5°C
Humidity	91%	89%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST

FOG/MIST IN THE MORNING

2 DEAD, OVER 70 INJURED IN 4 MISHAPS

Berhampur/Baripada: Two people were killed and over 70 injured in four accidents across the state Sunday, police said. A 29-year-old man named Biswasundar Jena from Balasore drowned in a water-fall near the Lulung tourist spot inside the Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district. In Nayagarh district, one person died and three others were critically injured when their car caught fire after crashing into a tree near Jamusahi, according to police. The victims were traveling from Chhattisgarh to Puri to visit the Srimandir on New Year's Day. About 30 picnickers were injured in Balia near Purushottampur in Ganjam district when their vehicle overturned, police said. In another accident, around 40 picnickers from Jajpur district were returning from Jeerang in Gajapati district when their bus overturned near Taptapani ghat, according to police.

CANCER CARE CENTRE AT VIMSAR BY 2024

Sambalpur: A cancer care centre will come up in Western Odisha's Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), Burla by the end of 2024, an official source said. The construction work of the building for the cancer care centre on the premises of the institution is going on in full swing and a target has been set to complete the work on the project by July 2024. The Public Works department (PWD) is carrying out the construction work of the centre, which has been estimated at ₹34 crore. Around 1,000 new cancer cases are reported at VIMSAR annually. Thousands of patients from across western Odisha besides from neighbouring states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand depend on VIMSAR for their health care service.

NAVY UPS SURVEILLANCE IN ARABIAN SEA

New Delhi: The Indian Navy has deployed task groups comprising frontline destroyers and frigates in the central and north Arabian Sea and augmented its force levels in the region to undertake maritime security operations in view of recent attacks on commercial vessels in key shipping lanes. The Navy said Sunday that it has "substantially enhanced maritime surveillance efforts" and that recent incidents indicated a shift in maritime incidents closer to India's EEZ. The additional deployment of the assets including long-range maritime patrol aircraft by the Indian Navy in the region came amid increasing global concerns over the Houthis militants targeting cargo vessels in the Red Sea against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Gen Alpha will tire of living online

Globally, the amount of time people spent on social media declined year-over-year in 2023 for the first time since tracking started in 2012

REUTERS

New York, Dec 31: For all the changes that technology has brought about, one thing will stay the same in 2024. Generation Alpha, kids born in the 2010s, are going to want to be "different" from their parents. For them, that means spending less time online. For companies counting on their data, that means life is about to get harder.



Members of the youngest generation may have a role model in their slightly older peers when it comes to pushing back against an all-enveloping digital world. Globally, the amount of time people spent on social media declined year-over-year in 2023 for the first time since the consumer research firm GWI started tracking it in 2012, according to its latest survey of over 9,50,000 internet users. Gen Zers, born between 1997 and 2007, are at the forefront of the shift. One-third of those surveyed said they were actively trying to limit their usage of such platforms, seeking out hobbies and friendships in the physical world instead.

In addition to cutting down screen time, the internet's next generation will look to get more out of what they put in. Those who have slowly been lulled into increased online usage have been willing to accept the implicit agreement that underpinned the rise of social media, wherein companies offered services like email and messaging to users at no cost in exchange for the ability to collect data about them and sell it to advertisers. Younger generations are going to become more aggressive about demanding a change.

The rise of generative AI tools trained to mimic human behavior will only accelerate the backlash. Tech firms such as Alphabet and OpenAI are facing lawsuits from authors and artists who say the companies improperly scraped their intellectual property from the web to train AI models. Startups like Caden and Datacy claim to help reshape this relationship by allowing users to peddle their valuable data directly to firms. Tech giants are on notice. Instagram parent Meta Platforms and social media site X both rolled out new tools in 2023 to facilitate payments to content creators who post on their platforms.

If companies don't pay up, Gen Alpha kids will make use of tools to withhold their personal information. TikTok influencer Coco Moco, who herself has over 1 million followers, reckons that virtual avatars will become popular among young users seeking to mask their identities on social media sites. Some parents, too, are growing wary. Meta boss Mark Zuckerberg, for example, hides his kids' faces when posting photos of them publicly. As their generation grows up, they're likely to do as Zuckerberg does, not as his company hopes.

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(A Joint Venture of Tata Power and Government of Odisha)

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4.6+ crore lives illuminated | 53000 jobs created
₹3000+ crores invested in distribution business

Greetings for a bright and happy 2024.

Scan and join the movement.
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For You, With You, Always

The ₹800-crore Srimandir Heritage Corridor Project includes redevelopment of the peripheries of the 12th century shrine for visitors and tourists while creating a seamless 75-metre corridor around the Meghanada Pacheri



The sublimity of Srimandir and its peripheries will be amplified manifold when the Srimandir Heritage Corridor Project (Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa) that aims at ensuring hassle-free darshan for devotees will be inaugurated January 17.

The ₹800-crore Parikrama Prakalpa includes redevelopment of the vicinity of the temple for visitors and tourists while creating an unobstructed 75-metre corridor around the Meghanada Pacheri (the outer wall of the 12th-century shrine). The amenities, to be available around the temple boundary wall include toilets and shelter pavilions in the south, north and west directions of the temple.

While the newly-constructed AC shed will provide the much needed comfort for the devotees waiting in queues to have darshan of The Trinity, the landscaping around the shrine would give a swanky look. Besides, the work for a reception centre with a capacity to accommodate 6,000 people, a cultural centre including Raghunandan Library, Badadanda Parikrama streetscape, Jagannath Ballav pilgrim centre, multilevel car parking facility and other amenities is on war footing.

According to Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) sources, it is readying plans for ceremonial rituals, cultural presentations, and logistical preparations. The temple administration stated that three days prior to the opening ceremony, a yajna will be held at Aisanya corner of the Parikrama, conducted by Sotriya Brahmins appointed by

WHILE THE NEWLY-CONSTRUCTED AC SHED WILL PROVIDE MUCH NEEDED COMFORT FOR THE DEVOTEES WAITING IN QUEUES TO HAVE DARSHAN OF THE TRINITY, THE LANDSCAPING AROUND THE SHRINE WOULD GIVE A SWANKY LOOK

Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb. Purnaahuti (culmination of the yajna) will be conducted between 1:30 pm and 2:30 pm, followed by Parikrama inauguration ceremony by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, January 17.

All the four gates of Srimandir will resonate with Vedic hymns by pundits. Digital screens along the Badadanda will display these performances for devotees. Currently, the surroundings are undergoing a makeover, with houses and buildings alongside Badadanda being freshly painted in symmetrical and uniform aesthetic colours. 3D murals being

drawn on boundary walls are an added attraction. Cultural traditions, including Odissi and Gotipua dances will be showcased on the inaugural day.

A significant number of devotees is expected besides the presence of Sankaracharyas from the four peethas, mahantas, and heads of various Hindu institutions. The district administration has been tasked with arranging accommodation and transport for the invitees. Four sub-committees — culture, media publicity, accommodation and hospitality, and transport — have been established to manage the inauguration ceremony, each headed by an officer and a temple managing committee member.

Meanwhile, a 50-member delegation presented the first invitation of the 'Srimandir Parikrama' to Lord Lingaraj in Bhubaneswar recently.

Meanwhile, a delegation comprising

temple servitors, members of the temple management committee and Puri district administration met Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at Naveen Niwas December 26 and invited him to the inaugural ceremony. The CM accepted the invitation by giving one 'gua' (areca nut) and a handful of rice.

A total of 30 teams were formed to distribute the invitations to about 200 temples inside and outside the state including other countries, said Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief administrator Ranjan Das.

Meanwhile, 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman VK Pandian December 30 reviewed the progress of pilgrim's holding area, queue management and traffic control in the holy town. He inspected the progress on landscaping works, mutt (monastery) restoration, queue management system, two-wheeler parking areas, garbage chutes and façade painting and emphasized on timely completion.

Pandian also inspected 'Shree Danda', 'Shree Jagannath Ballav Vihar' and 'Shree Setu'. Visitors to Srimandir will be stopped from entering the shrine if found in indecent and inappropriate attires like ripped jeans, skirts and shorts from January 1, 2024. This apart, consumption of paan or gutka and use of polythene on the temple premises will draw a fine of Rs 1,000 from the New Year Day.

SRIMANDIR PERIPHERY FACELIFT

SCB transformation likely by March

If things go well, people from Odisha would no more need to go outside the state for better medical treatment as the first phase of government's ambitious initiative to transform SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) in Cuttack into an 'AIIMS Plus' facility is most likely to complete by March of 2024.

Continuing his efforts towards ensuring quality and affordable healthcare to all, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had, November 6, 2019, announced redevelopment of SCBMCH into a world-class healthcare facility in two phases.

Under the initiative - billed as one of the biggest government healthcare projects in the country - the premier state-run hospital established in 1944 will be redeveloped into a 5,000-bed integrated facility on 175 acres of land with an allocation of Rs 3,500 crore. While 3,500 beds will be ready in the first phase, another 1,500 beds will be added in the second phase.

Quarters for 1,280 employees and hostels for 2,200 students will also come up under the transformation initiative. Besides, the project will introduce best-in-class technology in fields of medical education, research and healthcare, and help prepare the premier medical college to address the challenges of the future, it is reliably learnt.

The first phase of redevelopment was expected to complete by the end of December 2023 or January 2024. However, the deadline was later revised to March.

5T Chairman Kartik Pandian has recently reviewed the ongoing construction work and asked officials to ensure speedy completion of the first phase of the noble initiative.

₹3,500 CRORE for SCBMCH redevelopment into 'AIIMS Plus' facility

5,000-BED integrated care on sprawling 175-acre campus



BARAMUNDA ISBT

The much-awaited Baramunda inter-state bus terminal (ISBT) project in Bhubaneswar is most likely to be completed in January 2024.

Approved by the state Cabinet in April 2020, the world-class transit system is being developed by Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) on 15.50-acre of land in Khandagiri area at an estimated investment of Rs 180 crore.

The ISBT will offer facilities like office space, parking lots, food court, restaurant and commercial space, waiting halls, proper sanitation, bus bays, Aahaar centre and modern toilets.

5T Chairman Kartik Pandian had, in the first week of December, reviewed the progress of the project and directed officials to finish it by the end of the month.

He asked agencies to adopt smart IT-driven infrastructure and develop creative ambience for travellers using local art. The officials were asked to ensure idle bus parking, dormitory for bus drivers, and sufficient parking space for auto rickshaws, taxis and two-wheelers.

Buses from the terminal will run towards different destinations of the country, including Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Raipur, Ranchi, Kolkata and Bangalore.

₹180 CRORE world-class transit system in Baramunda



Lok Sabha and Odisha Legislative Assembly elections shall be conducted simultaneously in 2024. We've made efforts to enrol all eligible citizens as voters. I request all voters to make the most important New Year resolution - to definitely vote in the 2024 General Election as every vote matters. New Year greetings to all!

NIKUNJA BIHARI DHAL | CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

2023 saw Odisha building one of the best sports infra, hosting national and international championships and implementing coaching programmes at grassroots and HPC levels. With the blessings of Lord Jagannath, Odisha created miracles like completing Birsu Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela within just 15 months. I hope 2024 will be another year of achievements and glory for all

R VINEEL KRISHNA | SPORTS & YOUTH SERVICES SECY

2024 will be a year of glory for Cuttack. A 4-lane bridge will be built on Kathajodi river which will connect Orissa HC with Trishulia. The box drain project between Buxi Bazar and Chhatra Bazar will be inaugurated soon. The Chandi temple facelift will be completed shortly

SUBASH CHANDRA SINGH | CMC MAYOR

In 2024, our focus will be on research and full digitisation of the university. We recently got back NAAC A+ grade. Our next goal is to achieve the NAAC A++ grade

SABITA ACHARYA | UTKAL UNIVERSITY VICE CHANCELLOR

In 2024, our prime focus will be to make Bhubaneswar a single-use plastic-free City. I urge citizens to avoid throwing plastic garbage on roads, especially during New Year celebrations at picnic spots. We encourage all to use garbage bins and Safai Wala vehicles

SULOCHANA DAS | BMC MAYOR

AIIMS-Bhubaneswar is determined to deliver quality healthcare to people of Odisha and beyond. In 2024, we'll start new services like liver and bone marrow transplant. Process to establish a skin bank is also in pipeline. Implementing Artificial Intelligence in healthcare services will be one of our priorities

ASHUTOSH BISWAS | AIIMS-BHUBANESWAR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our prime objective this year will be to adopt a tougher stance against anti-socials that would help ensure safety and security to all, especially women and senior citizens, in the Temple City

PRATEEK SINGH | BHUBANESWAR DCP

NH expansion to be over by March

Expansion of at least 20 national highway (NH) projects, including the four-laning of Angul-Sambalpur and Cuttack-Angul sections of NH-55, will be completed by March 31, 2024.

Of the 68 expansion projects related to 20 NHs in Odisha, 42 are ongoing and the remaining 26 are either under bidding or are yet to commence after the awarding of the work order, according to data shared by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) in the Rajya Sabha.

Apart from the four-laning of Angul-Sambalpur and Cuttack-Angul sections of NH-55, six-laning of Bhadrak-Balasore section of NH-16, four-laning of the Rajamunda to Barkote section of NH-23, four-laning of Bargarh to Barpali and Barpali to Bolangir sections of NH-26 and widening of NH-49 from Jharsuguda to Bhojpur will be completed by March 2024, it said.

These apart, four-laning of Duburi Chandikhole section of NH-53, construction of bypass on NH-59 near Berhampur Town including four-lane RoB and six-laning of Dhanara-Hatibena section of NH-130-CD are ongoing and are expected to be completed by March 2024, the MoRTH told the Upper House earlier in December.

Cell, gene therapy to rule pharma sector in 2024: Report

Cell and gene therapy (CGT) will have the greatest impact on the pharmaceutical industry in 2024, according to a report.

The report by GlobalData, a data and analytics company, is based on a survey of 115 healthcare industry professionals.

It revealed that 18 per cent of industry professionals were convinced that CGT will dominate as the most important trend in pharma next year. This was followed by personalised/precision medicine (16 per cent).

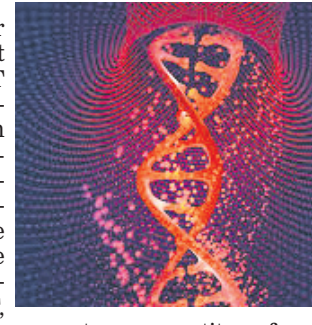
"Cell and gene therapies are gradually becoming more important focus areas within the healthcare industry and their full potential is still unrealised. While this is a relatively new area, with the first autologous dendritic cell therapy Provenge approved in 2010 for prostate cancer, these therapies promise life-changing treatments for a broad spectrum of complex diseases ranging from genetic conditions to cancers," said Urte Jakimaviciute, Senior Director of Market Research at GlobalData, in a statement. Although GlobalData anticipates cell and gene therapies to become an established treatment modality in the years to come, higher development and production costs, the risk of clinical trial failures, and intensifying pricing and reimbursement pressures will continue to place further stress on these innovations.

"The industry may try to offset the high development costs by outsourcing. One of the recent examples is Bayer's announcement of a cooperation with Shanghai Pharmaceuticals China in November 2023 to set up its first Chinese lab for CGT and cancer drug development. With lower R&D development costs than in advanced markets, countries like China are becoming attractive markets for the development of CGT, and therefore may emerge as strong competitors of overseas-made CGT," Jakimaviciute said.

The report estimates that the global CGT market is projected to reach \$80 billion by 2029.

Oncology is expected to continue its lead as the indication and area of major development for cell and gene therapies, accounting for 44 per cent of the CGT market by 2029.

"Even though cell and gene therapies are mainly approved for the use in the oncology space, the versatility of these therapies means that they can be used in both acquired and inherited diseases. Other therapeutic areas that can benefit the most from CGT include neurodegenerative, autoimmune, and cardiovascular diseases," Jakimaviciute said.



Illegal fishing endangering turtles

PROHIBITION GOES FOR A TOSS AS FISHERMEN REGULARLY ENTER BANNED AREA ON THEIR TRAWLERS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Dec 31: The future does not appear encouraging for the rare Olive Ridley turtles as fishermen and trawlers continue to intrude into the prohibited zone of Gahirmatha marine sanctuary at Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara district. This is happening on a daily basis despite a ban on fishing in the area, sources said Sunday.

The Forest department has imposed a fishing ban in the Gahirmatha marine sanctuary and declared it a prohibited zone from November 2023 to May 2024. However, the restriction appears to be only in name as rules are flouted with impunity. Locals pointed out that other than announcing the ban, no measures have been taken by the Forest department to implement it in a proper manner.

Sources also pointed out that the number of arrests proves how slack the Forest department is. A total of 175 fishermen have been arrested and 22 fishing trawlers have been seized in the last two months. Most of the fishermen are from neighbouring Balasore and Bhadrak districts. However, the number of fishermen who still continue to tread in the banned sanctuary far



exceeds the numbers who have been arrested.

Meanwhile some of the fishermen alleged that the Forest department is adopting repressive measures. They said that many fishermen with their trawlers inside the prohibited zone are being let off. On the other hand, fishermen working outside the prohibited zone are being penalised.

Locals alleged that some unscrupulous Forest department personnel are working in tandem with fishermen from other districts. They said that Forest staff are cracking down on local fishermen and arresting them even if they are fishing outside the prohibited zone.

Observers pointed out that that entry of fishing trawlers in the prohibited zone will result in the decline in breeding of the rare turtles. Environmentalists

have also expressed concern over the development. They said that fishing in the prohibited zone will lead to loss of lives of the rare turtles.

The Gahirmatha marine sanctuary adjoining Bhitarkanika under Rajnagar block is spread over 1,435 square kilometres. The marine sanctuary is known as the nursery of the Olive Ridley turtles as they visit the area in large numbers to lay eggs every year. Usually the turtles start arriving in the sanctuary November onwards and leave it in May. It is the main reason why Gahirmatha is declared as a prohibited zone for this period.

When contacted, ranger Pradosh Moharana rejected the charges. He warned that stringent action will be taken against any fishermen or trawlers found in the prohibited zone.

Cancer care centre at VIMSAR soon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambalpur, Dec 31: A cancer care centre will come up at the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), Burla by the end of 2024, an official informed here Sunday.

The construction work of the cancer care centre on the premises of the institution is going on in full swing and a target has been set to complete the work on the project by July 2024. The Public Works department (PWD) is carrying out the construction work the expenses for which would be ₹34 crore approximately.

"The ongoing construction of a ground-plus-one-storey building within the premises of VIMSAR is progressing rapidly now. Presently, the foundation part of the building is nearing completion. A bunker will also be constructed as a part of the facility," informed assistant executive engineer of PWD, Santanu Sahu.

To ensure compliance with safety regulations, eLORA (e-Licensing of Radiation Applications) registration has also been done for the project, said an official of VIMSAR.

The official informed that two linear accelerator machines will be installed at the cancer care centre. It is a machine that aims radiation at cancerous tumours with pinpoint accuracy, but sparing nearby healthy tissues. It is used to deliver several types of external beam radiation therapy, including the image-guided radiation therapy (IGRT) and intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT).

This apart, the cancer care centre will provide out patient department (OPD) services to the patients dependent on the hospital, the official added.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Elephant herd holds up traffic

POST NEWS NETWORK

Thakurmunda, Dec 31: Tourists who had come to Bhimkund in Mayurbhanj district for an outing Sunday had a harrowing experience while returning in the evening as a herd of 22 elephants blocked the main road. The herd stayed put on the road for more than hour creating panic among the

tourists. A large number of vehicles were seen standing on both the up and down sides of the road as the elephants held centre stage.

Forest department officials said the elephant herd had crossed the Tel river Saturday night and entered Andharikhaman village located in the Thakurmunda range. When villagers and Forest staff

tried to drive the herd away, the animals came on to the Bhimkund-Boring road and stationed themselves.

Later staff of the Forest department, locals and some of the tourists managed to drive the herd away towards Ambabeda forest. After the elephants left, vehicular movements resumed once more, much to the relief of the tourists.

NEW YEAR NEW BEGINNINGS!

Hearty wishes from Union Bank on the occasion of

2024

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यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Union Bank of India

A Government of India Undertaking

9-yr-old invited for Nepal sports meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Dec 31: Two boys from this town including a nine-year old kid will participate in a 5000 metres race at an international athletics meet to be held at Kaski in Nepal. The event will start January 7, 2024, officials informed Sunday. The two are Sahadatt Khan, nine years, son of Sheikh Shaukat Khan of Imambada and Biswajit Panda, 12, a resident of

this town. Sahadatt has been practicing for the event under the coaching of Shaukat. Speaking to mediapersons, Shaukat said that Sahadatt has been invited to participate in the VIth Indo-Nepal Federation athletics meet through a letter which he received December 6.

Toshali promises to fight for rape victims



PNN/ AGENCIES

Berhampur, Dec 31: Twenty-six-year-old SR Toshali, who secured eighth rank in the Odisha Judicial Service (OJS) Examination, said Sunday she was shaken by the 2012 'Nirbhaya' gangrape case and it motivated her to pursue law to provide justice to women and children who are victims of such incidents.

Toshali, who hails from this town, cracked the OJS Exam, 2022 conducted by the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC). The result was declared December 27 this year. She is the daughter of a retired judicial officer and hence she was always encouraged at home to chase her dreams.

"I was in Class XI when the 'Nirbhaya' case shook the entire nation. Like other sensitive people, I was very saddened by the incident. It motivated me to join judicial service so that I could provide justice to victims of such heinous crimes," stated Toshali. She is currently pursuing her second-year master's degree in law at the Lingaraj Law College here.

A 23-year-old paramedic student was gangraped inside a moving bus in Delhi December 16, 2012. She later succumbed to her injuries at a hospital.

After completing her Class XII from Khallikote Junior College here, Toshali joined the University Law College under Utkal University to pursue BA. She cracked the prestigious judicial service examination in her second attempt. Last time, she had cleared the written test but failed the interview.

"I worked harder than last year. This time, I was confident of clearing the examination but did not think that I would secure such a high rank," Toshali said.

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THE MOTHER



New Year, Old Woes

A permacrisis seems to have engulfed the world with no end in sight for conflicts, climate disasters, economic gloom and democratic backsliding as we enter another new year. The war in Ukraine which is soon set to complete two years and the conflict in Gaza which has entered 12 weeks are among the major geopolitical concerns for almost every country. Their ripple effects – high levels of inflation, growing inequality and a cost of living crisis – are being felt across the world. That these concerns are now relevant for India too is visible when we notice the reports of an internal mail sent to all staffers by N. Chandrasekaran, the Chairman of Tata Sons. Chandrasekaran has reportedly written that employees should be aware about geopolitical events and brace for increased volatility and disruption. He, however, is careful to end the note saying there is a silver lining in this because India's future seems bright. How he concludes this mail is, in itself, an ominous pointer towards the present situation prevailing in this country as perceived by important industry leaders.

Climate change, an existential threat to humanity, may cause more havoc than ever before if trends, especially over the past few months, are any indication. Global temperatures are on the rise year after year, with 2023 being the hottest in recorded history. The only solution, we are told, lies in a transition from our current fossil fuel-based economy to a green energy based one. The shift may take more time but for now there is at least some kind of awakening on the issue.

Two years of pandemic followed by two years of geopolitical tensions have led to widespread economic woes the world over. Inflation still remains above the comfort zone in most economies, hitting the poorest people the most. Wealth inequality has reached levels never seen before, with the richest 1 per cent grabbing nearly two-thirds of the \$42 trillion of wealth newly-created since the year 2020. The average billionaire has gained roughly \$1.7 million for every \$1 of new wealth earned by a person in the bottom 90 per cent. Such disparities between the haves and have-nots often result in social tension. Industrial policy reforms and protectionism, it seems, have returned with vengeance as a result of de-globalisation. This is particularly visible in emerging economies. The US is drawing a large portion of the world's foreign direct investment and financial flows due to its substantial subsidies and high interest rates, while the Global South is experiencing deficits as a result of growing dollar-denominated import bills for food and other necessities.

Technology in the form of artificial intelligence has taken the world by storm. Disruptions in the form of automation in more and more industries and sectors may lead to more layoffs and livelihood losses. This calls for urgent regulation of AI, something like the European Union has done with its AI Act, the world's first comprehensive AI law. Such laws should come in other parts of the world so that humanity continues to control technology and not the other way round. The mad rush for digitalization in every sector in countries like India has helped push the economy further away from the poor and enriched the rich much more. While the common man is happy with small conveniences and is incapable of understanding the permanent damages caused by digital systems being implemented, the rich and powerful are gloating over windfall super normal profits due to these very initiatives.

Authoritarian tendencies are developing in most governments with democracy taking a back seat. Governments are employing surveillance tools to snoop on own their own citizens. With more than a third of the world's population going to the polls in 2024 to elect leaders in more than 70 countries including India, the United States, Taiwan and Russia, the year is important for the future of democracy and the thought of freedom of the individual and human rights that are tied inextricably to it. The current wave of Right-wing populism spreading in many parts of the world remains a major threat for a free thinking liberal global order, and Donald Trump or any other Republican returning to the White House after the November polls will only aggravate that threat. Back home in India, the results to the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections are set to be the most momentous in the nation's recent history.

This is a time to hope for increased sanity and dispassionate evaluation of the bigger picture of the future by every citizen living across the globe.

WISDOM CORNER

- Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbours, and let every new year find you a better man. **BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**
- I have learned silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet, strange, I am ungrateful to those teachers. **KAHLIL GIBRAN**
- Every breath we take, every step we make, can be filled with peace, joy and serenity. **THICH NHAT HANH**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1863:** The Emancipation Proclamation, which freed enslaved people in the Confederacy (the states in rebellion against the Union during the American Civil War), was issued by US President Abraham Lincoln.
- 1959:** Dictator Fulgencio Batista fled Cuba after his regime was toppled by rebel forces led by Fidel Castro.
- 1994:** The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect, eliminating most tariffs and other trade barriers on products and services passing between the United States, Canada, and Mexico.
- 2002:** Euro introduced in Europe. The monetary unit of the European Union was introduced with the issuance of both currency and coins, and by March 2002 it was the sole legal tender of participating member states.

LOL

FLYING HUNTERS

Two hunters got a pilot to fly them into the far north for elk hunting. They were quite successful in their venture and bagged six big bucks. The pilot came back, as arranged, to pick them up. They started loading their gear into the plane, including the six elk. But the pilot objected and he said, "The plane can only take four of your elk; you will have to leave two behind."

They argued with him; the year before they had shot six and the pilot had allowed them to put all aboard. The plane was the same model and capacity. Reluctantly, the pilot finally



permitted them to put all six aboard. But when the attempted to take off and leave the valley, the little plane could not make it and they crashed into the wilderness. Climbing out of the wreckage, one hunter said to the other, "Do you know where we are?" "I think so," replied the other hunter. "I think this is about the same place where we landed last year!"

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

GREEN WISDOM

The ongoing war in Ukraine and the fighting in Gaza following Hamas' October 7 terrorist attack must not distract the world from our collective priorities: reducing our CO2 emissions, aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050, preserving biodiversity, and fighting poverty and inequality.

This is the doctrine France is implementing at an international level, through the Paris Pact for People and the Planet and the One Planet summits. The cornerstone of our strategy must be to speed up the ecological transition as well as the fight against poverty. After all, it is now crystal clear that no country will work to protect the planet if the price it must pay leads its citizens into a socio-economic dead-end.

The world's most advanced economies, which have also been the main CO2 emitters since the industrial revolution, must move away from fossil fuels. If we want to meet the goals of the Paris climate agreement, this is nonnegotiable.

Science has set the trajectory: we must move away from coal by 2030, from oil by 2045, and from gas by 2050. While the G7 countries bear the greatest responsibility, China, which is now the second-largest emitter in history, must be fully committed, too.

The threat posed by coal must be addressed first. Today, the 2,000 gigawatts of installed capacity emit enough CO2 to take us above 1.5°C. While the International Energy Agency recommends withdrawing 92 GW per year, 500 GW of additional capacity is already planned.

While it is the G7's responsibility to move away from coal by 2030 (France will have done so in 2027), emerging economies are now the biggest coal consumers. In these countries, we need to speed up the financing of renewables, as well as nuclear power, which, as a manageable and decarbonised energy source, must play a key role.

We must also put private fi-



Science has set the trajectory: we must move away from coal by 2030, from oil by 2045, and from gas by 2050

ancing and trade at the service of the Paris agreement. The cost of investment must be higher for players in the fossil-fuel sector. We need a green interest rate and a brown interest rate. Similarly, we need a climate clause in our trade agreements, because we cannot simultaneously demand that our industries become greener while supporting the liberalisation of international trade in polluting products.

For the most vulnerable countries, we must create conditions that enable them to finance their climate-change mitigation and adaptation efforts and access the green technologies that are the new engines of growth. This implies going further than traditional "official development assistance" and doing for vulnerable countries what rich countries did for themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic: pursue an unorthodox fiscal and monetary policy.

The results are already there: in two years, following the initiative we took in Paris in the spring of 2021, we have released over \$100 billion in special drawing rights (SDRs), the International Monetary Fund's reserve asset) for vulnerable countries. By activating this "dormant asset," we are extending 20-year loans at near-zero interest rates to finance climate action and pandemic preparedness in the poorest countries. We have begun to change debt rules to suspend payments

for such countries, should a climate shock occur. And we have changed the mandate of multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank, so that they take more risks and mobilize more private money.

We are going to continue working on this, including within the framework of the new loss and damage fund, where we must mobilise new private insurance mechanisms in the face of climate risk. We will start from the specific needs of the hardest-hit countries. In the first half of 2024, France and Bangladesh will sign an agreement to finance climate-change adaptation and loss and damage, with the French development agency contributing €1 billion (\$1.1 billion) in investment, and the IMF extending up to \$1 billion worth of SDRs in new loans.

This also implies identifying, on a global scale, governance mechanisms for the most crucial challenges we will have to face in the coming years, access to water being one of the most pressing. In this regard, France and Kazakhstan will convene a One Water Summit during the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024.

Moreover, we must focus on building the basis of a "bio-economy" that will pay for the services provided by nature. Nature is our best technology to sequester carbon on a large scale. The countries with the most important carbon and bio-

diversity reserves, especially in the three main tropical forest basins, must obtain much greater resources, determined on a country-by-country basis, in exchange for their stewardship of these vital reserves. France has already launched three contracts of this type at COP28, with Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Congo, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

But reform of the voluntary carbon market is essential. We need to create an international carbon and biodiversity exchange that will allow governmental and private actors to organise voluntary carbon credit swaps, based on sufficiently ambitious criteria to avoid greenwashing, and to remunerate local communities.

The ocean is our most important carbon sink, and we must protect it. France and Costa Rica will convene the third United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice in June 2025, with the aim of updating international law, including on the prohibition of plastic pollution and on protection of the deep sea and seabed. These reforms would also enable the development of national strategies for seaboard protection by countries with exclusive economic zones.

Finally, we will not succeed if we cannot reform the World Bank and the IMF, which play a prominent role in establishing the norms and financing the green transition on a global scale. Eighty years after their creation, these institutions remain underfunded, relative to the size of the global economy and population, and emerging and developing countries continue to be shut out of their governance. But we will not be able to agree on goals and financing until every country negotiating is on an equal footing. To this end, we must review Bretton Woods governance, and ask emerging countries to assume their share of accountability in financing global public goods.

The writer is President of France. #PROJECTSYNDICATE

SPECTRUM TECHNOLOGY

AI in the year of 70 elections

The global economy is at stake as both the World Bank and the European Union fear artificial intelligence (AI) manipulating 70 countries, including the world's largest democracies – India, the US and Russia – going to polls in 2024. Others to join the polls include Taiwan, Brazil, Indonesia and Pakistan. And all will be experiencing their first AI election, says British journal The Economist adding "Disinformation campaigns may be supercharged in 2024."

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) estimates that AI is poised to contribute \$15.7 trillion to the global economy. However, the World Bank underscores the challenges posed by AI, labelling 2023 as the year of inequality and 2024 as the year of artificial intelligence. The worry among nations stems from the potential for AI to manipulate information on a larger scale than the traditional social media or manual public relations methods. The upcoming elections, particularly Taiwan's in January 2024, carry global significance. The contest between the Democratic

Progressive Party and the Kuomintang, coupled with Beijing's alleged involvement through cyber warfare, adds a geopolitical dimension to the concerns.

Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, interim Dean at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, predicts that the 2024 elections will be an "AI election", comparable to the impact of social media in 2016 and 2020 changing politics. Luminare's survey reveals widespread European concerns about AI and deepfake technology, with over 70% of respondents in the UK and Germany expressing concern about its potential threat to elections and democracy.

India grapples with AI controversies involving sophisticated IT cells within numerous political parties, coupled with ongoing debates surrounding EVMs. More people think social media companies hurt democracy instead of strengthening it. Referencing historical examples, Professor Paul M Vaaler of the University of Minnesota highlights the influence of MNCs in electoral politics, emphasising a potential repeat scenario with

AI. He says that between 1987 and 2000, MNCs invested \$199 billion in 18 developing countries and replaced governments – right with left and left with right. Microsoft's chief economist, Michael Schwarz, warns of bad actors meddling in elections through AI-driven spams, while also acknowledging the lucrative potential of AI development.

India, facing a Hobson's choice regarding AI involvement, grapples with economic challenges, including high debt levels, growing gig jobs, and concerns about the quality of employment. The GDP is growing for sure as high debt figures also add to it. The low value gig jobs being created syncs with the World Bank's concern of loss in quality employment. India's debt has touched ₹169 lakh crore, foreign debt exceeds \$629 billion, though the Finance Ministry has allayed IMF fears of debt reaching 100 per cent of GDP.

Fears rise about the use and misuse of AI ahead of next year's elections around the world that will see billions of people come out to vote. Pime Minister Narendra Modi has cautioned against AI misuse in elections in India, echoing fears of deepfake

technology after a video of him dancing surfaced. During Telangana elections, the BRS complained to the Election Commission that the Congress used AI to discredit its party working president KT Rama Rao. BJP has been using AI campaigns since 2020 with its MP Manoj Tiwari's AI generated videos. The party said that it had partnered with a private company to generate deepfakes that reached 15 million people in 5800 WhatsApp groups. Now other parties are also using it to reach a larger audience. Companies around Delhi have gone into producing many AI-generated campaign materials for the Lok Sabha elections from village to national level.

As AI's disruptive effects on wages, income distribution and economic inequality become apparent, balancing technological advancement with cautious regulation becomes imperative. Despite fears of remote political intervention, the inexorable march of technological progress mandates adherence to Western practices to ensure responsible use in polling and governance processes.



Shivaji Sarkar

INDIA GRAPPLES WITH AI CONTROVERSIES INVOLVING SOPHISTICATED IT CELLS WITHIN POLITICAL PARTIES, COUPLED WITH ONGOING DEBATES SURROUNDING EVMS

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

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Divergent views

Sir, This refers to "Can Trump run for 2024 US Prez despite bans?," OrissaPOST, December 31. Maine pitched the 2024 election into deeper chaos and constitutional confusion by becoming the second state to throw Donald Trump off the ballot over the 2021 US Capitol riot. The move from the Maine secretary of state – following a similar decision from the Colorado Supreme Court earlier this month – worsened a growing crisis for Trump's campaign and strengthened the rationale for the US Supreme Court to take up the issue, arising from the "insurrectionist ban." It has already exacerbated the havoc already surrounding the election and could cement ever wider national divides. The controversy, however, also raises new questions over whether efforts to make Trump pay for the January 6 riot are justified on the grounds of protecting America's democracy from a uniquely pernicious challenge or could backfire politically against President Joe Biden and Democrats next fall. The multiple criminal charges Trump is facing have tended to hike his popularity among base voters even if his wild anti-democratic conduct in 2020 could be a major general election liability. The fact that different states now have a divergent view of the constitution and Trump's eligibility to run again means that it is almost incumbent on the US Supreme Court to step in. This, even if wading into this political tsunami could further expose an institution that has been battered politically in recent years to further strain.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Wrong message

Sir, Soon after Olympic medallists Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia returned their respective medals as a mark of protest against the election of Sanjay Singh, a close aide of former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, accused of sexual harassment, the medallist Vinesh Phogat joins the race and the government is non-committal. Does the action of the government give a comfortable message to sports lovers? Certainly not. The whole world is watching as to how a wrongdoer gets protection only because he belongs to the ruling party.

Arun Gupta, KOLKATA

national

of the day quote

The victory march of the Dravidian model government, which has been shattering any obstacle coming in the way of the journey towards equality, brotherhood and social justice will touch new heights in the coming year

As the world welcomes the New Year, let us share our hopes for a better tomorrow filled with peace, happiness, and equality

It is a time when we refresh our thoughts and renew our resolve to make improvements in our life. The New Year brings new hopes, aspirations, expectations and rejuvenates our lives

Shimla sees record 40-year drop in hotel occupancy

Shimla (HP), Dec 31: Prediction of weekend snow and the Chief Minister's directions not to be harsh with drunk revellers on New Year failed to woo tourists to Shimla which recorded over 60 per cent occupancy till Sunday evening, "the lowest in the last 40 years". Last year, Shimla had recorded more than 80 per cent occupancy on New Year. The hotel and allied industries were pinning hopes on 'white New Year' but chances of snowfall appear very bleak. While, the Mall Road and The Ridge in the heart of the city are abuzz with tourists as winter carnival turned the place into a fair with lights and cultural bonanza being organised but tourist footfall has not converted in room occupancy in hotels, said Shimla Hotel and Tourism Stakeholders Association president M K Seth.



The occupancy is about 60 per cent which is the lowest in the last 40 years and even during the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourist rush on New Year was more than this time, he said Sunday. He said that the vehicles without prior bookings were being diverted from the Shoghi by the police not realising that the majority of the tourists on the New Year are on the spot tourists which also affected tourist rush to the main city. However, the matter was resolved after he spoke with the SP, Seth added. Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu had directed to follow the slogan of 'Atithi Devo Bhava', facilitate the tourists and make adequate arrangements and proper plans in all districts for smooth flow of traffic. Besides allowing food joints and pan shops to remain open 24x7, he had said that drunk tourists would not be arrested, but would be facilitated by the police to their hotels to ensure that their New Year experience is not spoiled. The unregistered tourism units are eating into the sales of registered hotels, home stays and other such accommodations, said Seth adding that the tourists coming by train and luxury buses are "captured" by touts which take them to unregistered accommodations. "We are surprised to see such a drop in tourist inflow when all the things are favourable. This is the lowest occupancy in my living memory" said vice president of the association Prince Kukreja, hoping that the occupancy would pick up.

While, the Mall Road and The Ridge in the heart of the city are abuzz with tourists as winter carnival turned the place into a fair with lights and cultural bonanza being organised but tourist footfall has not converted in room occupancy in hotels, said Shimla Hotel and Tourism Stakeholders Association president M K Seth.

Cong braces for a make-or-break 2024

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: Fresh from the setbacks in the Assembly elections of Hindi heartland states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, the Congress is bracing for a make-or-break 2024, the year of the 18th Lok Sabha election.

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi hopes to equal Jawaharlal Nehru's record of returning to the PMO thrice in a row, the New Year is also being seen by many as one of the toughest periods for the Congress in its 138-year journey.

It will also mark 40 years since Congress scaled its electoral peak in 1984 winning a record 414 Lok Sabha seats. With just 48 seats in the Lower House of Parliament now, the party has experienced a steady decline in the last 10 years.

In 2024, as Congress hopes to arrest this slide, it will face multiple challenges, the top-most being finalising seat-sharing deals with constituents of the anti-BJP INDIA bloc which is yet to make any electoral impact.

The Congress will begin these negotiations on a weak footing, having lost the Hindi heartland states of Madhya Pradesh,



Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh to the BJP. The defeats have upset the Congress' calculations as it was hoping to sustain the momentum gained by the victories in Himachal Pradesh in 2022 and in Karnataka in 2023.

The losses are most likely to prove demoralising for the party cadre just ahead of the 2024 general elections as the Hindi belt states play a major role in determining the outcome. In 2019, the BJP had won 141 seats -- 71 per cent of those contested -- in the Hindi heartland.

A poll analyst feels that the 2024 Lok Sabha polls are significant for the Congress considering that it has lost two general elections badly. It is a "make or break situation for the party now," the analyst said. The Congress is

May the year 2024 bring happiness, peace and prosperity for all. May we continue to contribute to the progress of our country. Let us welcome the New Year and take a pledge to build a prosperous society and nation

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT

PM TO VISIT TN, LAKSHADWEEP

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Tamil Nadu and Lakshadweep January 2 and 3 during which he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects, his office said Sunday



TRINAMOOL EYES PIVOTAL ROLE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Dec 31: Despite losing national party status, the Trinamool Congress remains a dominant political force in West Bengal, buoyed by a triumphant victory in the violence-marred rural polls and aiming to play a pivotal role in the national opposition alliance -- INDIA -- ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Conversely, the BJP faced an exodus and electoral setbacks in 2023. The state leadership grappled with maintaining internal cohesion while attempting to capitalise on allegations, including graft charges against the Mamata Banerjee government.

The TMC aspires to uphold its political dominance in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, actively contributing to forging a formidable opposition in the run up to the parliamentary elections. Simultaneously, the BJP, known for its strict control over dissidents, is placing its hopes on rural areas to stage a turnaround and mobilise its cadre base to maintain unity.

The erstwhile mighty CPI(M)-led Left Front, having lost its main opposition status to the saffron camp in recent years, has exhibited signs of recovery in bypolls and panchayat polls. Despite a disappointing start to the electoral year, losing the minority-dominated Sagardighi seat to Congress-Left Front alliance, the party also relinquished its national party status due to lacklustre performances in various elections.

The withdrawal of national party status resulted from the TMC's unsuccessful attempt to expand nationally and act as the linchpin of an opposition alliance against the BJP, culminating in its poor showing in Goa Assembly polls and the civic election debacle in Tripura in December 2021.

Efforts to rectify the Sagardighi defeat included the induction of a Congress MLA into the party, accompanied by significant organisational restructuring at the grassroots level.

In emulation of the Congress's Bharat Jodo Yatra, the TMC launched a mass outreach campaign, 'Trinamool ey Nabajowar' (new wave in Trinamool).



■ The TMC aspires to uphold its political dominance in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, actively contributing to forging a formidable opposition in the run up to the parliamentary elections

■ The TMC's successful campaign translated into a sweeping victory in West Bengal's rural polls, securing all 20 Zila Parishads in the three-tier panchayat system and winning 880 seats out of 928

Abhishek Banerjee, nephew of TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee, and considered the party's de facto number two, led the campaign.

The TMC's successful campaign translated into a sweeping victory in West Bengal's rural polls, securing all 20 Zila Parishads in the three-tier panchayat system and winning 880 seats out of 928. The BJP secured 31 seats, while the Congress-Left Front alliance won 15 seats, with the remaining two going to others.

Buoyed by this success, the TMC assumed a leading role in forming the INDIA opposition alliance, comprising 28 anti-BJP parties across the country. Despite these victories, challenges loom for Bengal's ruling party, as its proposals for a swift seat-sharing deal, common manifesto, and narrative are yet to resonate among allies.

As the party enters the New Year, it aims not only to reclaim Lok Sabha seats lost to the BJP in 2019 but also to strengthen its position in the state and play a pivotal role in the opposition alliance if the BJP falls short of a majority.



People fly kite on New Year eve on the outskirts of Amritsar

PTI PHOTO

BJP to flag off New Year with 'Lok Sabha Yojana Baithak'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Dec 31: BJP is on a mission to secure a massive victory for the third time in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections after 2019 and 2014, and is going to hold 'Lok Sabha Yojana Baithak' across the country in the first week of January this year.

This is aimed at holding deliberations within the party regarding its preparations ahead of the upcoming parliamentary polls. The BJP High Command has written a letter to all the state in-charges of the party, state presidents and general secretaries of the party organisation across states.

The party high command has also given instructions to discuss in detail the social and political issues affecting the party organisation, organisational preparations and party activities, publicity campaigns and political narratives run on various platforms and media sources (such as social media etc).

BJP has asked all the state in-charges, state presidents and general secretaries of the party to hold 'Lok Sabha Yojana Baithak' before January 7, and has also directed them to send the details of these meetings to party's national president JP Nadda.

Govt hopeful of 'bountiful harvest'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: With India's farm sector remaining resilient to erratic weather conditions, the government is hopeful of having bountiful food grain production even as it tries hard to keep a lid on food inflation ahead of general elections in 2024.

From floods to droughts, extreme weather events this year have not only raised fears over foodgrain production but also created an artificial supply scare that forced the government to take a slew of pre-emptive measures, including export curbs on certain commodities.

Besides, the government sub-

In the year ahead of the 2024 general elections, the government walked a tightrope to balance farmers' and consumer interests



sided the sale of a few commodities to improve domestic supply and arrest the sharp spikes in retail prices of wheat, rice, edible oils, pulses, tomato, and onion. While the efforts to control food prices are still on, the government is closely watching the prospects of rabi (winter) crops, especially wheat and pulses, which are sown

now and will be ready for harvest closer to 2024 general elections in April-May. Food inflation remained at an elevated level throughout the year after touching a low of 2.96 per cent in May. In November, it stood at 8.7 per cent.

Agricultural crops are grown in two seasons -- kharif (summer) and rabi (winter) -- between July

2023 and June 2024. Kharif crops have been harvested while rabi crops are sown now. The agriculture ministry has come out with its initial estimates which do not give a positive picture due to the projection of a likely slight drop in the 2023 kharif food grain output at 148.56 million tonnes as against 155.7 million tonnes in the year-ago period due to "below average" rainfall in the four-month (June-September) monsoon season amid strengthening of El Nino conditions. Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh faced drought conditions while Tamil Nadu faced floods due to cyclone Michaung, impacting kharif crops and farmers' livelihoods.

Space industry seeks bold reforms, clarity on FDI

Industry bodies - Indian Space Association (ISpA) and Satcom Industry Association (SIA-India) - have asked the government to bring the Space Activity Bill for approval of Parliament to give statutory cover to the Space Policy announced earlier this year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: India's private space industry has sought bold and transformative reforms with clarity on the foreign direct investment to propel the nascent sector in the New Year.

The industry had welcomed the government decision, reflected in the Telecommunications Act approved by Parliament, to adopt the administrative route for allocation of satellite-based spectrum which would help bridge the digital divide by enabling

space-based broadband internet access to remote parts of the country.

Industry bodies - Indian Space Association (ISpA) and Satcom Industry Association (SIA-India) - have also asked the government to bring the Space Activity Bill for approval of Parliament to give statutory cover to the Space Policy announced earlier this year.

"We expect the Space Activity Bill to be discussed in Parliament which will cover various factors of India's space goals, including insurance in space, in-



ternational and national obligations, define offences and subsequent punishments, barriers of entry for private companies, liability for damages caused in space," Lt Gen A K Bhatt (retd), Director General, Indian Space Association (ISpA), said.

Bhatt said since the FDI Policy is in place, funds will flow from Indian big companies and there will be financial incentives to

private players to be able to operate. In its pre-budget memorandum, SIA-India has sought increased budgetary outlay for the Department of Space, tax incentives for research and development, extended tax-holiday for deep tech start-ups to seven years, interest rate subsidies, financial incentives for academia and visa programmes for entrepreneurs.

"The proposed budget reforms outlined in the memorandum are crucial for fostering innovation, ensuring global competitiveness, and propelling the Indian space industry to new heights," said Subba Rao Pavuluri, president of SIA-India.

However, prior to implementing financial stimulus and regulatory measures, the space sector requires a comprehensive Quantitative Analysis and delineation of Space Economy Sectors, akin to the OECD framework or the US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) framework, the industry body said.

The emphasis on promoting private entities, encouraging youth participation, and nurturing deep tech startups aligns with the ambitious goals of creating India's space odyssey, with a moon landing by 2040 and a

space station by 2035, SIA-India said.

It also wanted the government to establish specialised research and development hubs, testing facilities for space technologies and data centres to process, analyse and store massive data from space-related activities. ISpA's Lt Gen Bhatt (retd) said Indian start-ups had received 123.90 million dollars in 2023, taking the total funding raised to 380.25 million dollars till date.

In the past year, a total of 54 new space startups have emerged, bringing the current count of space startups in India to 204, Bhatt said.

According to industry estimates, the private space sector in India accounts for about two per cent of the global space economy and is projected to grow to about 10 per cent by 2040.

international



I wish that the new calendar year will be auspicious for our country and all humanity. We maintain our hope for a better, more peaceful & more prosperous future for all
RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN | PRESIDENT OF TÜRKIYE

META TO TURN TWENTY

Mark Zuckerberg and some Harvard classmates launched their social game-changer, then called the Facebook, in February 2004. The website's membership was initially limited by the founders to Harvard students, but was expanded to other colleges in the Boston area, the Ivy League, and gradually most universities in the United States and Canada, corporations, and by September 2006 to everyone

Messages from world leaders

Here are quotes of some world leaders

VLADIMIR PUTIN



Russian President Vladimir Putin, facing an election in March, made only passing reference in his New Year address Sunday to his war in Ukraine, hailing his soldiers as heroes but mostly emphasising unity and shared determination.

XI JINPING



China's President Xi Jinping, speaking Sunday in a televised speech to mark the New Year, said the country will consolidate and enhance the positive trend of its economic recovery in 2024, and sustain long-term economic development with deeper reforms.

KIM JONG UN



North Korea vowed to launch three new spy satellites, build military drones, and boost its nuclear arsenal in 2024 as leader Kim Jong Un said US policy is making war inevitable, state media reported Sunday.



POPE FRANCIS

At his Sunday prayers at the Vatican, Pope Francis said: "I wish everyone a peaceful end of the year, and please do not forget to pray for me".

Sydney, Auckland first major cities to ring in 2024

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canberra, Dec 31: Sydney and Auckland were among the world's first major cities to ring in 2024, with revelers cheering spectacular fireworks displays that lit up the skies over Sydney Harbor and New Zealand's tallest structure, Sky Tower. As the clock struck midnight in Australia, tons of explosives erupted in a 12-minute display that focused on the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

More than 1 million people — a number equivalent to one in five of the city's residents — watched from the shore and from boats in the harbour.

In Auckland, the light rain that fell all day had cleared as forecast by midnight over the city of 1.7 million people before the countdown began on an illuminated digital display near the top of the 328-metre (1,076-foot) communications and observation tower.

The ongoing wars in Ukraine



and Gaza, and heightened tensions in parts of the world, are affecting this year's New Year's Eve celebrations in a myriad of ways. Many cities were deploying extra security and some places cancelled New Year's Eve events altogether.

More police than ever were deployed throughout Sydney. The waterfront has been the scene of heated pro-Palestinian protests after the sails of the Sydney Opera House were illuminated in the colours of the

Israeli flag in response to the October 7 attack by Palestinian militant group Hamas that triggered the war.

In Japan, temple bells rang out across the nation as people gathered at shrines and temples to welcome in the new year. In New York City, officials and party organisers said they were prepared to ensure the safety of tens of thousands of revelers expected to flood Times Square in the heart of midtown Manhattan.

Year of democracies

As the new year begins, people may be wanting to right the world and leave the topsy-turvy 2023 behind. That opportunity may come soon for some 2 billion citizens of 70 countries that will hold elections in 2024, and for all those fighting to improve their lot and the planet.

US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

While incumbent President Joe Biden, a Democrat leader, has filed his candidature seeking a second term as the head of the United States, the rather undisciplined Republicans have also upped the ante with impeached former President of US Donald Trump, Indian-origin businessman Vivek Ramaswamy. The Republicans rule the Houses in the US, however, the Republicans has seen a major crisis when they were unable to retain a House speaker owing to internal conflicts.

UK ELECTIONS

With the chain of resignations that began with then Conservative Party member and Chancellor of the Exchequer in the ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson's cabinet, Rishi Sunak, saw the political turmoil come a full circle, when Rishi Sunak assumed office as the Tory's



General elections slated to be held in 70 nations, some of key stakeholders like United States of America, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, United Kingdom, Russia, and Mexico

choice for the PM post. After Boris Johnson resigned, following the 'Covid-gate' accusations, Liz Truss took over only to become the shortest reigning Prime Minister of UK. Truss' resignation was followed by Rishi Sunak assuming chair.

RUSSIA ELECTIONS

In the absence of an Opposition and incumbent President Vladimir Putin declaring his candidature for a sixth term, it looks like the people of Russia has been left with any choice. Opposition leader and Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny has been imprisoned, and his latest where-

abouts are unknown.

B'DESH GENERAL ELECTIONS

General elections are scheduled to be held in Bangladesh 7 January 2024 under the auspices of the 2024 Bangladesh Election Commission. Notably, all major opposition parties are opposing the General Elections. Massive rallies have led to mass arrests of opposition leaders in Bangladesh drawing international attention on the Sheikh Hasina-led government in Bangladesh.

PAK PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Pakistan fell into a govern-

mental chaos with former Prime Minister Imran Khan being removed from governance on accusations of corruption, and the Toshakhana case. General elections are scheduled to be held 8 February 2024 to elect the members of the 16th National Assembly.

MEXICAN GENERAL ELECTIONS

General elections are scheduled to be held in Mexico 2 June 2024. Voters will elect a new president to serve a six-year term, all 500 members of the Chamber of Deputies and all 128 members of the Senate of the Republic.

NORTH ASIA ELECTIONS

Taiwan heads to the polls in January in a presidential election that will be closely watched from Beijing to Washington to Canberra. The island of 24 million people has been vaulted to the centre of global concerns over China's military intentions. Beijing has made no secret of its desire to unite the island with the mainland and sent dozens of fighter jets and naval vessels weekly to harass its neighbour. Standing in its way is the democratically elected government in Taipei which has been led for the past eight years by Tsai Ing-wen and her Democratic Progressive Party.

Will the world see more wars, unrest?



Sadly, 2023 has been a violent one on the global stage. War broke out between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, leading to the deaths of thousands of Palestinians and hundreds of Israelis, including many children on both sides. The bitter war between Russia and Ukraine continued with no end in sight.

As a result of the focus on these two conflicts, other countries have dropped off the radar for many people. Some of these nations have been dealing with simmering unrest, however, which could erupt in 2024 and seize the global spotlight.

Myanmar

The country, home to 135 ethnic groups, has rarely known peace. For years before the coup, there was an ongoing, low-grade civil conflict between the military and several minority ethnic groups who have long sought control over natural resources in their regions and independence from the state. Their resistance escalated in late 2023 with a coordinated northern offensive dealing the military its most significant losses in many years. The tenacity of the resistance of these minority groups, paired with the refusal of the military to compromise, suggests the country's civil war may worsen considerably in 2024 and regain international attention.

Lebanon

In 2019, widespread civil protest broke out in Lebanon against leaders who were perceived not to be addressing the day-to-day needs of the population. The International Monetary Fund criticised Lebanon in September for a lack of economic reform. Most recently,

the war between Israel and Hamas has threatened to spill over to Lebanon, home to the Hezbollah militant group, which claims to have an army of 100,000 fighters. Importantly, this jeopardises tourism as a key hope for Lebanon's economic recovery. These factors may precipitate a more serious economic and political collapse in 2024.

Pakistan

Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, the military has played an interventionist role in politics. Though Pakistani leaders are popularly elected, military officials have at times removed them from power. Pakistan is expected to hold parliamentary elections in February 2024, after which the current military caretaker government is expected to transfer power back to civilian rule. Many are watching the military closely. If this transfer of power does not take place, or there are delays, civil unrest may result.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka faced a debilitating economic crisis in 2022 that led to critical fuel, food and medical shortages. Civil protests caused then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to flee the country. He was quickly replaced by current President Ranil Wickremesingh. Elections are due in Sri Lanka by late 2024. While Wickremesingh, the incumbent, is likely to run for a second term, he has low trust with the public. He is viewed as too close to corrupt political elites. This dissatisfaction could lead to renewed protests — particularly if the economy stumbles again — in a repeat of the situation that led to Rajapaksa's ousting in 2022.



HAPPY NEW YEAR: Pedestrians pose in front of a New Year 2024 numerals decoration in central Moscow December 31, 2023, on the eve of the New Year

TID BITS

Myanmar to participate in ASEAN Tourism Forum

Yangon: Myanmar will participate in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Tourism Forum 2024 in Laos next year, the Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association said. "Until now, four travel companies registered to represent Myanmar in the forum," U Naung Naung Han, president of the Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association, told Xinhua news agency. He said participating in the event would help promote the country's tourism sector as travel agencies from various countries will come to the event. The forum will also include a tourism ministers' meeting, he added.

EU agrees to ease travel for Bulgaria & Romania

Brussels: Citizens of European Union members Romania and Bulgaria will no longer need a passport from March 31, 2024 to travel by air or sea to most other EU countries as well as Norway and Switzerland, the council of EU governments said. The decision extends the EU's passport-free travel zone, called the Schengen area, to 25 of the 27 EU countries. The Schengen area includes also Norway and Switzerland, which are not part of the EU, but does not include EU members Ireland and Cyprus and EU citizens still must have a passport to enter them.

China to enhance economic recovery

Beijing: President Xi Jinping said that China will consolidate and enhance the positive trend of its economic recovery in 2024, and sustain long-term economic development with deeper reforms. In a televised speech to mark the New Year, Xi said China would deepen reforms to shore up confidence in the economy. Xi said China will "consolidate and enhance the positive trend of economic recovery, and achieve stable and long-term economic development," Xi said in a statv.

Countdown for some big space missions

AFTER DECADES, HUMANS WILL FINALLY RETURN TO THE MOON. THE FIRST MANNED MISSION IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN 2024, WHICH WILL BE A YEAR CONSIDERED A MILESTONE IN ASTRONOMY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Golden (Colorado), Dec 31: 2024 is shaping up as the year of Moon landings. As many as 12 missions could fly by or land on the Moon in the next 12 months, the most in one year.

Three missions are expected in January alone.

Japan's SLIM mission is targeting 19 January for its first lunar landing. If successful, it will be only the fifth country to successfully reach the lunar surface after Russia, the United States, China, and India (which landed there in 2023).

Two companies are racing to achieve the first commercial landing on a celestial body. Intuitive Machines and Astroblet are part of NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) programme and represent the growing ambitions of the US commercial space sector. Indeed, Astroblet's mission is carrying small rovers de-

veloped by Mexico for that nation's first lunar mission. Second, there is intense scientific and economic interest in lunar exploration and resources. The Moon likely has minable water resources, which can be used for in-space refuelling and to support astronauts. Many of 2024's missions are either directly or indirectly focused on the search for water.

Third, the re-emergence of geopolitical competition has led to significant support for civil space programmes. Competing visions of international cooperation in space, like the United States-led Artemis Accords and the China-led International Lunar Research Station, are rapidly being adopted by many first-comers to space exploration. Underscoring this competition, both China and the United States have planned flagship missions in 2024. In May, China plans to launch the Chang'e 6 mission to return the first scientific sam-



ples from the lunar far side.

Following the successful sample return from the Chang'e 5 mission, Chang'e 6 will further demonstrate China's ability to operate across all parts of the lunar surface. A successful mission will keep the country on track for its goal to land taikonauts by 2030. Notably, the lander will also host instruments from Pakistan, Italy, France and

Sweden. In November, the US plans to launch the Artemis II mission to fly by the Moon carrying a human crew. Artemis II's four astronauts, including one Canadian, will be the first to leave Earth orbit since the 1970s.

This mission will lay the groundwork for a crewed return to the lunar surface in 2026 or 2027, with an expectation for continual missions by the end of

the decade and establishment of a lunar surface base in the early 2030s. Beyond these larger missions, several smaller fly-bys, orbiters, and landers are planned. China is sending a relay satellite that can support future missions to the south pole.

Not all of these missions will be successful. Even landing on the Moon is a technological challenge, as illustrated by the loss of Russia's Luna 25 lander in 2023. Landing is the first major hurdle to securing lunar surface access. With so many commercial and national landing attempts in 2024, the success of even two or three would mark a major technological feat.

Successful landings, and even lessons learned from failures, will prove that newcomer countries and private industry can reach the Moon.

The culmination of so many missions this year represents the last five years of renewed focus on the Moon.

business

of the day quote

In 2023, India's logistics sector showcased commendable progress. The government's strategic investments and commitment to digitalisation have been instrumental in this growth. As we step into 2024, the sector's outlook remains promising

The Indian retail industry's growth prospects for 2024 present a mixed picture with several factors influencing the landscape

As we move to 2024, increased focus on managing an inclusive and equitable organisation is likely to take centre stage

As such, we think of the current phase as a part of the growing up of our ecosystem. Yes, there will be consolidation, valuation correction and even some mortality of companies but all in all, the end result will still be progress



As we transition into 2024, there is anticipation that foreign investors will join the momentum, particularly with the decline in US bond yields and weakening of the dollar index

PARTH NYATI | FOUNDER, TRADINGO

NAT'L E-COMMERCE POLICY SOON

The proposed national e-commerce policy being formulated by the commerce and industry ministry is in the final stages and expected to be announced very soon, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said



FASTEST-GROWING

India to top major economies

After a remarkable 2023, geopolitical developments will again test the resilience of Indian economy this year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: India decisively withstood global headwinds in 2023 and is likely to remain as the world's fastest-growing major economy on the back of growing demand, moderate inflation, stable interest rate regime and robust foreign exchange reserves.

Despite widespread pessimism witnessed among the developed nations and the worsening geopolitical situation, India recorded a gross domestic product (GDP) expansion of 6.1 per cent in the March quarter. The growth moved up to 7.8 per cent in the June quarter and was 7.6 per cent in the September quarter.

For the first six months of this fiscal, the growth was 7.7 per cent.

The growth momentum is expected to sustain in the December quarter, making India the fastest-growing major economy in the world much ahead of China.

According to the latest growth projections of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which appear conservative, India will record a growth of 6.3 per cent in 2023, ahead of China and Brazil at 5.2 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively.

For 2024, the OECD expects India to grow at 6.1 per cent and China at 4.7 per cent.



On the other hand, major economies, including the US, UK and Japan, are likely to witness either deceleration or very nominal increase in economic growth rates in the coming year.

India's performance on the economic front in 2023 appears even better when viewed from a global perspective.

As per the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) World Economic Outlook, global growth is estimated to decelerate from 3.5 per cent in 2022 to 3 per cent in 2023 and further to 2.9 per cent in 2024.

Ashima Goyal, Member of the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), said India's growth has "shown great resilience despite many external shocks. This is due to increasing economic di-

- OECD EXPECTS INDIA TO GROW AT 6.1%
IMF ESTIMATES GLOBAL GROWTH AT 2.9%

versity and the role of policy in smoothing shocks".

Equipping people with better skills and assets, she said, "will add up to give India good growth in 2024 and beyond".

A recent article on the state of the economy by the RBI said, "Despite significant global headwinds, the Indian economy remained the fastest growing major economy in 2023. The outlook is one of cautious optimism as consumer confidence remains positive and perceptions about current income turned up in the RBI's latest survey of households in

Inflation is likely to moderate, although a well-distributed monsoon will be crucial for quelling food inflation. India's macro factors appear to be in a good place heading into 2024. The growth is expected at 6.5% in FY2024 and 6.2% in FY2025

ADITI NAYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST AT RATING AGENCY ICRA

November 2023".

Retail inflation is on a downward trajectory after touching a peak of 7.44 per cent in July. This year began with retail inflation of 6.52 per cent in January, and it softened to 4.31 per cent in May before rising to 7.44 per cent in July.

In November, the retail inflation worked out to be 5.55 per cent, which was within RBI's comfort zone but some distance away from the near rate of 4 per cent.

KEY RATE CUT EXPECTED

Following the policy of remaining "actively disinflationary", the RBI has kept the short-term interest rate or repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent since February.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das ended the rate hike cycle, which began in May 2022, by opting for the status quo in policy rate from April 2023. The stable interest rate regime has yielded good dividends and

strengthened the twin balance sheets of banks and corporates.

It is likely that the Reserve Bank may go in for a rate cut during the course of 2024 if the retail inflation remains within the specified band of 2 to 6 per cent and the price of crude oil does not show any unexpected spike driven by geopolitical factors, including Russia-Ukraine war, Israel-Gaza conflict and blockade of Red Sea route.

"Overall, the forces are likely to balance out in calendar year 2024, giving us a comfortable growth rate in the range of 6.3 per cent to 6.6 per cent. The joker in the pack is geopolitics and conflict hotspots - the worsening or easing of the current conflicts will determine the landing bias of the growth rate to the lower or higher end, respectively," opined Ranen Banerjee, Partner, Economic Advisory Services, PwC India.

The comforting factor for India in the midst of a worsening geopolitical climate and global economic slowdown is the foreign exchange reserves, which crossed the \$600 billion mark in December after a gap of about four months.

Also on the external front, the current account deficit showed remarkable improvement, and it narrowed sharply to 1 per cent of GDP in the September 2023 quarter against 3.8 per cent in the year-ago period.

AUTOMAKERS GEAR UP FOR MORE EVs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: After posting record-breaking volumes in 2023, Indian automobile industry is driving into the new year aware of a lurking moderation in sales growth but ready to embrace green technologies, led by electric vehicles.

Passenger vehicle sales are expected to cross 40 lakh units this year and prices are set to rise from January.

Veteran industry leader and Maruti Suzuki India Chairman RC Bhargava said the sales are expected to moderate a bit next year compared to 2023.

While being positive on the growth of Electric Vehicle (EV) sales next year, he noted that the focus should be towards all the green technologies which help in meeting the carbon neutrality goals.

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Managing Director Shailesh Chandra said the company will continue to launch new products across Internal Combustion Engine and EVs.

Homegrown rival Mahindra & Mahindra is also looking to charge up its electrification programme further as there is an increasing customer pull, conducive policy environment and expanding charging infrastructure.

In the luxury segment, Mercedes-Benz India expects an increase in the EV penetration. Another luxury carmaker Audi is also upbeat about electrification of its portfolio in India.

D-ST SET FOR BULL-ISH JOURNEY

ANALYSTS ARE OF THE VIEW THAT THE 2023 BULL RUN WITNESSED IN THE DOMESTIC EQUITY MARKET WILL CONTINUE, AND OVER THE NEXT 3-6 MONTHS, THE BENCHMARK INDICES COULD CLIMB UP TO 7%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: With tailwinds of a remarkable year and handsome investor returns, Indian equities are set for an eventful journey in 2024, with a slew of local and global cues - varying from interest rates to Lok Sabha polls to geopolitical happenings.

In 2023, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 11,399.52 points or 18.73 per cent, and the NSE Nifty climbed 3,626.1 points or 20 per cent.

Lok Sabha elections, the US Presidential polls, the trajectory of interest rates, particularly in the US and India, inflation trends and geopolitical situation will be the key factors for the stock market, analysts opined.

Experts said the return of the BJP government with a majority in the 2024 general elections is a pivotal factor on the market's wishlist for the new year.

As political stability plays a significant role in shaping market dynamics, the market's optimism hinges on a smooth and decisive outcome in the upcoming elections, fostering an environ-



The outlook for the Indian equity market in 2024 is optimistic yet cautious. Anticipated 6.5% economic growth in fiscal year 2024-25 positions India among the fastest-growing economies globally. While the Fed is expected to implement three interest rate cuts, the RBI may hold rates at 6.5%

PALKA ARORA CHOPRA | DIRECTOR, MASTER CAPITAL SERVICES

ment conducive to sustained economic growth and prosperity in 2024, an expert said.

A note by Motilal Oswal Broking and Distribution said that Lok Sabha elections and the first budget post-election would be most important on the domestic front.

"We expect market sentiment to strengthen further as the ongoing pre-election rally is likely to continue. Any rate cut would provide an additional boost to the market," it said.

Dalal Street investors added a whopping ₹81.90 lakh crore to their wealth in 2023 amid a raft of positive factors, including

strong domestic macroeconomic fundamentals, political stability owing to the BJP's success in recent elections, optimistic corporate earnings outlook, signals from the US Federal Reserve about three prospective rate cuts next year and heavy retail investors' participation.

"India continues to be the fastest growing economy in the world, and BJP's win in recently-held state elections has further boosted investors' sentiment. With macroeconomic factors beginning to turn positive, falling US bond yields have once again fuelled

robust foreign fund inflows into the Indian market. Along with that, sliding crude oil prices are likely to keep inflation under check, all of which should augur well for Indian equity markets going ahead.

Hence, the rally in the market is likely to further continue over the next 3-6 months, and Sensex and Nifty could see another 5-7 per cent appreciation, while midcap and smallcap indices may witness another 10-15 per cent jump," said Rakesh Mehta, Chairman of Mehta Equities Ltd.

The experts said investors' immediate focus would be on third-quarter earnings, and any deviation in earnings would be a reason for markets to go into profit-booking zone.

Indian equities had a dream run this year where the benchmark indices reached many milestones. The combined market valuation of all listed companies on the leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE reached the \$4 trillion milestone for the first time November 29 and December 1, respectively, this year.

RE investment to take centre stage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: India will witness more than 83 per cent increase in investments in renewable energy projects to around \$16.5 billion in 2024 as the country focuses on energy transition to reduce carbon emissions, according to ministry estimates.

This is in line with India's ambitious target of having 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030 and its resolve to reduce overall power generation capacity from fossil fuels to less than 50 per cent. India has committed a net zero emission target by 2070.

However, Union Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister RK Singh has said on many occasions that as much as 65 per cent power generation capacity would be from non-fossil fuels by 2030 and that would be higher than the set target of 50 per cent.

Apart from solar and wind energy, India has increased its focus on green hydrogen in a big way to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, mainly diesel, which is required for long haul vehicles. India is a diesel-based economy in a way that most of the commercial vehicles for passenger and freight services are using diesel as the fuel.

Gold on course to get dearer

GOLD LIKELY TO TOUCH ₹70,000 IN 2024, SAY EXPERTS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Mumbai, Dec 31: Continuing to glitter in 2024 as well, gold price is likely to touch ₹70,000 per 10 grams in the domestic market on the back of a stable rupee, geopolitical uncertainties and slowing global economic growth, according to experts.

In early December, prices skyrocketed again on global tensions in the Middle East, and emerging market participants anticipated that the rate hike cycle has more or less ended.

While the gold price remained volatile this year, it reached a new high of ₹61,845 per 10 grams May 4 in the domestic market and ₹2,083 an ounce in the global markets. Later, the yellow metal touched a record high of ₹61,914 per 10 grams November 16, Comtrend Research Director Gnanasekar Thiagarajan told PTI.

In a reflection of its safe-haven appeal, he said, gold touched an all-time high of ₹64,063 per 10 grams and \$2,140 an ounce December 4.

"We expect an eventual rise to \$2,400 in 2024, and if the rupee is to be stable, gold is likely to reach around ₹70,000 levels. As India faces elections, the rupee could weaken as Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) are expected to lighten up their portfolios, which could further bolster domestic prices for gold," he said.

Kotak Securities Vice President - Head Commodity Research Ravindra Rao said retail jewellery buying might face headwinds from higher domestic prices in India and China while central banks' demand might exceed last year's record if the current momentum continues.

All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) Chairman Saiyam Mehra said the volatility in gold prices impacted sales, and in spite of 30-35 lakh weddings, the business will be the same as in 2022.

"With the US Fed reducing rates, and continuing geo-

Currently, the yellow metal price is hovering at ₹63,060 per 10 grams on the commodity stock exchange MCX and around \$2,058 an ounce in the international market at a time when the rupee is trading above 83 against the US dollar

litical tensions, the weak rupee will further boost gold prices, which is likely to touch \$2,250-2,300 and ₹68,000-70,000 in 2024. The high prices will impact sales further in 2024, and the business is likely to remain at the same level as 2023," he said.

World Gold Council Regional CEO Somasundaram PR said gold prices touched historic highs globally during the year due to various factors that accentuated its role as a safe haven and hedge against inflation.

In the September quarter, gold price was 12 per cent below last year. However, demand for 2023 will be marginally below the last year at 700-750 tonnes, though the value of investments in gold will be higher, he said.

"In 2024, apart from the economic developments, the trajectory of gold prices will be largely dependent on the dollar index and geopolitical situation," he said.

Gem Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) Chairman Vipul Shah said 2023 was a tough year for the exporters, mainly due to a decline in demand in the key markets following a rise in interest cost, geopolitical issues and China continuing to remain closed even after Covid.

CLASSIFIED

LOST

I Chhabi Sahu, S/o Late Duryodhan Sahu, At-Chheliapada, P.O. Khalari, P.S. Angul Sadar, Dist. Angul inform that the original Sale Deed of Mouza- Chheliapada, Khata No.- 638/1458 has been eaten by White Ants, while it was kept in a Wooden Almirah in my house. At present I want a duplicate copy/Certified copy of the said document.

Indian skies prep for a crowded 2024

With more travellers, planes, airports, 'bullishness' greets slightly clouded-aviation skies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Dec 31: A "bullishness" greets the skies as more passengers are set to step into airports and more aircraft, including A350s, are ready to carry them in expanding routes in 2024 even as the fate of two bankrupt airlines remain uncertain.

A slew of airports and terminal building inaugurations and re-



vised norms to address pilot fatigue issue will also happen in the new year. "As far as goals for 2024 are con-

For 2024, the demand for air travel remains robust, and despite the global supply chain challenges, the overall operating environment remains conducive

PIETER ELBERS | CEO, INDIGO

cerned, it is to enable many more airports to be put in place, the fleet size to grow.. We are getting roughly 2-5 planes a month between Air India, IndiGo and Akasa Air. We are going to rapidly expand our connectivity and it is also our intent to try and establish the first

international air hub in India," Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said.

Air India and IndiGo placing orders for 970 planes, Go First filing for voluntary insolvency proceedings, an amended insolvency framework to address aircraft lessors' concerns, and air passenger traffic touching a record high of more than 4.63 lakh in a single day in November, were among the key developments in 2023. Scindia emphasised there is a "bullishness with regard to civil aviation" and the outlook is positive.

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B-TOWN SPEAKS

As the world bids farewell to another year, celebs are taking a moment to reflect on the future



Kareena Kapoor Khan

Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan, who is on her annual vacation to snow-capped Switzerland with her family and friends, has shared her 2024 mantra. She shared, "I'm at the stage of my life where I keep myself out of arguments. Even if you tell me 1+1=5, you're absolutely correct, enjoy."

Samridhii Shukla

Actress Samridhii, who plays Abhira in *Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai*, shared her New Year resolutions. She said, "My New Year's resolution would be to be healthy and aim to build a workout regime. I am expecting this new year to bring growth and challenges that induce growth and happiness for everyone."



Nehha Pendse

Actress Nehha, who plays the role of Sanjana in the show *May I Come in Madam*, said, "I emphasise preserving my integrity throughout my life and I'm aiming to cease overthinking and embrace the present. Additionally, I desire to reduce my coffee consumption or potentially eliminate caffeine altogether in the coming year."

Sumeet Raghavan

Actor Sumeet, who plays Rajesh Wagle in *Wagle Ki Duniya*, shared, "This New Year, I encourage everyone to embrace their dear ones and cherish moments with siblings and parents, as much as possible."



Showbiz HOPES



RISING STARS

The New Year is set to witness the launching of quite a few star kids on the big screens. OP's top five picks from the list

Pashmina Roshan

Hrithik Roshan's cousin will be seen in the remake of *Ishq Vishk* alongside Rohit Saraf, Jibraan Khan, and Naila Grewal.



Rasha Thadani

The daughter of Mohra actress Raveena Tandon and distributor Anil Thadani is all set to make her debut with director Abhishek Kapoor's film opposite actor Ajay Devgn's nephew Aaman Devgn.

As we already have stepped into 2024, the expectations of movie-goers are running high, with some big-ticket projects poised to hit the screens. Fans are also upbeat about the upcoming talents, star kids, and what the B-town celebs have to share about their future plans. On the first day of the year, Orissa POST tips off readers about the things to watch out for



Rasha Thadani, daughter of actress Raveena Tandon

Aryan Khan

Shah Rukh Khan and Gauri Khan's son will have his directorial debut with a web series titled *Stardom* featuring Bobby Deol and Mona Singh in the lead.



Ibrahim Ali Khan

Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh's son gearing up for his debut with Dharma Productions film *Sarzameen*.



Junaid Khan

Amir Khan and his first wife Reena Dutta's son will have his debut with *Maharaja* helmed by Yash Raj Films banner alongside Sharvari Wagh and Jaideep Ahlawat.



A slew of movies across the globe is slated for release in 2024. Orissa POST lists some of the much-awaited movies to hit screens in the first couple of months of the year

MOVIES TO WATCH OUT

Merry Christmas

Slated for release January 12, the movie boasts an ensemble cast including Vijay Sethupathi, Katrina Kaif, Radhika Apte, and Sanjay Kapoor. This film, with a budget of approximately Rs 60 crore, promises to be a festive treat for audiences.



Dasama

Claimed by the makers as the first Odia musical film, *Dasama* is set to captivate audiences with its compelling narrative and soul-stirring songs. The movie, to be released January 18, features Sailendra, Armaan, Mira, Lopamudra and Rabi Mishra in pivotal roles.



Dear Purusha

Produced under Jhilik Motion Pictures, the movie boasts a star-studded cast, the protagonist, Chitrangada, played by the talented producer Jhilik Bhattacharjee, emerges as a valiant warrior challenging societal norms in the pursuit of justice. The ensemble also includes Choudhury Jayprakash Das, Mahashweta Ray, Sidhant Mohapatra and Nitu Singh.



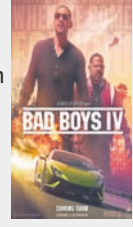
Dune: Part ii

Denis Villeneuve's follow-up extends the narrative of Paul Atreides (portrayed by Timothée Chalamet), who embarks on a vengeful quest against those responsible for his family's demise while also striving to avert a catastrophic future. Zendaya, Rebecca Ferguson, Javier Bardem, and Stephen McKinley Henderson are parts of the principal cast.



Bad Boys 4

Will Smith and Martin Lawrence are set to come together once again for the fourth installment in the action series. This film will serve as a follow-up to *Bad Boys for Life*, which raked in \$426.5 million in global box office earnings.



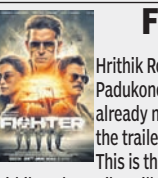
Main Atal Hoon

Former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's biopic could be one of the most-anticipated movies of the years with accomplished actor Pankaj Tripathi playing the titular role. Mumbai-based British actor Benedict Garrett also plays a key role in the movie to be released on January 19.



Fighter

Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone's chemistry is already making waves after the trailer was released. This is the first time that Hrithik and Deepika will be together on screen and it seems that the zeal among the audience has been more than ever. The Rs 250-crore movie will release January 25.



Trikanya

After the success of *Pratishtha*, director Anupam Patnaik's next film *Trikanya*, based on the lives of three women hailing from diverse social backgrounds, is set to release January 2024. The movie features Barsha Patnaik, Manoj Mishra, Sradha Panigrahi, Aman, Partha Sarthi Ray, Nishant Majithia, Sukant Rath, Nivy and Srijan Mohapatra in main roles.



INTERNATIONAL

HE'S NOT COMING ALONE. DEADPOOL 3



Deadpool 3

Ryan Reynolds is set to return as the main character in the third installment of the franchise, where he will once again team up with Hugh Jackman's *X-Men* character Wolverine. This upcoming movie, voted as the most anticipated film of 2024

Plans & Resolutions

Celebrities from the Odia entertainment industry make plans and resolutions at the beginning of a new year. Here's what a few stars have to share on their plans in 2024

'It'll be a process of unlearning and relearning'

This year I am looking forward to exploring opportunities beyond regions and platforms. My journey is an ongoing process of learning, unlearning and relearning. I will continue to be involved in various ventures including acting, dancing, philanthropy and environment. **BM Baisali, Actress**



'Number 24 is my lucky charm'

Born on the 24th, I consider the number 24 to be my lucky charm. Hoping that 2024 brings luck and prosperity to both myself and my family, my wish is for everyone to lead joyful, secure lives free from negativity. As we step into the New Year, may it always retain the freshness and promise of new beginnings. **Swaraj Barik, Actor**



'Will cash in on lessons learnt last year'

Because of my ongoing final-year exams, I haven't made any plans and have been dedicated to my studies. I aim to contemplate the valuable lessons learnt last year and eagerly look forward to the fresh opportunities and challenges. **Bhoomika Dash, Actress**



'My commitment will lead to success'

I'm looking forward to 2024 with excitement. I have scheduled the release of two movies in January and February. I am optimistic that the effort and commitment I have put into these projects will lead to success. **Sandeep Panda, Playback singer**



HINDI

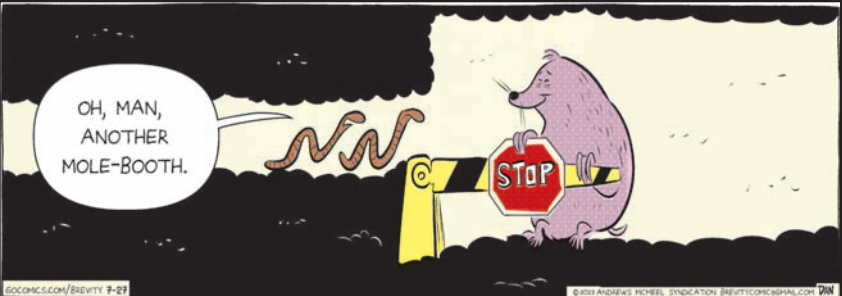
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

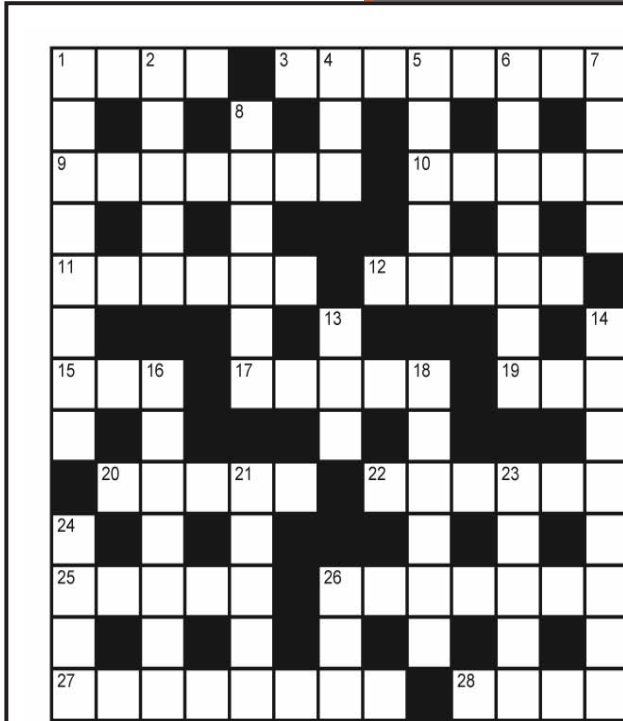


BREVITY



FUN post

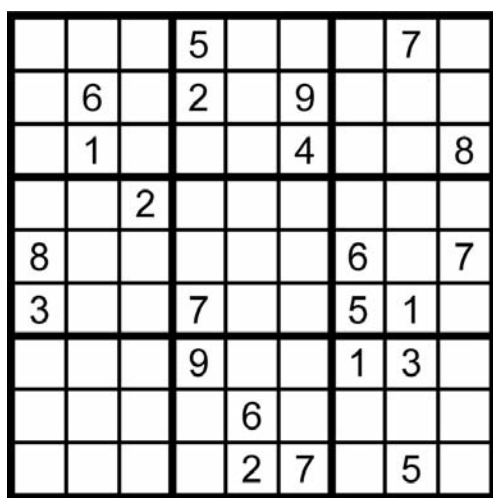
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Small stream
 - 3 Duck hunter's ammo
 - 9 Windfall
 - 10 Confess
 - 11 Mid-East wear
 - 12 Wheeled vehicle
 - 15 Sharp tool
 - 17 Marina sight
 - 19 Young fox
 - 20 Kismet
 - 22 Shellfish
 - 25 Corolla part
 - 26 Math course
 - 27 Spanish estate
 - 28 Race pace
 - 5 Eucalyptus eater
 - 6 A hanging bed
 - 7 Ballet attire
 - 8 Underhanded
 - 13 Frigid
 - 14 Courageous
 - 16 Pliant
 - 18 Plod
 - 21 Free-for-all
 - 23 Solemn
 - 24 Colorful fish
 - 26 Helping hand
- Down**
- 1 Refutation
 - 2 Cruise ship
 - 4 Thurman of *The Avengers*

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.

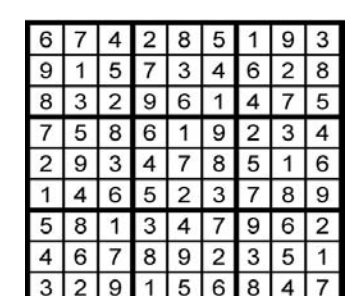


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Sporting bonanza awaits fans in 2024

AGENCIES

A sporting bonanza awaits fans in 2024. Starting from the mother of all events, 'The Olympics' in Paris, the year will see plenty of action. There is the T20 Cricket World Cup for both men and women, the Euro and the Copa American football championships, the four tennis Grand slams - Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open events. Not to forget the Formula One championships that will be held across the year with Max Verstappen looking to retain the title which he won in 2023. The crucial stages of the English Premier League will also be held in 2024 with a number of contenders vying for the title in one of the most prestigious tournaments in the world.

The performance of the Indians will be watched closely. First, the Indians will hope to forget the heart-break of the 2023 ODI World Cup. The cricket crazy fans will certainly want the Indian men's team to win the T20 World Cup. Indians will also be rooting for men's and women's hockey teams at the Paris Olympics. Fans will hope for an encore from the men's team who won a bronze at the Tokyo Games. Eyes will also be on javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra who won India's first Olympics gold in athletics at Tokyo. Hopes will also be on Odisha's own Kishore Jena who finished second best to Neeraj at the Asian Games last year. Overall, 2024 will be an year full of excitement and at the same time heart-breaks for fans. However, for the sports loving fans, it will be the year to remain glued to the TV sets.



HERE'S A LIST OF WHAT TO WAIT FOR AND WATCH IN 2024.			
JANUARY	Jan 8-28 Jan 12-Feb 10 Jan 14-28 Jan 25-March 7	Indian Super Cup football tournament AFC Asian Cup football tournament Australian Open tennis tournament 5-match Test series between India and England	JUNE June 1 June 4-30 June 14-July 14 June 20-July 14 June 27-30
FEBRUARY	Feb 3-4 Feb 19-March 22 Feb 21-March 9 Feb 22-March 17 Feb 29	Davis Cup playoff between India-Pakistan Prime Volleyball League Santosh Trophy final round Women's Premier League F1 racing championships begin	JULY July 1-14 July 26-Aug 11
MARCH	March 12-17 March 22-May	All England badminton championships Indian Premier League (tentative)	AUGUST August 17 Aug 26-Sept 8
APRIL	April 2-25 April 27-May 5 April 30	World Chess championships Thomas Cup badminton tournament Indian athletics Grand Prix (1st leg)	SEPT Sept-Oct
MAY	May 20-June 9 May 25	French Open tennis tournament FA Cup football final	OCT Oct 4-6
			NOV Nov 1-15
			DEC Dec 11-15

Teams announced for FIH Hockey5s World Cup

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec 31: Simranjeet Singh and Rajni Etimarpu will lead the men's and women's sides respectively as Hockey India named Sunday the Indian teams for the upcoming FIH Hockey5s World Cup to be played in Muscat, Oman. While the women's World Cup will be held January 24 and 27, the men's event is slated from January 28 to January 31.

The Indian women are grouped in Pool C along with Namibia, Poland and the United States. A total of 16 teams will participate in the women's World Cup which includes Fiji, Malaysia, the Netherlands and hosts Oman in Pool A, while Australia, South Africa, Ukraine and Zambia are in Pool B and Pool D features New Zealand, Paraguay, Thailand and Uruguay.

"The team comprise young players with enough international experience and understanding of the challenges of playing a prestigious event such as the Hockey 5s World Cup," coach Soundarya said in a HI release. "We are well prepared and are upbeat ahead of the tournament," she added.

Grouped in Pool B, the Indian men will play against Egypt, Jamaica and Switzerland to

TEAMS: (WOMEN)	
Rajni Etimarpu, Mahima Chaudhary, Bansari Solanki, Akshata Abaso Dhekale, Jyoti Chhattri, Mariana Kujur, Mumtaz Khan, Ajmina Kujur, Rutaja Dadaso Pisal and Deepika Soreng.	
MEN	
Simranjeet Singh, Suraj Karkera, Prashant Kumar Chauhan, Mandeep Mor, Mohd Raheel Mauseen, Maninder Singh, Pawan Rajbhar, Gurjot Singh and Uttam Singh.	

make the knockout rounds. The other teams in the fray include the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan and Poland in Pool A and Pool C features Australia, Kenya, New Zealand, Trinidad and Tobago while Pool D includes Fiji, Malaysia, Oman and the United States.

"We have chosen a very balanced team with youth and experience for this exciting format of hockey," coach Sardar Singh said. "Several players in this squad already have the experience of playing this format and are eager to perform well. It will definitely help the players gain in experience," added Sardar.

Rafa hints at retirement

AGENCIES

Brisbane, Dec 31: Rafael Nadal returned to action for the first time in nearly a year and also did not rule out that he will continue playing beyond the 2024 season. Playing in his first competitive match since last January, the Spaniard lost his doubles match Sunday at the Brisbane International but showed no obvious after-effects of the hip injury that ruined his 2023 season. Nadal and Marc Lopez lost 4-6, 4-6 to Australians Max Purcell and Jordan Thompson. However, despite the loss Nadal was hugely cheered by the crowd whenever he played a shot.

Nadal, who is playing here as part of his preparations for the Australian Open, did point out of after the match that it could be his last appearance at the Grand Slam event down under.

"The problem about saying it's going to be my last season is that I can't predict what's going on 100 per cent in the future," Nadal said. "That is why I am always using the word probably," he added.

Nadal, 37, has not played since suffering a hip flexor injury at last year's Australian Open that ultimately required surgery in June. The 22-time Grand Slam champion said he wants to wait to see how his body responds this season before making a final

Stimac hoping for good show

INDIAN FOOTBALL SQUAD ARRIVES IN DOHA FOR TOUGH ASIAN CUP ASSIGNMENT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Doha, Dec 31: The Indian football team are entering the upcoming Asian Cup as 'rank outsiders' and their main goal is to go through to the third round of the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers, head coach Igor Stimac said here Sunday. The Indian team arrived here Saturday night.

Stimac was making his assessment based on the level of competition India are expected to face in a tough group comprising continental heavyweights Australia and the physically intimidating Uzbekistan. Both Australia and Uzbekistan along with Syria, the third team in the group, are above India in FIFA rankings.

"Obviously, we are rank outsiders in our group. Uzbekistan is one of the dark horses and a fantastic team, their players' physicality could cause prob-

WE FEAR NO ONE: JHINGAN

Doha: They might be up against formidable and higher-ranked opponents such as Australia in the upcoming Asian Cup but star Indian stopper Sandesh Jhingan said Sunday that the side respect opponents, but fear none. "No group in the Asian Cup is easy. Of course, we've got Australia, and they need no introduction. But what we have learned in the last few years is that we must never fear any opposition. Believe in the work you do, we must stay humble, keep improving, and hopefully do something special," Jhingan said.

lems," Stimac stated.

"Australia are playing at the highest level of football and we all know what they are capable of. They are regular at World Cups and will clear the group stage easily," the Indian coach added.

And how does he (Stimac) plan to approach the matches?

"This group is much stronger than the last Asian Cup. The most important thing for us is to have a good performance and

ensure that we remain stable and in shape while playing. I am not putting any pressure on players about results," Stimac asserted.

"We need to find stability. We will try to play fearless football notwithstanding the teams we play against. I don't mind the final results. Our final goal is to qualify for the third round of World Cup Qualifiers," Stimac told reporters.

This will be India's fifth appearance in the AFC Asian Cup. The Blue Tigers have never made it past the group stage after finishing runners-up in 1964, which was played in a round-robin format. India will begin their campaign January 13 against Australia. Their other games are against Uzbekistan (January 18) and Syria (January 23). India will play a warm-up game January 7 to see where they stand in terms of preparation before the big test.

"Keeping in mind that all the other teams are in Dubai for three weeks already, we are trying to settle down to the climatic conditions and adjust in a proper way in the short time given to us," Stimac pointed out.



Fans were present with the Tricolour to greet the Indian football team upon their arrival in Doha, Saturday night

SHORT TAKES

JFC appoint Jamil as new head coach

Jamshedpur: Experienced AFC Pro licence holder Khalid Jamil has been appointed as head coach of Jamshedpur FC (JFC), the club said Sunday. Jamil's appointment was announced after Scott Cooper expressed an inability to continue in the position due to unavoidable circumstances. Jamil's first assignment will be the Kalinga Super Cup in January, followed by the remainder of the Indian Super League (ISL) season, Jamshedpur FC said in a statement. "I want to thank the club management to give me this opportunity and I feel very excited to join Jamshedpur FC. Our target is to bring Jamshedpur FC in a better position and for that we all must work hard," Jamil said in a statement.

Indians shine

New Delhi: Talented Indian teenager Anahat Singh produced a dominant performance, bagging the girls' under-19 title at the 2023 Scottish Junior Open squash tournament held in Edinburgh. Anahat defeated home favourite Robyn McAlpine 11-6, 11-1, 11-5 victory in the final played Saturday. Meanwhile, India's Subhash Choudhary rallied to beat compatriot Shiven Agarwal 5-11, 11-4, 6-11, 11-8, 11-5 in the boys' under-15 final, while Shreshth Iyer beat Shreyansh Jah 11-8, 11-8, 3-11, 11-8 in an all-Indian boys' under-13 final.

Hussain hopeful

Dubai: Former England captain Nasser Hussain is hopeful of a successful return of 'box office' cricketer Rishabh Pant in 2024 following his recovery from the near-fatal car crash a year back. It is expected that Pant will resume playing once again before the T20 World Cup in USA and the West Indies. "That was such a serious accident. The whole world held its breath and it has been a slow recovery," Hussain was quoted as saying by the ICC. "I am following his recovery on social media and hopefully we will see him back on field soon. After all he is a 'box office' cricketer," Hussain added.

Secrecy around Schumi's health continues

LAWYER REVEALS THE EXACT REASON FOR NOT DISCLOSING THE PRESENT CONDITION OF F1 LEGEND

AGENCIES

Brussels, Dec 31: It's been more than a decade since Formula 1 legend Michael Schumacher suffered a life-threatening injury while skiing in the French ski resort of Meribel. Schumacher, a seven-time former World Champion suffered severe brain injuries in the accident. The 54-year-old has been residing privately in Switzerland, and details about his health have been kept confidential. He has not made any public appearance since the accident and there have been speculation about the health of 'Schumi', as he is popularly known.

Another former World Champion Sebastian Vettel, who is close to Schumacher and his family, recently revealed that

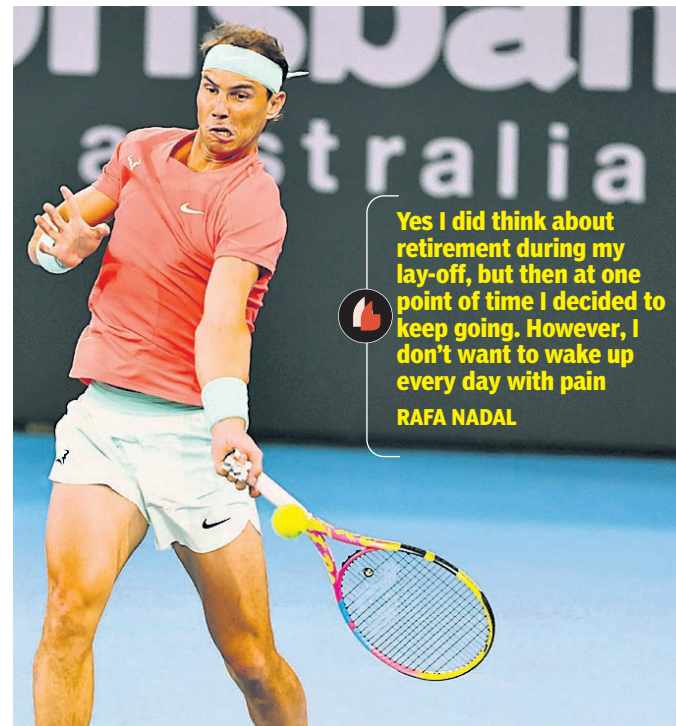


the F1 legend 'is not doing well'. He also said that there are reasons why Schumacher's family has not revealed the health condition of the driver.

Schumacher's lawyer, Felix Damm, however, has revealed

that the former F1 driver's family has decided not to make his final health report public due to privacy concerns.

"It was always about protecting private things. We considered whether a final report about



Yes I did think about retirement during my lay-off, but then at one point of time I decided to keep going. However, I don't want to wake up every day with pain
RAFA NADAL

decision on his career.

"It's obvious it's a high percentage that it's going to be my last time playing in Australia," Nadal said. "But if I'm here next year, don't tell me, 'You said it's going to be your last season,' because I didn't say it."

"You never know what's going on, you know? I can't predict how I'm going to be in the next six months. I can't predict if my

body will allow me to enjoy tennis as much as I enjoyed the past 20 years," the Spaniard informed.

Nadal was warmly welcomed by fans who held up Spanish flags and supportive messages at a packed Pat Rafter Arena. Nadal has previously said he expects 2024 to be his final season, and acknowledged he pondered retirement during his extended injury layoff this year.

Arsenal suffer 2nd successive loss

AGENCIES

London, Dec 31: Arsenal fell to a second straight loss Sunday with a 1-2 defeat at Fulham, missing out on a chance to end the year atop the Premier League table. Bukayo Saka gave Arsenal the lead after just five minutes, but the visitors were toothless after that as Raul Jimenez equalised in the first half and Bobby De Cordova-Reid poked in the winner in the 59th.

Arsenal topped the standings at Christmas but enter 2024 in fourth place after this defeat followed their first home loss of the season Thursday against West Ham United.

Meanwhile Manchester United's miserable season hit a new low as they crashed to a dismal 1-2 defeat late Saturday night at Premier League strugglers Nottingham Forest. On the other hand, Luiz's late penalty took Aston Villa joint top

of the Premier League with a 3-2 win over 10-man Burnley as Manchester City closed on the leaders by sweeping aside Sheffield United 2-0.

Erik ten Hag's Manchester United produced a wretched display that was punished by Morgan Gibbs-White's late winner at the City Ground. Nicolas Dominguez had put Forest ahead in the second half before Marcus Rashford equalised with just his third goal of a woeful campaign. United's fourth loss in their last six games in all competitions left them languishing in seventh place in the Premier League, nine points adrift of the top four.

Forest moved five points clear of the relegation zone after Nuno Espirito Santo masterminded his second successive high-profile victory. Nuno's first win as Forest boss after replacing the sacked Steve Cooper came against Newcastle, but this was an even bigger scalp.



SAGARIKA

Photo
KUMAR SHARAT, OP

01	SUN		7	14	21	28
JANUARY	MON	1	8	15	22	29
	TUE	2	9	16	23	30
	WED	3	10	17	24	31
	THU	4	11	18	25	
	FRI	5	12	19	26	
	SAT	6	13	20	27	
	02	SUN		4	11	18
FEBRUARY	MON		5	12	19	26
	TUE		6	13	20	27
	WED		7	14	21	28
	THU	1	8	15	22	29
	FRI	2	9	16	23	
	SAT	3	10	17	24	
	03	SUN	31	3	10	17
MARCH	MON		4	11	18	25
	TUE		5	12	19	26
	WED		6	13	20	27
	THU		7	14	21	28
	FRI	1	8	15	22	29
	SAT	2	9	16	23	30
	04	SUN		7	14	21
APRIL	MON	1	8	15	22	29
	TUE	2	9	16	23	30
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	THU	4	11	18	25	
	FRI	5	12	19	26	
	SAT	6	13	20	27	
	05	SUN		5	12	19
MAY	MON		6	13	20	27
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	WED	1	8	15	22	29
	THU	2	9	16	23	30
	FRI	3	10	17	24	31
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	06	SUN	30	2	9	16
JUNE	MON		3	10	17	24
	TUE		4	11	18	25
	WED		5	12	19	26
	THU		6	13	20	27
	FRI		7	14	21	28
	SAT	1	8	15	22	29
	07	SUN		7	14	21
JULY	MON	1	8	15	22	29
	TUE	2	9	16	23	30
	WED	3	10	17	24	31
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	FRI	5	12	19	26	
	SAT	6	13	20	27	
	08	SUN		4	11	18
AUGUST	MON		5	12	19	26
	TUE		6	13	20	27
	WED		7	14	21	28
	THU	1	8	15	22	29
	FRI	2	9	16	23	30
	SAT	3	10	17	24	31
	09	SUN	1	8	15	22
SEPTEMBER	MON	2	9	16	23	30
	TUE	3	10	17	24	
	WED	4	11	18	25	
	THU	5	12	19	26	
	FRI	6	13	20	27	
	SAT	7	14	21	28	
	10	SUN		6	13	20
OCTOBER	MON		7	14	21	28
	TUE	1	8	15	22	29
	WED	2	9	16	23	30
	THU	3	10	17	24	31
	FRI	4	11	18	25	
	SAT	5	12	19	26	
	11	SUN		3	10	17
NOVEMBER	MON		4	11	18	25
	TUE		5	12	19	26
	WED		6	13	20	27
	THU		7	14	21	28
	FRI	1	8	15	22	29
	SAT	2	9	16	23	30
	12	SUN	1	8	15	22
DECEMBER	MON	2	9	16	23	30
	TUE	3	10	17	24	31
	WED	4	11	18	25	
	THU	5	12	19	26	
	FRI	6	13	20	27	
	SAT	7	14	21	28	

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS Makar Sankranti-15th January, Subash Chandra Bose Jayanti/Vir Surendra Sai Jayanti-23rd January, Republic Day-26th January, Basanta Panchami- 14th February, Panchayatiraj Dibas-5th March, Maha Shivaratri-8th March, Dola Purnima-25th March, Holi-26th March, Good Friday-29th March, Utkal Divas-1st April, Id-ul-Fitr-11th April, Ram Navami-17th April, Budha Purnima/ Birthday of Pandit Raghunath Murmu-23rd May, Sabitri Amabasya-6th June, Pahlil Raja- 14th June, Raja Sankranti-15th June, Id-ul-Zuha-17th June, Muharram-17th July, Independence day-15th August, Jhulana Purnima-19th August, Janmastami- 26th August, Ganesh Puja-7th September, Birthday of Prophet Mohammad-16th September, Gandhi Jayanti/Mahalaya-2nd October, Maha Saptami-10th October, Mahastami-11th October, Kumar Purnima-16th October, Diwali/Kali Pula-31st October, Rasa Purnima-15th November, X-Mas Day-25th December.