



Southern lure

Actor Prachi Desai says she now wants to explore the south Indian film industry in a proper manner

LEISURE | P2



Landmark verdict

Pakistan's Supreme Court Monday scraps lifetime ban on contesting elections for people with criminal convictions

INTERNATIONAL | P10



MF industry sets feat

The mutual fund industry sees a substantial rebound in 2023 with its asset base reaching over ₹50 lakh crore mark

BUSINESS | P11



Der Kaiser no more

Family of legendary German footballer and coach Franz Beckenbauer says he has breathed his last Sunday

SPORTS | P12



People queued up at pumps in large numbers to buy fuel in view of the transport workers' strike which was called off later in the day Monday

Justice prevails

Noting that the Gujarat government had no right to release the Bilkis Bano gangrape convicts, SC sends them back to prison, asking them to report in 2 weeks

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 8: The decision by the Gujarat government to release the convicts of the Bilkis Bano gangrape case had created nation-wide uproar. When the convicts had walked out of prison August 15, 2022, a sad sigh had engulfed the nation as they were men who had been involved in a horrific crime. However, Bilkis herself along with a number of activists continued her fight against the convicts for justice. And justice finally prevailed Monday.



This is what justice feels like. I thank the Honourable Supreme Court for giving me, my children and women everywhere this vindication and hope that there will be equal justice for all. I have wept tears of relief and smiled after a long time

Accusing the Gujarat government of abusing its power, the Supreme Court quashed Monday the remission to 11 men convicted of gangraping Bilkis and murdering seven of her family members during the 2002 riots. The top court ordered that the 11 be sent back to jail within two weeks. The Gujarat government's remission order was without application of mind, a bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan said. It asked whether 'heinous crimes against women permit remission' whatever faith she may follow or creed she may belong to. Bilkis

was then 21 years and five months old and pregnant. "We strike down the remission orders on the ground of usurpation of power by Gujarat government," the bench said. "We need not have gone into the other issues. But for sake of completion, we have. Rule of law is breached because the Gujarat government usurped power not vested in it and abused its power. On that ground also, the remission orders deserve to be quashed," the bench said. The top court also nullified its May 13, 2022 order of another bench asking the Gujarat government to consider a remission plea of one of the convicts as the order was obtained by 'playing fraud on the court' and by suppressing material facts. Coming down heavily on the Gujarat government for not filing a review plea against the May 2022 judgment, the Supreme Court said only the state of Maharashtra could have passed the remission orders. "Taking advantage of the May 13, 2022 order of this court, other convicts also filed remission applications... Gujarat was complicit and acted in tandem with respondent No. 3 (one of the convicts) in this case. This Court was misled by suppressing facts," the bench said. The top court also held that the PIL contesting the remission filed by Bilkis under Article 32 of the Constitution was maintainable. The question of the maintainability of the PILs does not call for an answer, being rendered academic and is left open in an appropriate case, the SC bench said.

TRANSPORT WORKERS CALL OFF STRIKE

After being assured by the Chief Secretary, workers end agitation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: The Odisha Motor Transport Workers' Federation which had called for an indefinite strike against the new hit-and-run laws, decided to

end their agitation after holding discussions with Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena here, Monday. Senior officials of the transport body including its president Janardan Pati attended the meeting in which Commerce and Transport Secretary Usha Padhi was also present. Immediately after the meeting, the federation issued a statement saying that the strike has been called off

with immediate effect. "Chief Secretary Pradeep K Jena had called us for a discussion over our demands. He informed that Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla has stated that the Centre will not implement the new law pertaining to the drivers now and they will take further decisions after consulting the states and different trade unions. So we decided to call off the

strike," Pati said. Meanwhile, Utkal Petroleum Dealers' Association general secretary Sanjay Lath said that there is no shortage of fuel at the filling stations and appealed people not to stock petrol and diesel. Some filling stations in the Odisha capital are facing fuel shortage. Efforts are on restock the petrol pumps by transporting fuel from Jatni, he said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We've an excellent plan. Let's hijack all flights headed towards Maldives and land them in Lakshadweep

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	27.4°C	27.0°C
Min Temp	16.2°C	15.0°C
Humidity	89%	87%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST

FOG/MIST IN THE MORNING

Woman delivers baby on trolley rickshaw

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paradip, Jan 8: In an incident which again illustrated the lack of healthcare facilities in some parts of the state, a woman delivered a baby girl on a trolley rickshaw after the ambulance reportedly failed to reach her home in time at Sandhakuda village near this port town in Jagatsinghpur district Monday. The woman has been identified as Salamun Khatun, wife of Sarafat Khan. Despite the unlikely place of delivering a baby, both the mother and the newborn are in stable condition, sources said.

Locals informed that Khatun experienced labour pain Monday morning. Her family members called for an ambulance. However, the vehicle failed to arrive for a lengthy duration of time. Unable to bear the pain Salamun, decided to go to the hospital. Her family members accompanied her on a trolley rickshaw.

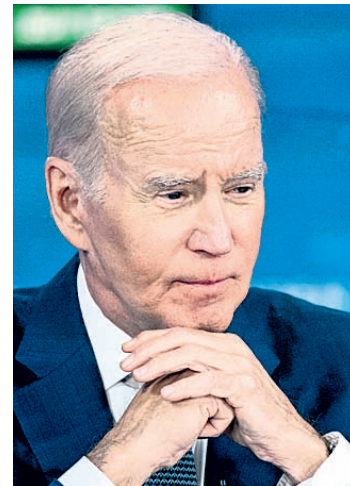
However, en route to the hospital, she delivered the baby girl in the rickshaw near Nua Bazaar locality here. The rickshaw puller and some local women from the market joined hands and assisted in the delivery of the baby on the road.

Later, an ambulance from Paradip Port Hospital arrived and rushed the woman and the newborn to Atharbanki hospital for further treatment. "Currently both the baby and the mom are in stable condition," a doctor said in the evening. He added that the woman shouldn't have waited till the last moment to come to the hospital. "She should have started for the hospital, the moment the pain began," the doctor added.

Sarafat, thanked the trolley rickshaw driver for the help. "Without him, the newborn probably wouldn't have survived," Sarafat said. "The driver also called women from the market place to help my wife," he added.

Forecast: Biden may not contest

Joe Biden nee Joseph Robinette Biden Jr may not throw his hat for a second time in the US Presidential race in 2024, if the 'Pillow Talk' predictions for this year are to be believed. The forecast is third among a list of 10 top surprises in store this year published in JP Morgan's 'Eye On The Market 2024 Outlook', titled 'Pillow Talk', January 1 according to which Biden will drop out of the November 2024 Presidential elections due to health reasons.



10 presidents in the same time period, the report states.

These predictions were written by Michael Cembalist, chairman of Market and Investment Strategy for JP Morgan Asset & Wealth Management, in honour of market strategist Byron Wien, who passed away last year at 90.

The first prediction for 2024 is that the American dollar will remain stable, while the second says the DoJ/FTC will win a big antitrust case.

Imminent driverless car backlash is the fourth prediction. "In the few places where full level five autonomous cars are being tested in real-world conditions (San Francisco, Austin), they have blocked ambulances on their way to the hospital, hampered other emergency responders, caused accidents, increased congestion, and run over pedestrians, one instance of which reportedly resulted in the resignation of Cruise's CEO," Cembalist writes.

Additionally, broadly syndicated loan losses will rise above private credit losses for the first time; Argentine dollarization will fail if implemented; and Russian invasion of Ukraine will drag on with no ceasefire in 2024, he predicts.

While stocks of US regional banks in 2024 will perform well with stable rising price to book values, major US cities will face electricity outages and/or natural gas outages (which are much worse), Cembalist predicts.

And finally, Cembalist says researchers will complete work on an inhaled Covid vaccine that will sharply reduce transmission.

DSPL-517

SISIR SARAS 2024

ଶିଶିର ସରସ ୨୦୨୪

National Exhibition on Handloom, Handicraft, Food & Spices

26 STATES | 400 STALLS | 2000 PARTICIPANTS

ETHNIC RURAL PRODUCTS DIRECTLY SOURCED FROM WSHGs & RURAL PRODUCERS

Date : 6th - 15th January, 2024, Time : 11:30 AM to 9 PM

BIJU PATNAIK PLAY GROUND, BARAMUNDA, BHUBANESWAR

EVENING CULTURAL PROGRAM 6.30 PM ONWARDS	
8.01.2024	Odia Melodies Dedicated to Late Akshaya Mohanty & Late Sikandar Alam
9.01.2024	Folk Dance Chhau • Dhamsa Dance • Bajasal Dance Gotipua Dance by Department of Culture
10.01.2024	Sambalpuri Nights by Mantu Chhuria
11.01.2024	Odia melody by Susmita Das, Kuldeep Pattnaik and Group
12.01.2024	Singari - Tribal folk • Talabadya - Folk Dance, Bhajana Sandhya (Mahaprasad Kar, Subas Das, Manmath Mishra, Geeta Das • Prince Dance Group
13.01.2024	Fashion Show on Odisha Handloom
14.01.2024	Musical Night by Mohd. Faiz
15.01.2024	Closing & Validation Ceremony Odia Band (Vighnanz)

ORMAS
Panchayati Raj & Drinking Water Department
Government of Odisha

OIPR-19004/13/0029/2324

leisure



ELBA CALLS FOR KNIFE BAN TO END 'BRUTAL' STABBINGS

Hollywood actor Idris Elba is urging the UK government to do more to end knife crime in the country. He's called for an immediate ban on machetes and 'zombie' blades in a bid to end a spate of brutal stabbings and youth violence.

KELLY CLARKSON BANS HER KIDS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

Pop star Kelly Clarkson - who has River Rose, nine, and Remington Alexander, seven, with her ex-husband Brandon Blackstock - has revealed that she won't allow her children to use social media while they still live under her roof.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES

Do something really exciting today - perhaps you could put on your trekking boots and explore unknown territories. Ganesh advises you to keep busy but not to go overboard. In group activities today, everybody will focus their attention on you.

TAURUS

This day your mind is likely to be blissfully drawn towards your personal friends and family members. Your warm and intimate relationships will stay uppermost in your mind and fill the day, not leaving room for anything else. Hanging out together with them will give you immense pleasure and contentment.

GEMINI

You will become more emotional and sensitive today. Health, diet, career, job and such things will be on your mind and will give rise to mental stress and worry. You need to take care of your health and hygiene, says Ganesh.

CANCER

Today, you are likely to experience something life-changing. A small incident, an observation, a tragedy, a disaster, or a simple thought may change the course of your life. You, however, may not be able to take the changes well. It may have a strong bearing on your health.

LEO

You will give importance to your work and your style of functioning to get a promotion in the office. You will also increase the amount of work you put in. While the fruits of your labour may not be immediately available to you, in a very short time you can expect to make more gains than you expected to.

VIRGO

You will be really very tough today. Like a man of steel, but there is enough warmth in your heart. Forbearance, positivity and extremely artistic abilities will predominate. Ganesh advises you to pursue the arts in your studies. Your deep insight into life will help you in serving society in a better way.

LIBRA

Ganesh says you will put everything aside to pay more attention to your outward appearance and your beauty as you will be more aware about it. People will get attracted to your beauty today. You will be able to share your own ideas and thoughts with people, at the same time you will learn about their views and from their experiences.

SCORPIO

Keep your eyes and ears open and believe in only what you see. Remember, believing in rumours may lead to ugly situations. Your efforts to be different and stand out would pay off well, predicts Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS

The day begins on a bright note and you decide to flaunt your sunny side up, foresees Ganesh. At home front, sharing of work with your partner will keep the home atmosphere peaceful and harmonious. Both of you discover a joy in cleaning and cooking together.

CAPRICORN

You are beaming with optimism and positive energy. Such strong vibes will penetrate through the day and maintain the energy level right till the end. Not everyone is blessed with such spirit, so will certainly have an upper hand at work, be it your profession or business, says Ganesh. You will enjoy a smooth, peaceful and beautiful married life with your spouse, blesses Ganesh.

AQUARIUS

You are an excellent team player and your performance reaches a new high when you are a part of a group. Be an active member of your group, express your opinions, share your knowledge and see how your team becomes the winning team, says Ganesh. Wind up your day by hanging out with friends and family.

PISCES

You will bump into an old friend or a distant relative today. This rendezvous may be with a person who you were close to long ago and it will warm your heart with nostalgia. You might contemplate taking a break from your daily grind to spend sometime to rekindle your childhood memories or visit your hometown. Don't let the nostalgia overwhelm you as it may make you ignore the tasks at hand and cost you heavily, suggests Ganesh.

GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS-2024

Oppenheimer wins big

'Succession' and 'The Bear' win top TV honours at Golden Globes



Los Angeles: *Oppenheimer* ruled the 81st Golden Globe Awards just as it once loomed large at the summer box office. The sprawling examination of J Robert Oppenheimer and the creation of the atomic bomb racked up five wins, the most for any movie, including the Globes for best motion picture drama. Director Christopher Nolan won the Best Director trophy while Cillian Murphy, who played the brooding scientist at the centre of the film, was named best actor in a drama. The film also was honoured for its atmospheric score. Robert Downey Jr bagged best performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in any Motion Picture for the same movie.

Poor Things, a feminist reimagining of the Frankenstein tale, was named best motion picture, musical or comedy, one of two victories for the post-modern film. On the television front, *Succession*, a scabrous look at a Murdoch-esque media mogul and his dysfunctional family, won a leading four prizes, including best drama series. The show ended its four-season run in May 2023. *The Bear*, the story of a Chicago restaurant struggling to keep its doors open, earned three prizes, including best comedy series and best leading actor and actress in a musical or comedy for Jeremy Allen White and Ayo Edebiri. *Beef*, a dramedy about the aftermath of a road rage incident, also won three Globes -- it was named best limited series, while picking up acting prizes for Ali Wong and Steven Yeun. Lee Sung Jin, the show's creator, thanked the real-life driver who prompted him to make the series. Lily Gladstone received best female actor in a drama for playing an Osage woman who is targeted for her oil wealth in *Killers of the Flower Moon*. Emma Stone was honoured as best female actor in a comedy for playing a childlike woman who embarks on a journey of sexual and emotional discovery in *Poor Things*. Paul Giamatti, named best actor in a comedy for his portrayal of a caustic prep school instructor in *The Holdovers*, dedicated his award to teachers.



SRK to collaborate with Vishal for next

Mumbai: After having a great year at the box office, there is growing speculation around Shah Rukh Khan's next project. And it's learnt that the actor is in talks with filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj for his next. "There is inside chatter in the industry that Shah Rukh Khan is signing a Vishal Bhardwaj film for his next. The plan is in sync with his desire to keep surprising the audiences with his film choices," says a source adding that "it will be a typical Vishal Bhardwaj film with all the thrills and shades that he likes to weave in his stories." "Even though Bhardwaj's world of cinema is very different from the cinematic world and image of Shah Rukh, the actor is ready to take it up as it offers something new to him. He has really liked the script with the two being in discussion mode for the same at the moment," the source further informs. It also shares, "Shah Rukh has made all such unconventional choices all through his career. He has also worked with Amol Palekar in *Paheli* in the past, so it will be interesting what he would bring to Bhardwaj's world. However, the industry is waiting for confirmation from either of them soon."

Prachi to delve deeper into south film industry

Mumbai: Actor Prachi Desai is happy to get positive feedback for her Telugu web show, *Dhootha*, as she was nervous to step into an unknown territory. However, things have changed as she is now feeling confident to explore the south industry further. "To be honest, I really did not know what to expect. The language is very new to me as I had never attempted it before. We travel to different states and are exposed to different cultures, but it is a different thing as compared to when you have to go and work there," says Desai. The 35-year-old adds, "I was very nervous about it. But it turned out to be one of the best experiences of my life. I had heard people say nice things about people in the south industry, and today I can vouch for it. Now, I want to delve deeper into that side of the industry." That combined with the feedback has boosted confidence in her to explore the zone further. "It definitely instill confidence in me that I can do this. We are always looking for something new to explore and experiment with. It helps us grow and challenges us at some point while breaking the monotony," she says.

Romance with Shammi Kapoor cost Mumtaz 'Mera Naam Joker'

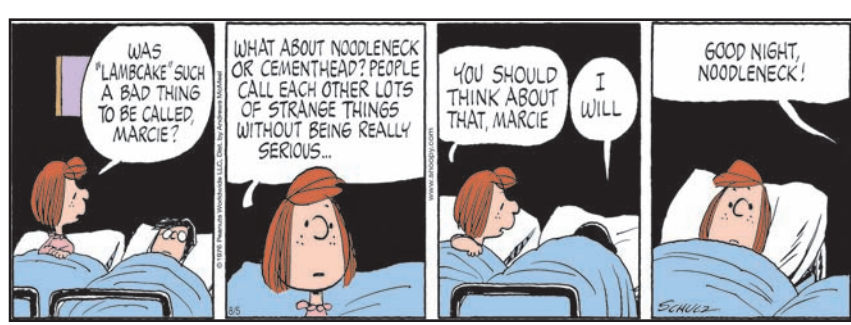
MUMTAZ FELT THAT SHE WAS ONLY 17 AND IT WAS TOO EARLY FOR HER TO GIVE UP ON HER CAREER TO SETTLE DOWN WITH SHAMMI

Mumbai: Raj Kapoor's *Mera Naam Joker* is a film that still holds a special place in people's hearts. It not only became a classic cult cinema but also defined an entire era. Everything about the movie, from the brilliant acting to the engaging storyline, managed to capture the hearts of millions. If you happen to remember this film, you'll be pleasantly surprised to learn that Mumtaz, another prominent name from that time, could have played the role of a trapeze artist. Yes, it's true! However, she missed out on this opportunity due to her romantic involvement with Shammi Kapoor. In a recent interview with the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*, Mumtaz candidly shared her feelings about this incident. In the interview, Mumtaz revealed that Raj Kapoor had her audition for the role of the trapeze artist. Raj who himself was the lead actor in the film later de-



cidated against casting her: Mumtaz quipped that after auditioning her, the *Awaara* actor dropped her saying that she would soon come to their house and they did not want her to wear such small clothes. So he cast her out of the film and she lost out on a chance to play the trapeze artist named Marina in the film. The character was later enacted by a Russian actor, Kseniya Ryabinkina. Earlier, Mumtaz shared that she had a brief romance with Shammi Kapoor but it ended when the actress declined to marry the star. According to her, she loved the actor tremendously and he even reciprocated those feelings. But, the only problem was that Shammi wanted her to give up on films after the wedding. Mumtaz felt that she was only 17 and it was too early for her to give up on her flourishing career as she wanted to achieve something in life. She had also added that he was 18 years older than her.

PEANUTS



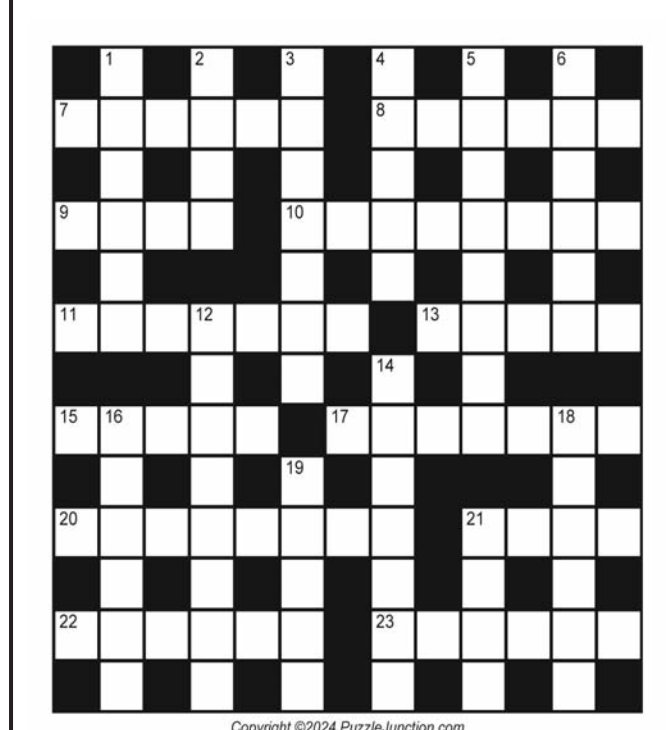
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



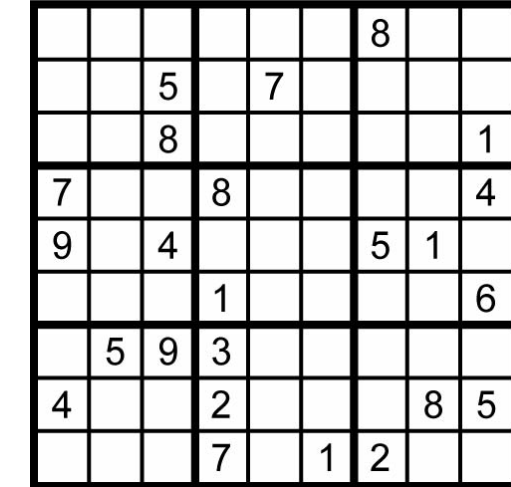
FUN post CROSSWORD



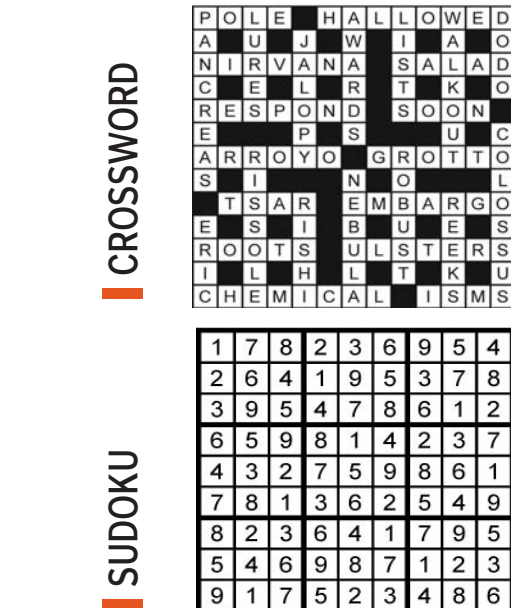
- Across
- 7 Apport to a clerical post
 - 8 Perfect world
 - 9 It may be found in the road
 - 10 Chick holder
 - 11 Gallivant
 - 13 Fencing move
 - 15 Variety of quartz
 - 17 Snippy
 - 20 Isolation
 - 21 Dry run
 - 22 Appraised
 - 23 Opulence
 - 5 Scotland's biggest attraction (4,4)
 - 6 Amati's creation
 - 12 Machination
 - 14 Hospital attendant
 - 16 Worldwide
 - 18 Hesitant
 - 19 Trailblazer
 - 21 Hack

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



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

PARADISE FOR BEACHGOERS



Airport to spur growth

If things go as per plans, work for the greenfield airport at Sipasarubali would begin in March this year.

It will be the second international airport in Odisha. The airport holds importance not only from spiritual front but also from economic and tourism points of view. Once operational, devotees would no longer have to spend 1.5 hours to travel from Bhubaneswar airport to reach Srimandir.

Meanwhile, land acquisition process for the airport has been expedited by the Puri district administration, while clearance has been given for 68 acre forest land - out of the total 1,164 acre - for the development of the project. Needless to say, the airport would help stimulate the growth of tourism sector in Odisha.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2021 for the setting up of the international greenfield airport mentioning that Sri Jagannath Dham is one of the four dhams of Hindus in India which is thronged by millions of pilgrims from home and abroad.

UNESCO certified Sun Temple at Konark is located at a distance of only 35 km from the airport. Similarly, the pristine beaches at Ramachandi and Chandrabhaga have emerged as major tourist destinations.

Moreover, Chilika Lake, the largest brackish water lagoon of Asia, and Bhitarkanika National Park are situated on the north and south of Puri coast, said the letter highlighting the rationale for the international airport.



The state government has allocated ₹102 crore for revamping the beachfront in line with the Blue Flag beach in the Pilgrim City

cality will have casuarina trees and will be properly illuminated for tourists' convenience. A watchtower, construction of which is in the last leg, will offer a pleasant view of the sea.

As part of the redevelopment, the road between Acharya Harihar Square and Digabareni Square is being widened. A patch of land belonging to Puri Municipality will be used for widening the Acharya

HIGHLIGHTS

- The administration will ensure safe bathing zone, differently-abled friendly ambience, pure drinking water, 5-ft-wide granite pedestrian track and deck chairs at the beachfront
- The locality will have casuarina trees and will be properly illuminated for tourists' convenience
- A watchtower, construction of which is in the last leg, will offer a pleasant view of the sea
- The road between Acharya Harihar Square and Digabareni Square is being widened

Harihar Square road, it was learnt.

Due to space crunch at Nali Padia, tourists have been parking their vehicles at Belabumi Marg, creating traffic snarls. In order to address the issue, the state government has been redeveloping the existing parking facility at Digabareni Square.

"A multi-level vehicle parking facility is being

built at Digabareni Square. The basement with G+3 structure on 10,500 sq metre area can accommodate 300 four-wheelers at once. Moreover, similar parking facilities are being developed at Nali Padia and Sipasarubali," said an official.

Shopkeepers will be provided with ultramodern kiosks at a dedicated location along the beach. "Around 666 kiosks will be installed. While 120 such kiosks have been installed, the remaining structures will be set up soon," said the official.

Tourists and locals will get the chance to buy a variety of products at a single place.

Odisha Bridge and Construction Corporation (OBCC) Limited executive engineer Sridhar Rout said the project is being executed by BC Bhuiyan Construction. The agency will complete the project soon, the official added.



There is something to cheer about for beach lovers as the 4.5-km stretch between Digabareni Square and Sterling Square in Puri is being redeveloped by the state government with an allocation of ₹102 crore. The beachfront will be revamped in line with the Blue Flag beach. "The administration will ensure safe bathing zone, differently-abled friendly ambience, pure drinking water, 5-ft-wide granite pedestrian track and deck chairs at the beachfront. Proper sanitation and solid waste management system will also be put in place to keep the beach clean," said an official. The official added that the lo-



We are very happy for the darshan system introduced by the administration. The beautiful flower plants around Meghanada Wall are a treat for sight. Despite rush, a system has been put in place to ensure that the deities are visible to all inside the temple

GURU CHARAN SAMAL | ROURKELA

The facilities we are getting following the Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa are adding to the unique experience of visiting Puri. The seamless management has enabled hassle-free darshan of the deities and everyone is happy for the additional amenities available now

SANJUKTA SWAIN | CUTTACK



ARPANA RATH ROLLS ON



Transcending boundaries

In a heartwarming display of harmony and brotherhood, members of the Muslim community at Jatabal panchayat in Nabarangpur district welcomed the Arpan Rath in large numbers with raw rice (Arua Chaula) and betel nuts offerings, Monday. The community members completed the ritual before the Rath set rolling from the panchayat office. Zilla Parishad chairperson Motiram Nayak, sarpanch Malati Bhatra, samiti member Baidi Bhatra, naib sarpanch Md. Jahangir, Sheikh Munna, Amjad Ali, Sheikh Mustaq and Muna Pradhan welcomed the chariot with lamps (diyas), flowers amid the chanting of Jay Jagannath, ululations and Hari Bol. Residents, Anganwadi and ASHA workers were present on the occasion.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, a great devotee of Lord Jagannath, has vowed to give Puri a special place on the world map. Accordingly, a slew of development projects are being carried out under his visionary leadership and active supervision of 5T and Nabin Odisha chairman Kartik Pandian. As part of the Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa, which is aimed at transforming the periphery of the 12th century shrine, 'Sri Setu', a 2.3-km bypass stretch, is being built to allow vehicles coming from Bhubaneswar and Brahmagiri to directly drive into a multi-level parking spot by avoiding city traffic, thus reducing travel time to Srimandir by up to an hour.

'Sri Setu', Odisha's first trumpet bridge, begins from Mangala Haat bypass and culminates at Sri Jagannath Ballav Mutt. A total of 37,984 acre land belonging to four mouzas was acquired for the ₹161.43 crore bridge project, the work for which began under ABADHA scheme in December 2020.

Puri Collector Samarth Verma said, "The average footfall of devotees to the Jagannath temple post pandemic has increased. On usual days, it is one to two lakh which goes up to 10 lakh during festivals."

"To manage this volume of crowd, we have built the Sri Setu traffic network around the city that will enable devotees to directly enter a multi-level car parking via a bypass highway and visit the temple without entering the city," Verma added.

These steps were taken based on the recommendations of the state-appointed Commission of Inquiry. The commission submitted its report on better administration and governance of the temple and its endowments including security and safety measures in 2019, officials said. Following the approval by the

Odisha's 1st trumpet bridge



state cabinet, the city administration initiated the first phase of redevelopment and rehabilitation scheme, clearing around 3 acres for the ambitious bridge connecting the newly built Jagannath Ballav Parking Complex and the temple, they added. Officials said the government has redeveloped the settlement around the shrine to ease the increasing footfall of worshippers to the Holy city and

built a 1.5 km-path 'Srimandir Parikrama' abutting the temple under the corridor plan.

"The redevelopment around the temple complex was required to prevent stampede-like situations during festivals and ease crowd movement during Parikrama," the official added.

The redeveloped Jagannath temple complex has been equipped with an underground utility pavil-

ion, shelter pavilions, washrooms, and electrical rooms.

The city administration has also built a 4.5-metre wide dedicated shuttle lane, a 7.5-metre wide mixed traffic lane, and a 3-7 metre wide walkway for easy traffic flow and decongestion, the officials said.

A two-wheeler parking and extended pathway has also been constructed by the administration, they added.

FOCUS ECONOMY

EXPECT SLOWDOWN NOW



Clearly the second half of this fiscal year, from October till March is a slowdown phase, as per the government's own projection

The Indian economy grew at a rate of 7.2% during last fiscal year (April 2022 till March 2023). At that time the forecast from both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank was that India will further slow down this fiscal to around 7%. This view is still shared by the Reserve Bank of India as per their latest assessment. However, quite surprisingly, the momentum for the first six months of this fiscal has been tremendous. That is why the growth rate for the first half of 2023-24 is an impressive 7.7%, much higher than IMF and World Bank estimates. It was driven largely by a 31% growth (in nominal, inflation unadjusted terms) in capital expenditure, both by government and private sector. This strong rate of capex push, largely by the government, was far more than the 11% pace seen the previous year. Since capex is about one third of GDP, and if that part grows at 31%, surely the aggregate GDP growth gets a strong impetus. Thus, the pace of the first half defies both the international agencies and even the cautious optimism of RBI.



Ajit Ranade

THE SITUATION IN INDIA IS NOT IMMUNE TO WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE REST OF THE WORLD

Now the government has published its advance estimates for the full year, which is 7.3%. This implies that during the second half the government expects growth to slow down from 7.7 in first half to around 6.9 during second half. This number is still quite impressive and is above RBI's estimates. Is it too optimistic? We will soon find out. The extrapolation is based on detailed data points (called "high frequency data") available to the government. This includes tax collection including GST, movement of cargo, tourist arrivals, export data, oil and energy consumption trend and so on. However, nobody knows how quickly the momentum can slow down. The best of economists are not really expert psychologists, for ultimately it is consumer

and investor psychology and sentiment which drive growth. This present fiscal year, consumption growth is growing only at 4.4%, i.e. below GDP growth rate and far below the capex growth rate. Consumption spending is more than 60% of the GDP and forms the bulk of the momentum. That in turn depends on how household incomes are growing, what are the prospects for employment growth and livelihoods and so on.

So clearly the second half of this fiscal year, from October till March is a slowdown phase, as per the government's own projection. This is also partly because the government funded fiscal push to capex cannot continue indefinitely. It hurts the fiscal deficit, which if not kept under control can make the debt to GDP ratio rise to 100%, as has been warned by IMF. Hence if the government itself tightens its purse strings then the growth momentum has to come from somewhere else.

The situation in India is not immune to what is happening in the rest of the world. Globally there is a talk of recession in most advanced economies. The geopolitical flashpoints cast a dark cloud, and make investors generally risk averse. The Ukraine war is two years old with no end in sight. The Israel-Palestine conflict is threatening to spill out in a larger region of the Middle East. More wor-

rying are the attacks by the Houthi faction on commercial ships traversing the Red Sea. Many commercial cargo and passenger liners will simply avoid using this channel which normally hosts more than half the global trade traffic. Any geopolitical flashpoint, especially in the Middle East has the potential to spike up oil prices, which is very bad news for India. It has negative consequences for inflation, the fiscal deficit, consumer and investor sentiment, and ultimately growth.

The other factor apart from global geopolitics which can affect the growth outlook is the national election in India. As we get into the model code of conduct period, inevitably it puts a brake on developmental spending. Apart from Lok Sabha, there are many states too which are scheduled for elections to their respective legislatures. Election year does provide a small fiscal push to the economy, and the incumbent government fast tracks pending projects, clears many more files, fills up vacancies in government jobs and so on. All of this is a positive for the economy, even if fiscally doubtful. The acceleration of spending now, in a pre-election spending spree, means post elections (after July) we may see a moderation in spending momentum. Of course, the incumbent government might not

choose to accelerate spending now if it feels that its re-election prospects do not depend on artificially inserting fiscal steroids for now!

The positives for the economic outlook are the strong structural factors. These include a youthful demography and expanding labour force, rapid urbanisation, increasing spending on the green economy and the large infrastructure ambition. On top of this is the continuing strong momentum in the export of software services. The negatives are as mentioned earlier, weak consumer spending, global uncertainties, potential for an oil spike, still high inflation and weak employment growth prospects. It must be noted that overall consumer spending will pick up when consumers from all income classes are doing well, in terms of their wage income growth and employment prospects. Hence if the lower income classes are not doing well it is a matter of concern. This is the continuing story of the K-shape trajectory of growth, where consumers in the higher income bracket, and those who buy higher priced products and services and luxury goods are doing very well, but those in the lower classes are struggling. The growth in real wages at the lower end, especially in agriculture, rural areas and the informal sector has been very low. This is a serious policy challenge. The extension of the free food scheme for five years for 800 million Indians is a partial response to compensating for their lack of income growth. In the longer term, for high growth to be sustainable it also has to be wider and more inclusive. On the balance we can expect growth to be lower in 2024-25 than during this fiscal year.

The writer is a noted Pune-based economist.
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Whatever is the difficulty if we keep truly quiet the solution will come.

THE MOTHER



Stormy Waters

One of the biggest disruptions global trade has witnessed since the COVID-19 pandemic is the attack on merchant ships by the Yemeni Houthis in the Red Sea. The Iran-backed rebels launched their attacks on this crucial trade route, which accounts for some 15 per cent of global trade flow, since Israel's invasion of Gaza in retaliation to the 7 October surprise attack on the Jewish state by Hamas militants. The Houthis have been fighting a civil war with Yemen's internationally recognised government since 2014. According to UN estimates, the civil war has led to 377,000 deaths and displaced some 4 million people by the end of 2021.

At least 18 shipping lines, including the Danish giant Maersk, have rerouted their vessels around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa to avoid passing through the strategic Gulf of Aden. However, taking this detour means 10 days of additional voyage, which has negatively impacted trade and led to higher freight charges. Shipping costs have multiplied since the attacks, which the rebel militia alleges are intended to retaliate against Israel for the conflict in Gaza, which grew more intense in mid-December last year. The rising shipping costs pose a significant risk to the global economy, potentially leading to additional inflationary pressures.

The Shanghai Containerized Freight Index, which measures rates for transporting imported goods from China, has risen 161 per cent since December 15, from \$1,029 to \$2,694 (as on 5 January). Shipping companies have already announced substantial increases in freight prices in order to compensate for the expenses linked to the detour. The French shipping firm, CMA CGM, has now doubled the cost of shipping a 40-foot container between Asia and the Mediterranean to \$6,000. Similarly, the Italian-Swiss shipping behemoth, MSC, has raised its prices from \$2,900 to \$5,900 for the same service. The higher freight prices have resulted in a sharp appreciation in the share prices of shipping companies - Maersk shares are up 30 per cent over the last month, while Hapag-Lloyd shares have gone up by almost 50 per cent during the same period.

Last week, the United States urged the United Nations Security Council to promptly address the Yemeni Houthi rebels' assault on vessels within the crucial trade passage. Additionally, a cautionary message was conveyed to Iran, the long-standing benefactor of the Houthis, emphasising the need for a decision regarding continuation of their support to the rebel group.

A statement issued later by the US, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand and the United Kingdom called for immediate end of Houthi attacks and warned that further attacks would prompt collective action.

However, Houthis have displayed no indication of being discouraged, stating that unless Gaza receives humanitarian aid and Israel ceases its assaults, they will persist in causing disruptions to shipping operations, "even if the United States manages to rally the entire global community."

At a time when the Israel-Hamas war has entered four months with no signs of de-escalation, the Red Sea crisis could lead to a regional conflagration in the Middle East, something the world can ill afford.

WISDOM CORNER

"We've got this gift of love, but love is like a precious plant. You can't just accept it and leave it in the cupboard or just think it's going to get on by itself. You've got to keep watering it. You've got to really look after it and nurture it."
JOHN LENNON

"Who are we? We find that we live on an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost in a galaxy tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people."
CARL SAGAN

"Peace in the world starts with peace in oneself. If everyone lives mindfully, everyone will be more healthy, feel more fulfilled in their daily lives and there will be more peace."
THICH NHAT HANH

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1768: Philip Astley opens the world's first modern circus. The British equestrian, who is considered the father of modern circus, opened a riding school in London where he also performed tricks for an audience in the afternoons.

1839: Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre of France proclaimed his invention of the daguerreotype, the first commercially successful form of photography.

1861: Mississippi became the second US state (after South Carolina) to secede from the Union in the run-up to the American Civil War.

1916: The Battle of Gallipoli ends. The Gallipoli Campaign during World War I ended with the victory of the Ottoman Empire. In Turkey it is regarded as a defining moment in the history of the state, a final surge in the defence of the motherland as the Ottoman Empire retreated.

2001: Apple introduced iTunes, a digital media player application that, with the year's later debut of the iPod, revolutionised digital music. iTunes' original and main focus was music, with a library offering organization and storage of Mac users' music collections. With the 2003 addition of the iTunes Store for purchasing and downloading digital music, and a version of the program for Windows, it became a ubiquitous tool for managing music and configuring other features on Apple's line of iPod media players, which extended to the iPhone and iPad upon their introduction.

LOL

Amazing golf ball

A golfer, playing a round by himself, is about to tee off, and a greasy little salesman runs up to him, and yells, "Wait! Before you tee off, I have something really amazing to show you!" The golfer, annoyed, says, "What is it?" "It's a special golf ball," says the salesman. "You can never lose it!" "Whattaya mean," scoffs the golfer, "you can never lose it? What if you hit it into the water?" "No problem," says the salesman. "It floats, and it detects where the shore is, and spins towards it."



"Well, what if you hit it into the woods?" "Easy," says the salesman. "It emits a beeping sound, and you can find it with your eyes closed." "Okay," says the golfer, impressed. "But what if your round goes late and it gets dark?" "No problem, sir, this golf ball glows in the dark! I'm telling you, you can never lose this golf ball!" The golfer buys it at once. "Just one question," he says to the salesman. "Where did you get it?" "I found it."

SPECTRUM TECHNOLOGY

The threat of persuasive AI

What does it take to change a person's mind? As generative artificial intelligence becomes more embedded in customer-facing systems - think of human-like phone calls or online chatbots - it is an ethical question that needs to be addressed widely. The capacity to change minds through reasoned discourse is at the heart of democracy. Clear and effective communication forms the foundation of deliberation and persuasion, which are essential to resolve competing interests. But there is a dark side to persuasion: false motives, lies, and cognitive manipulation - malicious behaviour that AI could facilitate.



Mark Esposito & Josh Entsminger

AS PERSUASION IS AUTOMATED, A COMPREHENSIVE ETHICAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK BECOMES IMPERATIVE

In the not-so-distant future, generative AI could enable the creation of new user interfaces that can persuade on behalf of any person or entity with the means to establish such a system. Leveraging private knowledge bases, these specialised models would offer different truths that compete based on their ability to generate convincing responses for a target group - an AI for each ideology. A wave of AI-assisted social engineering would surely follow, with escalating competition making it easier and cheaper for bad actors to

spread disinformation and perpetrate scams.

We tend to develop a strong emotional attachment to our beliefs, which then hinders our ability to assess contradictory evidence objectively. Moreover, we often seek information that supports, rather than challenges, our views. Our goal should be to engage in reflective persuasion, whereby we present arguments and carefully consider our beliefs and values to reach well-founded agreement or disagreement. But, crucially, forming emotional connections with others can increase our susceptibility to manipulation, and we know that humans can make these types of connections even with chatbots that are not designed to do so. When chatbots are built to connect emotionally with humans, this would create a new dynamic rooted in two longstanding problems of human discourse: asymmetrical risk and reciprocity.

Imagine that a tech company creates a persuasive chatbot. Such an agent would be taking essentially zero risk - either emotional or physical - in attempting to convince others. As for reciprocity, there is very little chance that the chatbot doing the persuading would have any capacity to be persuaded. It is

more likely that an individual could get the chatbot to concede a point in the context of their limited interaction, which would then be internalised for training. This would make active persuasion - which is about inducing a change in belief, not reaching momentary agreement - largely infeasible.

In short, we are woefully unprepared for the dissemination of persuasive AI systems. Many industry leaders, including OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, have raised awareness about its potential threat. But awareness does not translate into a comprehensive risk-management framework. A society cannot be effectively inoculated against persuasive AI, as that would require making each person immune to such agents - an impossible task. Moreover, any attempt to control and label AI interfaces would result in individuals transferring inputs to new domains, not unlike copying text produced by ChatGPT and pasting it into an email. System owners would therefore be responsible for tracking user activity and evaluating conversions.

But persuasive AI need not be generative in nature. A wide range of organisations, individuals, and entities have already bolstered

their persuasive capabilities to achieve their objectives. Consider state actors' use of computational propaganda, which involves manipulating information and public opinion to further national interests and agendas.

Meanwhile, the evolution of computational persuasion has provided the ad-tech industry with a lucrative business model. This burgeoning field not only demonstrates the power of persuasive technologies to shape consumer behaviour, but also underscores the significant role they can play in driving sales and achieving commercial objectives.

What unites these diverse actors is a desire to enhance their persuasive capacities. This mirrors the ever-expanding landscape of technology-driven influence, with all its known and unknown social, political, and economic implications. As persuasion is automated, a comprehensive ethical and regulatory framework becomes imperative.

Mark Esposito is policy associate at the University College London. Josh Entsminger is PhD student at the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose.
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Strained ties

Sir, This refers to "Beach war boils," Orissa POST, January 8. PM Narendra Modi's recent visit to the Lakshwadeep took social media by storm, but it is Maldivian ministers' snide remarks that took the spotlight and highlighted the souring relations between the two countries. This row is only the latest controversy in a string of recent developments that have strained India-Maldives ties. President Mohamed Muizzu who assumed office last September had won the election with the campaign "India Out" from Maldives projects, and termed New Delhi as a hegemon that is a threat to Maldivian autonomy. Add to this, unlike his predecessor Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, Muizzu is viewed by many as close to China. Since his election, there has been a deliberate distancing from India with Muizzu expressing his desire to expel Indian troops from the country in order to safeguard Maldives' independence and sovereignty. However, India has always stood by Maldives in its good and bad times. New Delhi was among the first to recognise the island nation after its independence in 1965. With the trending of "Boycott Maldives" on social media, the island nation whose tourism accounts to around 28% of its GDP, tends to lose a large number of tourists from India affecting its economy apart from a valuable and strategically significant ally.

Regulate AI

Sir, Artificial Intelligence is the demon that will one day devour all our jobs and we would be mere spectators to this debacle. This demon is not a 'millennial' one; its birth goes way back to the 1950s. This demon is growing stronger and the leash that we have right now will no longer be able to hold it back. We need more stringent laws for AI as we can see that it is spreading like wildfire as people and institutions are now heavily dependent on it. Almost all developed countries have laws or regulations regarding AI which marks the territory for AI and it cannot trespass that. India is the only exception. We are a population of 1.44 billion and if any problem crops up regarding AI it will be much bigger and almost impossible to regulate. The sooner the policymakers realize this, the better.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Noopur Baruah, TEZPUR (ASSAM)

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Minor kills self at hostel

Rourkela: A 12-year-old boy committed suicide by hanging over unknown reason at Anvesha boys' hostel under Chhend police limits in this city, police said Monday.

MARKET WATCH table with columns for INDEX and VARIATION, listing SENSEX, NIFTY, DOLLAR, EURO, GOLD, and SILVER.

CLASSIFIED LOST

I Sri Hrudananda Pattnaik residence of village Bilipada, PO-Binayakpur, PS-Pipili, Dist-Puri hereby declare that I was purchase a piece of A 0.04 decimal land from Keluni Mohanty on dated 22.05.1996 which sale deed no.1051 bearing Khata No. 104 & Plot No. 698 Mouza Bilipada from Tahasil Pipili.

We Mr. Suryanarayan Rout and Satyanarayan Rout, S/o- Purnachandra Rout residing at Village-Banapur, Nuasahi, Po-Nuasomeswarpur, PS-Satyabadi, Dist-Puri stated that on 05.01.2024 due to our carelessness our original link saledeed no. 11541400559 of dated 18.08.2014, Mouza-Biramchandrapur was lost or misplaced somewhere and in spite of our best efforts it is still untraced.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Anil Panda, S/o-Brundaban Panda, resident of At-Panda Street, PO/Dist/PS-Ganjam, Pin-761026, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.09, dated 08.01.2024 that now onwards I shall be known as Anil Panda for all future purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Bhubaneswar on dated 06.01.2024, I Suvendu Acharya, S/o. Janardan Acharya and Sujata Acharya, Permanent resident of Plot No.-1562/5109, S.B.I Colony, Soubhagya Nagar, Lane-10, Bhubaneswar- 751003, Dist.- Khordha, in the state of Odisha, I have changed my name from "Suwendu Padhi" to "Suwendu Acharya".

Develop passion to give your best: CM



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: As many as 504 (civil) junior engineers joined the state government here, Monday. While 398 of them were appointed to the Panchayati Raj department, 78 have joined the Odisha Municipal Engineering Cadre and 28 the Public Health Engineering Cadre under the Housing and Urban Development department.

Patnaik further said that his government has taken up in a mission mode the drive to bring transformation in every sector of society and bring visible improvement in the quality of life of the state's people. "Our 24x7 'Drink from Tap' scheme is one such transformative initiative that even bigger cities like Delhi and Mumbai do not have.

Stone laid for Paradip Fishing Harbour facelift

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: Union Fisheries minister Parshottam Rupala Monday laid the foundation stone of a project to modernise and upgrade the Paradip Fishing Harbour.

(PMMSY) in collaboration with the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways under the Sagarmala Scheme, Rupala said. Stating that the modernisation of the Fishing Harbour will improve the lives of the thousands of fishermen and allied workers, the minister said the upgradation and value-addition activities will generate employment opportunities of skilled and unskilled nature.

Provision of drinking water, sanitation, initiatives like Basudha, Garima, Drink from Tap, and housing facilities for urban poor under the Jaga Mission are some of the programmes that will be directly managed by these new engineers at the grassroots level. On the occasion, Housing and Urban Development Minister Usha Devi said that water is crucial to public health and hygiene. As engineers, these professionals will take up one very essential mandate establishing a link between policy and implementation.



MATTER OF LIVELIHOOD: Hundreds of tribals, under the aegis of Adivasi Mahasangha Odisha, take out a rally at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Monday, protesting against the leasing of forestland to companies

Municipality EO escapes immolation bid

POST NEWS NETWORK

Barbil, Jan 8: In a shocking incident, a youth poured petrol and attempted to set ablaze the executive officer (EO) of Barbil Municipality in Keonjhar district Monday evening. EO Abhishek Panda narrowly escaped the murder bid while the accused has been detained by police for questioning.

chamber and had a discussion with him. Later, he suddenly took out a bottle filled with petrol and poured it on Panda. When the accused tried to set him on fire with a lighter he had brought with him, Panda screamed for help and ran out from his chamber. Hearing his scream, employees in the office reached the spot and overpowered Gupta. On being informed, Barbil police reached the spot and took Gupta into custody.

government land in front of their house. Even after visiting the municipality office for years the illegal encroachment was not removed. Even then they filed a case in the high court in this regard. But all their efforts went in vain, for which she was always in depression. But she was surprised that her son took this extreme step which he should not have to do, she added.

Naveen to open Malkangiri Airport today



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will inaugurate the newly-constructed Malkangiri Airport January 9, reports said. Ahead of the inauguration, a trial run of a VT-100 flight was conducted successfully at the airport Sunday.

Malkangiri will usher in a new era of development, open up avenues of business and tourism and further transform the lives of people in the region. The airport's runway is 1,500 metre in length and 30 metre in width. In the first phase, nine-seat aircrafts are likely to operate from the airport while larger aircraft will provide services later.

The airport has been constructed on over 94.5 hectares of land at an expenditure of around Rs 33 crore. The functioning of the airport is expected to bring rapid economic development in the region. This is the second significant connectivity project in the district after the Gurupriya bridge, which was inaugurated by the Chief Minister in 2018. The bridge has been providing road connectivity between the cut-off areas of the district (Swabhimana Anchala) and mainland.

Slight increase in migratory bird count this winter in Bhitarkanika

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, Jan 8: There has been a slight rise in the number of migratory birds visiting Bhitarkanika National Park this winter, according to the latest census report of the feathered guests released by the Forest department. According to the report, the number of avian guests has risen to 1,51,421 this year compared to 1,39,959 last year.



species in the wetland areas of the national park. "This is a clear indicator that Bhitarkanika is still a congenial spot to attract birds," said divisional forest officer (DFO), Rajnagar Mangrove (wildlife) Forest Division, Sudrashan Gopinath Yadav. The annual bird census was conducted January 6. The increase in the number of migratory birds this year is due to the availability of open space, following the eviction of large tracts of illegal prawn gheries

by the Revenue and Forest departments, he said. "It was a treat to watch the feathered guests with their chirpy cacophony adding colour to the vibrant eco-system of this region," said a wildlife staffer engaged in the annual headcount of birds. Birds from the northern hemisphere and cold places like Ladakh prefer Bhitarkanika wetland for its unique eco-system, he added. Chilika and Bhitarkanika wetlands in the state are the favoured destinations of winter migratory birds, he said.

Annual bird census underway at Hirakud reservoir

SAMBALPUR

Sambalpur: Census of migratory birds at Hirakud reservoir in Sambalpur district got underway Monday, a forest officer said. The reservoir and power channel have been divided into 21 sectors covered by 32 teams comprising forest officers and experts, said Anshu Pragnan Das, DFO, Hirakud Wildlife Division. Teams of Hirakud Wildlife Division, equipped with binoculars, bird field guides, GPS devices and census sheets began the exercise Monday morning, she said. A total of 78 participants including 33 birding experts will cover 500 sq km Hirakud reservoir including power channels. The teams have been engaged in Sambalpur, Bargarh and Jharsuguda districts, the DFO informed. Every year, thousands of winged guests from Caspian Sea, Baikal Lake, Aral Sea, Mongolia, central and southeast Asia and the Himalayas make Hirakud reservoir their home from November to March. Common pochard, red crested pochard, spot-billed duck, great crested grebe, pond heron, painted stork, whiskered tern and many more have been sighted during this period every year. More than 3.16 lakh birds of 108 species thronged the reservoir last winter. Similarly, over 2.08 lakh birds of 104 species were sighted in 2022.

of Hirakud Wildlife Division, equipped with binoculars, bird field guides, GPS devices and census sheets began the exercise Monday morning, she said. A total of 78 participants including 33 birding experts will cover 500 sq km Hirakud reservoir including power channels. The teams have been engaged in Sambalpur, Bargarh and Jharsuguda districts, the DFO informed. Every year, thousands of winged guests from Caspian Sea, Baikal Lake, Aral Sea, Mongolia, central and southeast Asia and the Himalayas make Hirakud reservoir their home from November to March. Common pochard, red crested pochard, spot-billed duck, great crested grebe, pond heron, painted stork, whiskered tern and many more have been sighted during this period every year. More than 3.16 lakh birds of 108 species thronged the reservoir last winter. Similarly, over 2.08 lakh birds of 104 species were sighted in 2022.

GENERAL NOTICE and EAST COAST RAILWAY notices regarding property mutation and railway work.

Bank of India POSSESSION NOTICE regarding secured assets and mortgage details.

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BSKY NABIN CARD



“EVERY LIFE IS PRECIOUS”

[Signature]
Chief Minister, Odisha

BSKY EXISTING



- For existing beneficiaries having BSKY SMART CARD or RATION CARD, their eligibility & entitlements will not change. They need not apply for BSKY NABIN CARD.
- Newly enrolled beneficiaries under NFSA / SFSS (Ration Card) will continue to get auto enrolled under BSKY.
- BSKY beneficiaries will continue to get cashless treatment for both critical and non-critical diseases as before.

BSKY NABIN

- All rural families (except regular government employees, government pensioners and income taxpayers) presently not covered under BSKY are eligible for “BSKY NABIN CARD”.
- Beneficiaries with “BSKY NABIN CARD” are entitled to get cashless treatment for identified critical diseases (**Heart Diseases, Kidney Diseases, Liver Diseases, Brain Stroke, Severe Head Injury, Brain Tumour, Burns Management, Nerve & Muscle Diseases and Cancer**) at all empanelled private hospitals both inside & outside Odisha.
- BSKY NABIN CARD will provide cashless treatment of Rs. 5 lakh per annum per family and additional Rs. 5 lakh for women members of the family.
- BSKY NABIN CARD holders will get cashless coverage at empanelled private hospitals with effect from 1st May 2024.

HOW TO ENROL FOR BSKY NABIN CARD

Eligibility: To qualify for registration under BSKY-NABIN, all family members must meet the following criteria:

- Residing in rural areas of Odisha.
- No family member should be an income taxpayer during FY 2022-23.
- No family member should be a regular government employee or government pensioner.
- No family member should be part of the existing BSKY beneficiaries / Ration Card holder.



BSKY NABIN CARD



“EVERY LIFE IS PRECIOUS”

[Signature]
Chief Minister, Odisha

DOCUMENT REQUIRED FOR REGISTRATION

- Registration should be done in the name of the “Head of the Family”
- Any members above age of 18 can apply for BSKY-NABIN on behalf of family.
- The applicant must have an Aadhaar card, linked with an active mobile number.
- Aadhaar based E-KYC (Know your consumer) is mandatory for the applicant.
- Voter ID card (EPIC card) for all family members above 18 years of age.
- The applicant & HoF (Head of the Family) must have valid mobile number to receive important communications.
- Recent photograph of the applicant as well as Head of the Family (or captured directly by the system).
- Aadhaar card of all family members, including children under 5 years.
- In case Aadhaar card of children under 5 years is not available, an undertaking must be submitted to provide Aadhaar card number by 30.06.2024.

WHERE TO APPLY

The eligible family can apply for BSKY-NABIN CARD in two (2) different modes.
Self-registration: Applicant can visit to www.bskynabin.odisha.gov.in & do self-registration. Applicant may take help of helpdesk support for technical assistance.
Mo-Seva Kendra: Applicant can visit to nearest MSK centre to apply for BSKY-NABIN CARD without any registration fees.
All applications are to be made online only. There will be no offline receipt of applications.

WHEN TO APPLY

The registration portal at www.bskynabin.odisha.gov.in will open on the 6th of January 2024 & will close on 16th January 2024.
All applications must be submitted online between 6th and 16th January, 2024.

THE BSKY SCHEME IS BEING EXPANDED IN PHASES SO THAT THERE IS TIMELY SERVICE DELIVERY & OPTIMAL UTILISATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HEALTH FACILITIES. IN SUBSEQUENT PHASES OF EXPANSION, URBAN FAMILIES AS WELL AS OTHER LEFT OUT CATEGORIES INCLUDING GOVERNMENT SERVANTS & PENSIONERS WILL BE COVERED UNDER BSKY, SO AS TO FULFILL THE DREAM OF OUR HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER OF PROVIDING UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE FOR THE PEOPLE OF ODISHA.

HELPDESK SUPPORT

FOR ANY SUPPORT, COMPLAINT & GRIEVANCE RELATED TO REGISTRATION PROCESS, APPLICANT CAN CALL
BSKY CARD HELPLINE: 155369



A view of a bike competitor in action during stage 2 of the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia



A displaced Palestinian boy, who fled home due to Israeli strikes, gets a haircut at a tent camp in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip



A boy rides a donkey during the traditional religious procession Alilo celebrating Orthodox Christmas in Tbilisi, Georgia



Masatoshi Nakamae drives his car on a damaged road as he heads to his town Soryomachi, which is isolated after the earthquake, in Wajima, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan



A vendor transports warm clothes on a cold day in Agra



NCC cadets during the interaction with Indian Air Force Chief, Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari (unseen), in New Delhi

of the day quote

Kumbh Mela is a big fair and it gets all help from the Centre. We also must remember that the site of Kumbh Mela is connected by road. Gangasagar Mela, which is held on an island, is one of the best such fairs in the world but I don't know why the Centre is yet to give it the due recognition

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

The Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) led by Prakash Ambedkar is very much part of the opposition alliance in Maharashtra to counter the ruling BJP in the Lok Sabha elections due in a few months

SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA (UBT) MP

The BSP makes a special request to the UP government to make arrangements at a safe place somewhere else instead of the current party state office otherwise any untoward incident can happen here at any time. Besides, the party also demands that the government should deal strictly with anti-Dalit elements

MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

SHORT TAKE

Maldivian envoy summoned

New Delhi: The Maldivian envoy to India was Monday summoned to the External Affairs Ministry and conveyed its strong concerns over disparaging social media posts against Prime Minister Narendra Modi by three now-suspended ministers as the backlash over the remarks continued for the second day. In Male, the Maldivian government conveyed to Indian High Commissioner Munu Muhawar that the remarks against Modi do not represent its views. Deputy ministers in the youth ministry Malsha Shareef, Mariyam Shiuna and Abdulla Mahzou Majid were suspended Sunday by the government of President Mohamed Muizzu over their posts.

PM to lure tech at Gujarat summit



REUTERS

Gandhinagar, Jan 8: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will roll out the red carpet for hundreds of domestic and foreign investors visiting his home state of Gujarat this week for a business event, in one of his last major efforts to draw investments before a re-election bid. The Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit during January 10-12 is expected to bring in around 100,000 visitors, including chief executives, business leaders, ministers and diplomats from 133 countries, in what organisers have dubbed as the biggest ever gathering at the biennial event which is in its 10th edition. The list of foreign companies taking part include Microsoft (MSFT.O), Nasdaq (NDAQ.O), Alphabet's (GOOGL.O) Google, Suzuki (7269.T) and Toyota (7203.T). Gautam Adani, Mukesh Ambani and the chairman of salt-to-aviation conglomerate Tata Group, will be among the scores of top Indian executives in attendance. Foreign investors have bet big on India since Modi came to power in 2014 - with the likes of Apple (AAPL.O), Samsung (005930.KS), Kia (000270.KS) and Airbus (AIR.PA) expanding operations. This, even as some executives say his protectionist policies for sectors such as digital payments, manufacturing and e-commerce often promote local businesses to

the disadvantage of foreign ones. For Modi and Gujarat officials, the summit will present a chance to attract investors to sectors such as chipmaking and electric vehicles manufacturing where India lags, with the Prime Minister set to hold closed-door meetings with many executives, state officials said. It will be one of Modi's last big attempts to assure investors about his business friendly policies and bolster India's reputation as an investment destination, just months before the 2024 national elections, where he will fight for a third term and is widely expected to win. US companies "are factoring in that the current government will come back in power," said Mukesh Aghi, President of trade group U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum which is leading its biggest ever delegation of 50-plus U.S. firms to the Gujarat summit. "They are quietly de-risking from China, and so India, with its fast growing economy, becomes important," added Aghi. The event will be held in Gandhinagar at a sprawling convention centre managed by Leela Palace, an Indian luxury hotels group owned by Brookfield. Roads leading to the convention centre are being cleaned and repaired, with hoardings of Modi's photos plastered across to promote Gujarat as an investment hotspot. Gujarat has attracted roughly \$34 billion in foreign investments between 2019 and 2023, the third highest among states after Maharashtra - home to financial capital Mumbai - and Karnataka, whose capital Bangalore is India's Silicon Valley. Just like the earlier Vibrant Gujarat summits, hotel rooms are in short supply now and getting pricier. Ahead of the event, Gujarat signed initial investment pacts worth \$120 billion with more than 200 companies, including steelmaker ArcelorMittal's local joint venture.

Row over attacks on ED teams escalates Cong, AAP hold seat-sharing talks

Kolkata, Jan 8: The row over the attacks on ED teams in West Bengal escalated Monday with the federal agency saying that the state police registered an FIR only under bailable sections in the January 5 Sandeshkhali incident, while no details were given to it in the Bongaon assault case. The ED also claimed that the magnitude of the PDS "scam" which it was investigating was "enormous" and proceeds of crime transferred by a suspect amount to Rs 9,000-10,000 crore, out of which Rs 2,000 crore are "suspected to be transferred to Dubai either directly or through Bangladesh".

The money laundering investigation of the agency pertains to alleged irregularities in the public distribution system (PDS) including bogus procurement of paddy in West Bengal, where the ED last year arrested minister and Trinamool Congress leader Jyotipriya Mallick and his aide Bakibur Rahaman. Fresh raids were launched January 5 in this case as part of



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

which an ED team, along with an armed CRPF security escort, reached Sandeshkhali to search the premises of Shajahan Sheikh, convener of TMC's local unit. The other team raided the location of TMC leader Shankar Adhya in the Simultala area of Bongaon. Both locations are in the North 24 Parganas district. The agency said three of its officials were "grievously" injured and their mobile phones, laptop, cash, wallets, etc were looted in the first incident. It said in a statement that a complaint was given by the ED at Nazat police station for registration of FIR in the Sandeshkhali case under as many as 19 Sections of the IPC. These included IPC Sections like 307 (attempt to murder), 333 (voluntarily causing hurt on provocation), 326 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant), 392 (punishment for robbery) and 395 (punishment for dacoity). It had also registration of the case for offences under IPC Sections 148 (rioting, armed with deadly weapon), 186 (voluntarily obstructing any public servant), 189 (threat of injury to public servant) and 149 (every member of unlawful assembly guilty of offence committed in prosecution

of common object). The other Sections enumerated by the ED for registration of the FIR were 435 (mischief by fire or explosive substance), 440 (mischief committed after preparation made for causing death or hurt), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), 342 (punishment for wrongful confinement) read with section 120B (criminal conspiracy), 109 (punishment of abetment) and 115 (abetment of offence punishable with death or imprisonment for life if offence not committed). The police, the ED said, registered this FIR under IPC Sections 148, 149, 341, 186 and 353 out of the 19 sections sought by the agency. The other IPC Sections included in the FIR were 147 (punishment for rioting), 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), 427 (mischief causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees), 379 (punishment for theft), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention). All these sections are "mostly bailable and non-scheduled offences", the agency said.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 8: The Congress and the AAP discussed seat-sharing prospects for the Lok Sabha polls in Punjab, Delhi and other states Monday, and decided to meet again to give a final shape to the arrangements between the two key constituents of the INDIA opposition bloc. Top Congress leaders and members of the party's seat-sharing committee Mukul Wasnik and Ashok Gehlot were present at the meeting here while those from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) included Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak and Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj. The leaders of the two parties discussed the possibilities of seat-sharing but did not divulge any details. "We had a very good meeting. Senior AAP leaders attended the meeting for holding discussions with us on behalf of Arvind Kejriwal. The National Alliance Committee (NAC) formed by the

BJP suffers poll setback in Rajasthan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Dec 8: Rajasthan state minister Surendra Pal Singh lost the Assembly election in Karanpur constituency by a margin of 11,283 votes to his Congress rival Monday, an embarrassing defeat for the BJP days after it assumed office in the state. The BJP nominee was inducted into the Bhajanlal Sharma ministry December 30, ahead of the polling January 5. The minister of state (Independent charge) was later allocated Agriculture Marketing Board, Indira Gandhi Canal Department and Minority Affairs Department. Under the rules, he has to get elected as an MLA within six months of his appointment as a minister. According to the chief electoral officer, Congress candidate Rupinder Singh Koonar won 94,950 votes as against Singh's 83,667. There were 18 rounds of counting. This is the second time Singh has faced defeat in Karanpur constituency. He was defeated by Koonar's father Gurmeet Singh in the 2018 Rajasthan Assembly elections. The election for Karanpur Assembly



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

seat was postponed this time due to the death of Congress candidate Gurmeet Singh. The Congress then fielded his son from the seat. "I am thankful to the people of Karanpur who voted for me... Even central ministers had come for campaigning (but) people rejected them and made democracy win," Koonar said after winning the election. Congress leaders congratulated Koonar even before the final results came in. Former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said the people of Karanpur have defeated the pride of the BJP. "Hearty congratulations and best wishes to Congress candidate Shri Rupinder Singh Koonar for his victory in Srikaranpur. This victory is dedicated to the public service works done by the late Gurmeet Singh Koonar," he said.

ED arrests ex-INLD MLA, aide

Chandigarh: The Enforcement Directorate Monday arrested former Haryana MLA Dilbag Singh and his aide Kulvir Singh in an alleged illegal mining-linked money laundering investigation, official sources said. The Enforcement Directorate had raided Singh, a former legislator of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) from the Yamuna Nagar assembly seat, and Congress MLA from Sonapat, Surender Panwar, as well as their linked entities January 4 and the searches ended after five days Monday. About 20 locations were covered by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) during the searches.

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, GUDARI, DIST-RAYAGADA (H&UD Department, Govt. of Odisha) Ph.No.06862-260032, e-Mail:gudarinac.hud@gmail.com Date:04.01.2024 Letter No.25, e-Procurement Notice Tender Reference No.-GUD/NAC/05/2023-24 No.C-2288: 1. Type of Work:Civil Work, 2. Total No. of Works: 01 (One) no. of individual works, 3. Estimated Cost: Rs.59.21 Lakh, 4.Period of Completion: (06) Six Months, 5. Date and Time of Bid document available in website: 04.00 PM of 05.01.2024 to 04.00 PM of 22.01.2024. 6. The Last Date/Time for receipt of bid in the Portal: upto 4.00 PM of 22.01.2024. 7. Date of Opening Technical and Financial Bid: 11 AM of 23.01.2024. 8. Name and Address of Officer Inviting Bid: Executive Officer, NAC, Gudari. Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Sd./- Executive Officer, NAC Gudari OIPR-13184/11/0008/2324

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, BALUGAON, KHORDHA E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE BID IDENTIFICATION NO. Balugaon 03/2023-24 No.41, Date:05.01.2024 No.C-2282: The Executive Officer on behalf of NAC, Balugaon invites percentage Bid through e-procurement in double cover system according to norm of e-procurement. 1. Type of Works : Civil Construction works as in the DTCN 2. Total No. of Works : 21 Nos. 3. Tender Amount Cost : Rs.2,74,234.00 to Rs.16,90,062.00 4. Period of Completion : 30 days to 60 days 5. Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the Portal : From 10.00 AM of Dt.08.01.2024 upto 5.00 PM of Dt.20.01.2024. 6. Original Bid documents : Dt.22.01.2024 from 10.00 AM to submission in Tender Box : 1.00 PM 7. Date & Time of Opening of Tender : Dt.22.01.2024 at 2.30 P.M. Further, the details of e-tender documents can be had from the E-Procurement portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Corrigendum if any shall only be published in above website. Sd./- Executive Officer, N.A.C., Balugaon OIPR-13148/11/0017/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, SAMBALPUR (R&B) DIVISION No.-II, SAMBALPUR E-mail:eesbprnbdivision2@gmail.com, Phone-0663-2410104 BID IDENTIFICATION No.SE/R and B/SBP II/15 (online)/2023-24 E-Procurement Notice Dated:29.12.2023 No.B-1573:The Superintending Engineer, Sambalpur (R&B) Division No-II, Sambalpur on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites Percentage Rate bids in Single Cover System in ONLINE MODE. 1. No. of work : 3 nos. Building Works 2. Tender Cost : Rs.6,000/- 3. Class of Contractor : "D"/"C"/"B" Class Contractor 4. Availability of bid document : 11.00 Hours of 09.01.2024 to 17.00 Hours of 18.01.2024 in the website 5. Date of Opening of Tenders : 11.30 Hours on dt.19.01.2024 6. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in only. Any Corrigendum/Addendum/Cancellation of tender will be displayed in the website said only. Sd./- Superintending Engineer Sambalpur (R&B) Division No.II OIPR-34136/11/0020/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION-I, BHADRAK E-mail: ee_rwbdk@yahoo.co.in "e" Procurement Notice for Building Work Bid Identification No. Online Tender 15 of 2023-24 No.O-2145:Name of the Work: Building, 2. Total No. of Works: 30 Nos. 3.Estimated Cost: Rs.36.91 lakhs to Rs.36.92 lakhs. 4. Class of Contractor: "B" & "C" Class. 5. Period of Completion: As per Annexure. 6. Type of Tender: Single Cover. 7. Other details: Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "https://tendersorissa.gov.in" Sd./- Er. Kanan Pradhan Executive Engineer, R.W.Division-I, Bhadrak OIPR-25060/11/0016/2324

Government of Odisha OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, BHADRAK "e" Procurement Notice for Building Works 1st Corrigendum to Identification Online Tender 11/RWD-II/2023-24, Dt.30.12.2023 Letter No.122, Dt.06.01.2024 No.O-2139:In response to this office identification Online Tender 11/RWD-II/2023-24, Dt.30.12.2023 for modification of column No.06 i.e. time of completion 9 month instead of 6 month vide Ltr No.511, dtd.03.01.2024 of Chief Engineer Building & Bridges is hereby modified & following changes has been made. ANNEXURE Table with 9 columns: Sl. No., Name of the Work, Approx. Estimated Cost put to tender (in lakhs), EMD required (in Rs.), Class of Contractor, Time of Completion, Cost of Tender Paper (in Rs.), Name of R.W. Sub-Division, Name of the Division. Other conditions are remain same. Sd./- Executive Engineer, R.W.Division-II, Bhadrak OIPR-25090/11/0023/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA THE CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER CUM EO, ZILLA PARISHAD, NABARANGPUR No.CAD-3621 "e" Procurement Notice - CDO-NAB-02/2022-23 BID IDENTIFICATION NO.CDO-NAB-02/2022-23 Table with 2 columns: No., Name of the Work, Description. 1. Name of the Work: Construction of addl Class room for the year 2022-23 2. Total No. of Package: 114 Nos. 3. Tender Cost (Approx.): Rs.9.00 Lakhs to 12.00 Lakhs as per DTCN 4. Bid Security: Rs.9000/- to 12000/- 5. Cost of Tender Paper (Online): Rs.4000/- to 6000/- as per DTCN 6. Period of Completion: As per DTCN 7. Availability of Tender online for bidding: From 16.01.2024 at 11.30 AM to 24.01.2024 upto 5.30 P.M. 8. Date and Place of Opening: Dt.25.01.2024 at 11.30 AM in the office of the Chief Development Officer cum EO, Zilla Parishad, Nabarangpur 9. Tender Inviting Authority: Chief Development Officer, Cum EO, Zilla Parishad, Nabarangpur Further details can be seen from the website http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Any addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation to the above notice will be published in this website only. Sd./- Chief Development Officer Cum EO, Zilla Parishad, Nabarangpur OIPR-19233/11/0002/2324

Government of Odisha DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, LOWER INDRA CANAL DIVISION, KHARIAR E-mail Id:eelicd.kha@gmail.com No.A-1160: e-Procurement Notice No.SELICD-07, Dt.08.01.2024 (Online) 1.Type/Nature of Work : Electrical Work, 2. Total No. of Works: 01 (One) No., 3. Approx. value of works : Rs.13.57 Lakh (Excluding GST). 4. Period of Completion: 2 (Two) Calendar Months. 5. Classification of Bidders: "MV" Class Contractors only. Other details as follows: Table with 5 columns: Procurement Officer, e-Procurement Notice No., Availability & Submission of bids in online, Date & Time of Opening of Tender. Sd./- (Er.Soumya Kishore Jaipuria) Superintending Engineer, Lower Indra Canal Division, Khariar OIPR-32206/11/0008/2324

international

of the day quote

You should always ask probing questions, you should always approach things from a position of scepticism to ensure that you get value for money for taxpayers

Al Aqsa is the most important hospital remaining in Gaza's Middle Area and must remain functional, and protected, to deliver its lifesaving services

A contentious immigration bill backed by the far right is imperfect and needs some fixes but is what the French wanted and is not a victory for the far right

SHORT TAKES

TTP militants kill six Pak policemen

Peshawar: A bomb explosion targeting policemen going to provide security for polio vaccination workers killed at least six of them and injured 22 others in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province Monday, in the latest terror attack claimed by the dreaded Pakistani Taliban. The incident occurred in the Mamund tehsil of Bajaur district in the province bordering Afghanistan just when the police personnel boarded a van to join security duty with polio vaccination teams. The injured have been shifted to a nearby hospital, where an emergency was declared. Six policemen were killed and 22 others injured in the explosion, a police spokesman said.

Japan earthquake toll spikes to 161

Tokyo: The death toll from a devastating 7.6-magnitude earthquake that struck Japan's Ishikawa prefecture January 1, increased to 161 as of Monday, local authorities said. Meanwhile, efforts on underway to find at least 103 people who are currently unaccounted for, Xinhua news agency. Of the deaths, 70 have been confirmed in both Wajima and Suzu cities, 11 in Anamizu Town, five in Nanao City, two each in the towns of Noto and Shika, and one in Hakui City, according to Japan's public broadcaster NHK. A total of 565 people were also injured as a result of the massive tremor and the continued aftershocks.

French PM resigns

Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron Monday accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne, the President's office said. Borne's resignation follows recent political tensions over contentious immigration legislation backed by Macron to strengthen the government's ability to deport some foreigners, among other measures. Borne had been appointed in May 2022 after Macron's reelection for a second term.

Kim turns 40

Seoul: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un turned 40 Monday with no announced public celebrations at home, after he entered the new year with artillery barrages into the sea and vows to expand his nuclear arsenal. Since taking power in late 2011, Kim, the third generation of his family to rule North Korea, is believed to have established an absolute leadership similar to his predecessors. But his birthday has yet to be officially celebrated, unlike his late father Kim Jong Il and grandfather Kim Il Sung,



I consider despicable the practice of so-called surrogate motherhood, which represents a grave violation of the dignity of the woman and the child, based on the exploitation of situations of the mother's material needs

POPE FRANCIS | HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

INDIAN ENVOY MEETS HASINA
The Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Pranay Kumar Verma Monday called on Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and conveyed the greetings on behalf of his country on her re-election and the victory of her Awami League party for the fourth straight term



Israel carrying out strikes in Syria

AGENCIES

Beirut/Amman, Jan 8: Israel is carrying out an unprecedented wave of deadly strikes in Syria targeting cargo trucks, infrastructure and people involved in Iran's weapons lifeline to its proxies in the region, sources said.

The sources, including a Syrian military intelligence officer and a commander in the regional alliance backing Damascus, said Israel had shifted strategies following the October 7 rampage by Hamas fighters into Israeli territory and the ensuing Israeli bombing campaigns in Gaza and Lebanon.

Although Israel has struck Iran-linked targets in Syria for years, including areas where Lebanese armed group Hezbollah has been active, it is now unleashing deadlier, more frequent air raids against Iranian arms transfers and air defence systems in Syria, the sources said.

The commander in the regional alliance and two additional sources familiar with Hezbollah's thinking said Israel had abandoned the unspoken "rules of the game" that previously characterised its strikes in Syria, and seemed "no longer cautious" about inflicting heavy casualties on Hezbollah there.

"They used to fire warning shots - they'd hit near the truck, our guys would get out of the truck, and then they'd hit the truck," the commander said, describing Israeli raids on arms transfers handled by Hezbollah before October 7.

"Now that's over. Israel is now



An Israeli airstrike killed an elite Hezbollah commander in southern Lebanon Monday

unleashing deadlier, more frequent air raids against Iranian arms transfers and air defence systems in Syria. They bomb everyone directly. They bomb to kill." The intensified air campaign has killed 19 Hezbollah members in Syria in three months - more than twice the rest of 2023 combined, according to a Reuters count. More than 130 Hezbollah fighters have also been killed by Israeli shelling of southern Lebanon in the same period. The Israeli military did not respond to questions from Reuters about its escalating campaign. A senior Israeli official, briefing journalists on condition of anonymity, said Hezbollah had initiated this round of fighting with attacks on Oct. 8, and

that Israel's strategy was one of retaliation.

Asked last month about a reported Israeli strike in Syria, Israel's military chief said Israeli forces work throughout the region and take "whatever action necessary" to show Israel's determination to defend itself.

IRANIAN FORCES KILLED

Israel began striking Iran-linked targets in Syria years ago, but sources familiar with the strikes said it had appeared to avoid killing Hezbollah members if it could.

A regional intelligence officer said Israel feared a high casualty figure would prompt a retaliation from Hezbollah in Lebanon against Israeli villages just across the border.

But with exchanges of fire now taking place on a daily basis following the October 7 attack, Israel is willing to be "less cautious and less restrained in killing Lebanese Hezbollah in Syria," the officer added.

In a televised address on Jan. 5, Hezbollah head Sayyed Hassan

ISRAEL SHIFTS STRATEGY IN AIR STRIKES IN SYRIA - SOURCES

STRIKES TARGET IRANIAN ARMS TRANSFERS, AIR DEFENCE SYSTEMS

STRIKES DEADLIER, MORE FREQUENT SINCE OCTOBER 7, SOURCES SAY

Nasrallah said the group had lost "a number of fighters in Israeli shelling in Syria in several places in the last three months." "We had a formula before the (October 7) Aqsa Flood operation - if they killed any of our brothers in Syria, we would respond on the Lebanon front - which was calm. Practically, this formula's conditions have changed - why? Because the whole front is lit up now," he said in a statement.

An Israeli drone strike Dec 8 killed three Hezbollah fighters planning possible operations in northern Syria, and another strike on Quneitra in southern Syria targeted two Hezbollah fighters responsible for weapons transfers, the commander in the pro-Syrian alliance said. Four more were killed in late December in a strike on buildings and trucks being used by Iran-aligned militia groups along Syria's eastern border with Iraq.

The strikes have also hit Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Syria. One in early December killed two Guards members, and another December 25 killed a senior adviser to the Guards who was overseeing military coordination between Syria and Iran.

Pak SC allows Sharif to run for fourth time

REUTERS

Islamabad, Jan 8: Pakistan's Supreme Court Monday scrapped lifetime bans on contesting elections for people with criminal convictions, paving the way for Nawaz Sharif to run for Prime Minister for a fourth time.

Sharif's party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), is considered a front runner to win elections scheduled for February 8, with Sharif's main rival, former prime minister Imran Khan, in jail and barred from contesting for five years.

In his ruling, Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, who headed a seven-member panel of judges, said the life bans "abridge the fundamental right of citizens to contest elections".

The court's decision was six to one in favour of overruling a previous 2018 decision that imposed life bans on politicians convicted under certain provisions of the constitution.

Sharif, 74, was found guilty in 2017 of dishonest practices, which qualified for a ban under the 2018 ruling. Last year, the courts overturned the two convictions.

While Sharif was not an applicant in the latest Supreme Court case, which was filed by other politicians, the ruling makes him eligible to contest the polls as more than five years have elapsed since 2017.

Khan, 71, whose party won the last elections in 2018, will not benefit from the ruling as it abolishes only life bans, which means the cricketer-



turned-politician remains disqualified until 2028.

"Alhamdulillah (praise be to God), today the dark chapter of judicial injustice of lifelong disqualification to make Nawaz Sharif a target of political revenge has finally ended," Marriyum Aurangzeb, a PML-N leader, said in a post on social media platform X.

One of Khan's lawyers, Intazar Hussain Panjtha, described the scrapping of the ban as the "death of law and the constitution".

Sharif was removed from the premiership in 2017 and then convicted on the corruption charges. He spent time in jail before leaving for London in 2019, where he remained in self-imposed exile until October 2023.

In previous stints as prime minister, Sharif has favoured policies focused on rapid economic growth, including the inauguration of the multi-billion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor development. His push for closer ties with neighbour and arch rival India is cited as a reason behind his clashes with the country's powerful military, which sees India as a threat.

SNIPPETS

Maldives President Muizzu arrives in China

Beijing: Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu arrived in China Monday on a five-day state visit during which he is due to hold talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping and sign several agreements to bolster the bilateral ties. Muizzu, who is regarded as "pro-China", is accompanied by his wife Sajidha Mohamed and a high-level delegation. The President and the First Lady were greeted by senior Chinese officials upon their arrival in the country. They visited the Xiamen Free Trade Zone in China's Fujian province after their arrival. Representatives from the Xiamen Free Trade Zone presented an introductory video. Following the presentation, the President and the First Lady took a tour and inquired about significant areas in the zone. Muizzu's maiden visit to China, however, has been marred by a huge diplomatic row triggered by the derogatory remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi by some Maldivian ministers after he posted a video of him on a pristine beach during his visit to Lakshadweep. The Maldivian envoy to India was on Monday summoned to the external affairs ministry and conveyed strong concern over remarks.

Russia hits Ukraine with more missiles attacks

Kyiv: Russia launched its latest barrage of hypersonic and cruise missiles against Ukrainian targets early Monday, striking near the front lines of fighting in the east as well as in central and western parts of the country, officials said. At least four civilians were reported killed and at least 30 injured. Western officials and analysts had previously warned that Russia was stockpiling its cruise missiles in preparation for a strategy of winter bombardment, as bad weather keeps the 1,500-kilometre (930-mile) front line largely static after 22 months of war. Unlike last winter, when the Kremlin's forces targeted Ukraine's power grid, Russia is now aiming at Kyiv's defence industry, they say. But the barrages have repeatedly hit civilian areas. Monday's attacks struck a string of urban areas, including housing and a shopping mall, across Ukraine.

First US Moon lander in 50 years blasts off

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cape Canaveral (US), Jan 8: The first US lunar lander in more than 50 years rocketed toward the moon Monday, launching private companies on a space race to make deliveries for NASA and other customers.

Astrobotic Technology's lander caught a ride on a brand new rocket, United Launch Alliance's Vulcan. The Vulcan streaked through the Florida predawn sky, putting the spacecraft on a roundabout route to the moon that should culminate with an attempted landing February 23.

"So, so, so excited. We are on our way to the moon!" Astrobotic chief executive John Thornton said. The Pittsburgh company aims to be the first private business to successfully land on the moon, something only four countries have accomplished. But a Houston company also has a lander ready to fly, and could beat it to the lunar surface, taking a more direct path.

MID-AIR BLOWOUT

Boeing jetliner was restricted

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Portland (US), Jan 8: The Boeing jetliner that suffered an inflight blowout over Oregon was not being used for flights to Hawaii after a warning light that could have indicated a pressurisation problem lit up on three different flights, a federal official said Sunday.

Alaska Airlines decided to restrict the aircraft from long flights over water so the plane "could return very quickly to an airport" if the warning light reappeared, said Jennifer Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

Homendy cautioned that the pressurisation light might be unrelated to Friday's incident in which a plug covering an unused exit door blew off the Boeing 737 Max 9 as it cruised about three miles (4.8 kilometres) over Oregon. The warning light came on during three previous flights: December 7, January 3 and



Videos posted online by passengers showed a gaping hole where the paneled-over door had been. They applauded when the plane landed safely about 13 minutes after the blowout

Firefighters came down the aisle, asking passengers to remain in their seats as they treated the injured

January 4 — the day before the door plug broke off. Homendy said she didn't have all the details regarding the December 7 incident but specified the light came on during a flight on January 3 and on January 4 after the plane had landed. The NTSB said the lost door plug was found on Sunday near Portland, Oregon,

by a school teacher — for now, known only as Bob — who discovered it in his backyard and sent two photos to the safety board. Investigators will examine the plug, which is 26 by 48 inches (66 by 121 centimetres) and weighs 63 pounds (28.5 kilograms), for signs of how it broke free.

AI'S THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

MORE THAN TWO BILLION PEOPLE—ONE QUARTER OF THE PLANET—ARE EXPECTED TO VOTE IN VARIOUS ELECTIONS IN 2024

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is an incredibly transformative technology that has the ability to generate fresh text, images, and other forms of media using existing data. Its impact is so profound that it has the potential to disrupt established norms for centuries. Today, this technology is more accessible and powerful than ever before, which unfortunately opens up the possibility of its malicious use. This poses a serious threat to the security of the United States' electoral system, as it provides nefarious actors—such as China, Iran, and Russia—an opportunity to enhance their tactics and undermine democracy. Although the upcoming advancements in technology will not introduce entirely new risks in the 2024 election, it will cer-

tainly amplify the existing ones. Over the years, malicious actors have utilised cyberthreats and disinformation to undermine the American electoral process. However, the advent of generative AI in the wrong hands could pose a significant threat to every aspect of the electoral process, including voter registration, casting votes, and result reporting. The primary responsibility for addressing this imminent danger will largely rest upon the shoulders of state and local election officials throughout the country. These officials have been guardians of the electoral process for nearly 250 years, shielding it from foreign adversaries, wars, natural disasters, pandemics, and disruptive technologies. But these officials need support, especially because of the intense pressure they have faced since the 2020 election and the baseless allegations of voter fraud that followed it.

More than two billion people—one quarter of the planet—are expected to vote in various elections in 2024. With people going to the polls across the globe, concerns over generative AI's effect on elections are not limited to the US. As the United



Kingdom's National Cyber Security Centre has noted, this year's British general election will be the first to take place against the backdrop of significant advances in AI. The centre warned that "large language models will almost certainly be used to generate fabricated content, AI-created hyper-realistic bots will make the spread of disinformation easier, and the manipulation of media for use in

deepfake campaigns will likely become more advanced."

Generative AI is complicating the jobs of election officials at a time when many of them remain under-resourced and understaffed. The high turnover of experienced election administration professionals across the country has only exacerbated the problem. Although this year will be a very challenging one for election officials, time and again they

have risen to the challenge. The federal government will continue to support them with resources, information, and security services.

The private sector, including internet service providers, cloud service providers, and cybersecurity firms, as well as election vendors and companies that provide voting equipment, also has a role to play. In previous election cycles, such vendors and service providers stepped up to provide local and state election offices with enhanced security measures and support services. But any company providing critical services to election offices should ask what more it can do to reduce the cyber, physical, and operational risks to election infrastructure going into the election season. In particular, generative AI companies should consider how they can support election officials, both by ensuring the overall secure design of their products and in particular by developing methods for identifying AI-generated content.

It is also important for the media to be aware of the threat posed by the malicious use of AI in this election cycle. Journalists should help ensure the information they relay comes

from trusted, official sources; when incorrect information is circulating, they should make accurate information available. Sophisticated foreign influence operations could quickly overwhelm local election offices and exceed their ability to respond. This is where the media can be key, amplifying election officials as trusted sources of information and helping ensure that accurate information is being shared with the public.

Voters can do their part, too. There is always the opportunity to serve as a poll worker or as an election observer. And everyone can support their state and local election officials by being careful not to amplify or exacerbate the actions of nefarious actors who want to undermine the security and integrity of American democracy. Election security should not be a matter of politics or partisanship but rather preserving the integrity of the country's most sacred democratic process. Americans must work together so that the malicious use of generative AI is just another line in a long list of challenges that the American electoral process can and has overcome.

of the day quote

We will hit a fleet size of 70 aircraft by March or April 2024. I expect to get all legal approvals for our merger with Air India in the first half of 2024 and to merge operations by mid-2025 at the latest

VINOD KANNAN | CEO, VISTARA

In 2022-23, our annual revenue was at ₹1,600 crore. We are looking at ₹1,800 crore revenue in FY25. Overall our target is to reach ₹2,500 crore in next 3-4 years with the addition of overseas business especially in Brazil

BHAVESH SHAH | MD, GSP CROP SCIENCE

We look forward to continuing the successful collaboration and realizing these projects which contribute to local growth and job creation while delivering attractive returns for our fund investors

PETER SJÖNTÖFT | ASSOCIATE PARTNER, CIP

SHORT TAKES

Coal import up 11%

New Delhi: The country registered an 11.7 per cent rise in coal imports to 20.95 Million Tonne (MT) in November as compared to the year-ago period. The country's coal imports in November 2022 was 18.75 MT, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company mjunction services. However, coal import in the April-November period of the current financial year dropped to 169.08 MT from 173.47 MT in the year-ago period.

Clean chit to Boeing

New Delhi: Aviation watchdog DGCA Monday said the checks of operational Boeing 737-8 Max planes in the country have been completed satisfactorily, an inspection that was ordered as a precautionary measure in the wake of an incident involving an Alaska Airlines aircraft last week. The checks of the wing emergency exits have been completed for 32 aircraft. The inspection of these planes was ordered January 6 following an incident involving Alaska Airlines' Boeing 737-9 Max aircraft January 5.

ONGC starts output

New Delhi: State-controlled Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has started oil production from its much-delayed flagship deep-sea project in Krishna Godavari basin in Bay of Bengal, helping reverse years of decline in output, the company said. ONGC has started producing from the Cluster-2 project in KG-DWN-98/2 block and will slowly ramp up output.

MF sector rebounds

2023 marked 11th consecutive yearly rise in the MF industry's AUM after a drop in two preceding years. The growth in the industry was supported by inflows in equity schemes, especially through SIPs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 8: After a lacklustre performance in 2022, the mutual fund industry saw a substantial rebound in 2023 with its asset base surging by nearly ₹11 lakh crore, reaching over ₹50 lakh crore mark fuelled by an optimistic equity market, awareness about financial stability and a robust economic expansion.

"This noteworthy achievement comes against the backdrop of India's growth story, highlighting the MF industry's ability to win investors' trust by providing low-cost, long-term-oriented wealth creation avenues," the Association of Mutual Fund Industry (Amfi) said Monday.

The year 2023 has seen a substantial increase in overall inflow reaching ₹2.74 lakh crore. This was supported by the increasing popularity of Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs), which drew in ₹1.84 lakh crore.

The inflow has pushed the assets under management (AUM) of the mutual fund industry by 27 per cent, adding ₹10.9 lakh crore in 2023.

This was way higher than the 5.7 per cent growth and ₹2.65 lakh crore increase in AUM observed throughout 2022, as well as the nearly 22 per cent growth and close to ₹7 lakh crore addition to the asset base in 2021.

Sony may pull plug on \$10bn Zee merger

REUTERS

New Delhi, Jan 8: Japan's Sony is planning to scrap the merger of its Indian unit with Zee Entertainment, more than two years after the deal was announced, over a disagreement on who will lead the \$10 billion entity, Bloomberg News reported Monday.

Sony plans to file a termination notice before the extended Jan. 20 deadline to close the merger, Bloomberg reported, citing people familiar with the matter. It added that discussions between Sony and Zee were still ongoing.

The deal to merge Zee and Sony's TV channels, streaming platforms and film assets has been delayed after India's markets regulator, in August, barred Punit Goenka, Zee CEO and a candidate to lead the merged entity, from directorships of any listed company.

An Indian tribunal, however, lifted the ban on Goenka in October but said he would have to cooperate with any investigation by the country's markets regulator.

In November, Sony pushed for NP Singh, the managing director of its Indian operations, to head the merged company, instead of Goenka, local business daily Mint had reported.



I am very sure that \$50 billion exports of India today will see a doubling of our exports by 2030 to almost \$100 billion

SUNIL BARTHWAL | COMMERCE SECRETARY

SWISS TRADE DEFICIT FEAR LOOMS

Large trade deficit with Switzerland and its decision to remove import duties on almost all industrial goods for all countries starting January 1 would limit gains for India under the proposed trade agreement with EFTA bloc, Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said Monday



'FLAWED, PREJUDICED'

SBI debunks K-shaped eco recovery theory

Income inequality declines, says SBI research unit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 8: Income inequality in India has declined, with more than a third of taxpayers moving to higher income tax buckets, while top taxpayers' contributions declining, the Economic Research Department of SBI said in a report, rebutting talks of K-shaped post-pandemic recovery.

Some economists, including former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan, have often referred to India's post-pandemic economic growth as K-shaped.

SBI research paper said the K-shaped recovery seems "at best flawed, prejudiced, ill-concocted and fanning interests of select quarters to whom India's remarkable ascendance, signalling more the renaissance of the new global south, is quite unpalatable".

"Income inequality captured through the Gini coefficient (one of the most widely used measures of income inequality) of taxable income has declined significantly from 0.472 to 0.402 during FY14-FY22," it said.

While 36.3 per cent of taxpayers have moved from lower income to higher income tax bucket, resulting in 21.3 per cent additional income, the top 2.5 per cent of taxpayer's contribution in income has declined



In a K-shaped recovery, some parts of the economy may experience strong growth while others continue to drop

from 2.81 per cent to 2.28 per cent during FY14-FY21 (April 2013-March 2014 fiscal year to April 2020-March 2021 fiscal).

It went on to state that 19.5 per cent of small firms have transitioned into larger firms through MSME value chain integration and consumption of the bottom 90 per cent of the population has increased by ₹8.2 lakh crore post-pandemic.

With the rise of income in the rural economy, people are substituting two-wheelers for four-wheelers.

The report for the first time in the Indian context used publicly available income tax data to measure the estimates of inequality.



The Bull Run, awareness about financial stability post the pandemic and overall positive sentiment have encouraged retail investors to invest in equities and many retail investors have opted for the MF route

JEAN CHRISTOPHE GOUGEON | DIRECTOR & CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, SHAREKHAN

According to the data, the asset base rose from ₹39.88 lakh crore in 2022 to an all-time high of ₹50.78 lakh crore in 2023. The asset base stood at ₹37.72 lakh crore at the end of December 2021 and ₹31 lakh crore in December 2020.

"While the MF industry took almost 50 years to build the first ₹10 lakh crore of AUM, the last ₹10 lakh crore, from ₹40 lakh crore to ₹50 lakh crore was amassed in just over a year," Venkat Chalasani, Chief Executive of AMFI, said.

Equities in focus
Flows during 2023 included

an investment of ₹1.61 lakh crore in equity-oriented schemes and over ₹87,000 crore in hybrid schemes, however, there was an outflow to the tune of ₹46,000 crore in debt schemes.

"For the year 2023, the net flows for equity funds stood at ₹1.61 lakh crore, with 39 per cent or ₹63,949 crore coming into mid and small cap mutual funds. Sectoral/thematic funds were the next best category, garnering ₹30,841 crore for the year. Large cap and focused funds were the only two sectors with negative inflows of around 1.7 per cent

Mutual fund industry saw net inflow of ₹2.74L-cr in 2023 as compared to an inflow of over ₹71K-cr YoY

Automobile retail sales rise 11% annually in '23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 8: Aided by robust demand, automobile retail sales in India rose by 11 per cent last year as compared to 2022, dealers' body FADA said Monday.

The overall domestic automobile retail sales stood at 2,38,67,990 units in the 2023 calendar year as compared to 2,14,92,324 units in 2022.

Passenger vehicle sales stood at 38,60,268 units last year, up 11 per cent from 34,89,953 units in 2022.

Similarly, two-wheeler retails grew by 9 per cent last year to 1,70,61,112 units from 1,55,88,352 units in the January-December period of 2022.

Three-wheeler retail sales jumped 58 per cent to 10,80,653 units last year from 6,81,812 units in 2022.

Commercial vehicle retails saw an increase of 8 per cent at 9,94,330 units from 9,18,284 units in 2022.

Tractor retails rose to 8,71,627 units, registering a jump of 7 per cent from 8,13,923 units sold in the preceding year.

In December 2023, the overall domestic automobile retail sales increased by 21 per cent to 19,90,915 units as compared to 16,43,514 units in December 2022.



Passenger vehicle retails rose to 2,93,005 units last month, 3 per cent higher than that of December 2022 when the figure stood at 2,85,429 units.

Two-wheeler sales rose by 28 per cent to 14,49,693 units in December 2023 as compared to 11,36,465 units sold in the year-ago period.

The Federation of Automobile Dealers' Associations (FADA) stated that it has collated the sales data from 1,355 out of 1,442 regional transport offices across the country.

FADA noted that each sector within the auto retail industry is positioned for growth this year, navigating through the dynamic market conditions.

Passenger vehicles are expected to see growth with new product launches and stable market sentiments, it said.

Equities drop on global weakness

SENSEX, NIFTY TUMBLE NEARLY 1%; BREAK TWO-DAY WIN STREAK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 8: Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty surrendered early gains to close with deep losses Monday, snapping their two-day winning streak as investors pared exposure to banking, metal and FMCG stocks amid a weak trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 670.93 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at 71,355.22. During the day, it fell 725.11 points or 1 per cent to 71,301.04.

The Nifty declined 197.80 points or 0.91 per cent to 21,513.

"Nifty snapped a two-session rally to end lower after opening with marginal gains. Global stocks slipped on Monday ahead of a busy week of inflation and economic data and amid the dimming prospect of a cut in US interest rates in the first quarter. Stocks fell ahead of a corporate reporting season where robust results are needed to justify high valuations," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities.

Among the Sensex firms, State Bank of India, ITC, Nestle, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services and Hindustan Unilever were the



major laggards. In contrast, HCL Technologies, Power Grid, Sun Pharma, NTPC, Bajaj Finance and Titan were the gainers. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.87 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.36 per cent.

Among the indices, FMCG fell 1.55 per cent, commodities declined 1.44 per cent, bankex (1.42 per cent), metal 1.40 per cent, financial services (1.05 per cent), telecommunication (0.93 per cent), IT (0.90 per cent) and teck (0.77 per cent). Power, realty and services were the gainers.

Wealth erodes
Investors became poorer by

₹2.91 lakh crore on the back of benchmark's plunge. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies eroded by ₹2,91,756.23 crore to ₹3,66,40,965.08 crore.

"Investors fretted across Asian and European markets, as US bond yields crossed 4 per cent again that spiralled into a large-scale correction in domestic equities. While rising valuations were beginning to raise concerns, investors resorted to profit-taking as weakness in banking, IT and oil & gas stocks saw the Sensex end below the 72,000 mark," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

BANK BUZZ

OGB bags Best Performing Bank award for WSHG Credit Linkage

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha Gramya Bank has been awarded as the Best Performing Bank in WSHG Credit Linkage for the year 2022-23 by Govt of Odisha. OGB Chairman Rishi Singh and General Manager, advances Trupti Ranjan Swain received the award from Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on behalf of the bank in a meeting conducted at Lok Seva Bhawan January 6. This is the second consecutive year in which the bank has achieved this award. It stood as leading bank in Credit Linkage to SHG Groups in the state by linking more than one lakh SHGs and helping more than 10 lakh SHG members through Credit Linkage programme. The function was attended by RM Balasore Soumya Darshan Kar, RM Chandikhole Digbijay Bahadur Das, RM Dhenkanal Seep Sagar Acharya (top 3 regions with highest SHG disbursement) and BM Badatribidabinesh Kumar Sankhua (best performing branch) in SHG disbursement and Head of the Department of Advances Prabhu Prasad Mishra and B Sai Bhargab, Officer Advances Department.



UCO celebrates 82nd Foundation Day

BHUBANESWAR: UCO Bank celebrated its 82nd Foundation Day. On this occasion, the Bhubaneswar Zonal office of the bank organised walkathon, health check-up camp and cultural programme. Memento and bouquets were presented to retired General Managers, Deputy General Managers, Assistant General Managers and other officers. A similar programme was also held at RSETI of the Bank in Cuttack under the guidance of the Zonal Head. Goutam Patra, General Manager cum SLBC Convenor, Chinmaya Kumar Sahoo, Zonal Head cum Deputy General Manager, Bhubaneswar Zone, Ashish Kumar Biswal, Assistant General Manager cum Deputy Zonal Head, Bhubaneswar Zone, Retired General Managers along with other senior officials were present on this occasion.



30 YEARS IN INDIA

Benz lines up array of cars

In 2023, the luxury carmaker recorded its best-ever year in its history in India with sales of 17,408 units, a growth of 10%. It posted its previous best-ever sales in 2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 8: German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz will invest ₹200 crore in India this year on new products, manufacturing operations and digitisation, to strengthen its position after posting record sales of 17,408 units in 2023, a top company official said Monday.

Mercedes-Benz India will have more than 12 launches in 2024, including three electric vehicles, out of which half will be in the top end vehicle segment



(TEV) and will be priced ₹1.5 crore onwards.

"This year marks a special year as we celebrate 30 years of Mercedes-Benz in India. We are going to invest ₹200 crore more into our factory in Pune. This takes a total investment of ₹3,000 crore in India now. So that's a strong statement of intent," Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director & CEO Santosh Iyer

told PTI in an interview.

These investments will be towards manufacturing operations, new product startups and digitisation of the manufacturing process, he added.

On the outlook for 2024, Iyer said the company is looking for "double-digit" growth despite volatility in both supply and demand sides. Currently, the company's order bank stands at 3,000

MERCEDES PLANS ₹200CR INVESTMENT TO LAUNCH MORE THAN 12 PRODUCTS IN 2024

units. On the product launch plan, Iyer said, "We are looking at 12-plus new car lines to be launched in '24 and 50 per cent of them will be in the top end vehicle segment. These will include three new electric vehicles."

The TEV segment continues to drive aspiration for the brand, Iyer said, adding that three new EVs to be launched in 2024 will build up the company's EV portfolio.

"EVs now comprise 4 per cent of our total sales and the segment witnessed a trebling of growth in 2023," he added. Mercedes-Benz India also launched its new GLS luxury SUV in both petrol and diesel versions priced at ₹1.32 crore and ₹1.37 crore, respectively.

Eves aim for series victory

Shooters Varun, Esha seal Olympics quotas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Navi Mumbai, Jan 8: The culmination of a long and mixed home season brings the Indian women's cricket team one last opportunity to register a maiden T20I series triumph over Australia at home when the two sides square off in the series-decider here Tuesday.

With the three-match affair levelled 1-1, Harmanpreet Kaur's India have a chance to beat the reigning world champions Australia in their own den and kick off the 2024 T20I World Cup year in style.

India have only one series win to show against Australia's four in their five-series bilateral T20I history. Their triumph in an away affair in 2015-16 sits atop in the list of achievements for this side.

However, having registered historic wins in one-off Tests



earlier this season against both Australia and England, India would want to make this one last opportunity count.

India were on a roll in the first game and thrashed Australia by a record margin of nine wickets but their batters cut a sorry figure

MATCHDAY
India Women vs Australia Women
3rd T20 International
Time: 7 pm
Telecast: Sports18 Network
Stream: Jio Cinema

in the second. A tricky pitch here at the DY Patil Stadium Sunday did not allow batters to flourish.

While heavy dew in the first half of the game assisted India's charge with the bat, the absence of it in the second made the job of containing the Australian batters difficult.

But to their credit, the Indian bowlers did well to take the game as deep as possible with some tight lines and sharp fielding. However, the home team's fielding has only been sporadically good.

Kaur's own form with the bat will remain a huge concern for

the hosts, who were humbled by six wickets in the second game. The Indian captain has not made a fifty yet in 10 matches so far across formats in these games. She has seven single-digit scores now in 11 innings including the first T20I wherein her services were not required.

Deepti Sharma waged a lone battle of sorts with a combative all-round performance in the second game scoring a 27-ball 31 in a faltering Indian innings to give them some late impetus, and also fought hard with the ball to take the first two wickets of the four Australian wickets to fall.

The pitches for the two T20Is so far have not allowed batters to go berserk especially in the first innings, allowing the bowlers to dominate the proceedings. Deepti also found the pitch for the second game a challenging one to bat on.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jakarta, Jan 8: Young Indian shooters Varun Tomar and Esha Singh on Monday secured two Olympic quota places for the country with gold medals in the men's and women's 10m Air Pistol events of the Asian Qualifiers here.

The duo's qualification took the total number of Indian shooters bound for Paris to 15, equalling the highest-ever tally that was achieved in the Tokyo Games. India can add more to the group headed for the Games in July-August this year when the remaining qualifiers are held. India secured six medals Monday, including two team golds, at the continental event.

The 20-year-old Tomar shot 239.6 in the final to claim the top position, while Arjun Cheema won the silver medal with a score of 237.3. Mongolia's Davaakhuu Enkhtaivan (217.2) won the bronze medal.

Earlier, Tomar (586), Cheema (579) and Ujjawal Malik (575) shot a total of 1740 to win the 10m air pistol team gold, while Iran and Korea claimed the silver and bronze medals respectively.

Tomar, a former junior world



champion, is the cousin of Tokyo Olympian Saurabh Chaudhary, who won a gold medal in the 2018 Asian Games. "It helped that I had someone like Saurabh to take guidance from as I don't have anyone in the family who is a shooter," Tomar, who comes from a farming family, told PTTI.

The 19-year-old Esha then grabbed the gold in the women's event with a score of 243.1. The silver went to Pakistan's Kishmala Talat (236.3), while the bronze was grabbed by Esha's compatriot Rhythm Sangwan (214.5). The 21-year-old Talat also earned a quota for the Paris Games, becoming the third Pakistani shooter to achieve the feat.

Esha, Rhythm and Surbhi Rao also won the team gold medal with a combined score of 1736. Esha is a World Championship gold-medallist in the 10m air pistol mixed team and 25m pistol team events.

"She can also win a medal, possibly gold, in 25m sports pistol here. But an individual can bag only one quota place for the country. Her bagging the quota in 10m air pistol means she can also compete in 25m sports pistol in Paris," said Esha's father Sachin Singh.

Odisha suffer 147-run defeat against Baroda

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 8: Odisha opened their Ranji Trophy 2024 campaign with a 147-run defeat as the batters disappoint on the final day - Monday - of their Elite Group D match against Baroda in Vadodara.

Chasing a massive 432-run target, Odisha were in good position - 103/1 - going into the final day's play. However, apart from the top three, rest of the batters couldn't handle the pressure as the visitors were bowled out for 284.

Resuming the play at 103/1, overnight batters - skipper Shantanu Mishra (78, 232b, 6x4) and Sandeep Pattnaik (51, 121b,

8x4, 1x6) - played wonderfully adding 81 runs to the team's total and had they stayed longer, a draw could have been possible if not a win.

However, Odisha lost four wickets in just eight runs to leave any hope of a draw then and there. Sandeep was the first wicket to fall on the day to leave Odisha at 184/2. Subhranshu Senapati (1), Shantanu and Kartik Biswal (0) were dismissed in quick successions as the score 192/2 turned to 192/5.

Suryakant Pradhan took on the Baroda bowlers with his 35-ball 46 (2x4, 4x6), but it wasn't enough to avoid a defeat. Mahesh Pithiya (5/61) was the standout among the home team bowlers.

Football great Beckenbauer no more

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Munich, Jan 8: Franz Beckenbauer, who won the World Cup both as player and coach and became one of Germany's most beloved personalities with his easygoing charm, has died, news agency 'dpa' reported Monday. He was 78.

"It is with deep sadness that we announce that my husband and our father, Franz Beckenbauer, passed away peacefully in his sleep yesterday, Sunday, surrounded by his family," the family said in a statement to 'dpa', the German news agency. "We ask that we be allowed to grieve in peace and be spared any questions." The statement did not provide a cause of death. The former Bayern Munich great had struggled with health prob-

lems in recent years.

Beckenbauer was one of German football's central figures. As a player, he reimagined the defender's role in football and captained West Germany to the World Cup title in 1974 after they had lost to England in the 1966 final.

He was the coach when West Germany won the tournament again in 1990, a symbolic moment for a country in the midst of reunification, months after the Berlin Wall fell.

Beckenbauer's death comes just two days after the announcement that Mario Zagallo, the Brazilian who became the first person to win the World Cup as a player and coach, had died at the age of 92.

Beckenbauer was also instrumental in bringing the highly

successful 2006 World Cup to Germany, though his legacy was later tainted by charges that he only succeeded in winning the hosting rights with the help of bribery. He denied the allegations.

Beckenbauer was in 2014 briefly suspended by FIFA's ethics committee from all football-related activity for failing to cooperate with prosecutor Michael Garcia's probe of alleged corruption in the 2018 and 2022 World Cup votes. The suspension was lifted during the 2014 World Cup in Brazil when he agreed to cooperate.

The allegations damaged Beckenbauer's standing in public perception for the first time. Until then, Beckenbauer had seemingly been unable to say or do anything wrong. Germans simply loved him.

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