

## JAI JAGANNATHA



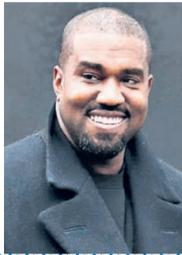
**SHREEMANDIRA  
PARIKRAMA  
PRAKALPA**  
Pousha Shukla Saptami  
17 January 2024

With the blessings of Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannatha, the inauguration of **'Shree Mandira Parikrama Prakalpa'** has been successfully completed.



### HEARTFELT GRATITUDE TO ALL DEVOTEES!

# leisure



## KANYE REPLACES TEETH WITH TITANIUM DENTURES

Rapper Kanye West has replaced his natural teeth with custom titanium dentures, reminiscent of James Bond's iconic villain Jaws, costing a rumoured \$850,000. He shared the photo on social media, shocking his fans yet again.

## SOPHIE DROPS CASE AGAINST ESTRANGED HUBBY JOE JONAS

*Game of Thrones* actress Sophie Turner has dropped the 'wrongful retention' claims against her estranged husband, Joe Jonas, with regards to the custody of their two daughters.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

Old, fond memories will define your mood today, which will show up in the manner in which you deal with work, where your mellow side will be visible to others. You are also circumspect with money and tend towards saving it. Ganesha says people dealing in cash and money-lenders will benefit.

#### TAURUS

You may find yourself compromising against your will today, predicts Ganesha. Stand strong despite things going awry instead of feeling disillusioned due to poor results. Ongoing negotiations might come to a logical end and a few important decisions are likely to be delayed due to lack of proper information.

#### GEMINI

You have been ignoring a few problems that have been plaguing your family members for quite some time now. It's time you looked into the matter, says Ganesha. Irrespective of how difficult the challenges are, today you will emerge victorious.

#### CANCER

Your strange and unconventional behaviour doesn't always go down well with many people. If you think you are different, and maybe even better than others, it is advisable that you keep it under the wraps. The reason being that most people may not be able to understand you.

#### LEO

Some people have the world at their feet. And today, you are one of them, says Ganesha. With your gorgeous appearance and gregarious attitude, it is easy for you to open all doors with just a touch. So, you have the luxury to choose – either you entertain yourself through multiple avenues such as movies, theatre and music, or you be the entertainer with your superior performing skills. But irrespective of what you decide to do, you shall excel in both, confirms Ganesha.

#### VIRGO

Financial affairs will face a major obstruction today. Ganesha advises you to allow your mind to prevail over your heart. Take extraordinary care of your precious personal possessions, apart from your legal duties and new projects keeping in view their long-term effect on your mind.

#### LIBRA

It's a day of reaching new heights when it comes to finances. The cosmos favours moneylenders and stock marketeers. Call it the special touch that you give to all transactions monetary, but today you have the uncanny knack of raking in the moolah from all sources. Sit back and see your tenacity multiply your fortunes, says Ganesha.

#### SCORPIO

Your energy levels are high as you gear up for new events. However, there are chances that these events may not meet your expectations. But, don't lose hope and get disappointed. Keep your spirits high. Implement the first lesson learnt in school: try & try till you succeed!

#### SAGITTARIUS

Your business is all set to expand with you making the most of your overseas contacts. Effective communication skills will help you sail through your tasks. And you are making all the right moves to become the leader of your pack.

#### CAPRICORN

Patience is tested when one is in trouble; your patience could be tried today. The trick is in keeping your composure, says Ganesha. Avoid getting into an argument or scuffle with those around you, as luck may not be on your side.

#### AQUARIUS

Get ready for a gala evening as you will party at the smallest excuse! You may toast a friend's success, or may be ecstatic about finding your lost pet. Otherwise it's the usual, says Ganesha. You plan a bit and march ahead successfully in your business or profession.

#### PISCES

Looking at your planetary positions for today, there is a likelihood that you will suffer from reversals in fortunes financially. Hence be wary when it comes to financial dealings.

## MUKTESWAR DANCE FESTIVAL: DAY II

# Odissi fervour enchants audience

**BHUBANESWAR:** Mukteswar Dance Festival, organised by the Odia Language, Literature & Culture Department in association with Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi (OSNA), witnessed more visitors on the second evening.

The proceedings began with Shiva Vandana by Biswanath Mishra along with his group from Cuttack invoking the blessing of Lord Shiva through 'Rudrastakam' *Om Namah Shivaya*.

The solo Odissi was performed by Gaurishankar Dash of Dhenkanal. His first item was *Bagesree Pallavi* set to Rag Bagesree and Tal Jati and Ektali followed by *Abhinaya Kaibarta Prasanga* adapted from Odia poet Upendra Bhanja's



A presentation by Aniket Pallav Nayak and Biswarupa Dixit

*Baidehisa Bilasa*.

The second presentation was a duet performed by Aniket Pallav Nayak and Biswarupa Dixit from Bhubaneswar. The duo presented *Bakulavarana*

*Pallavi* set to Raag-Bakulavarana and Taal- Ek Taali. The music was composed by Guru Sukanta Kumar Kundu, rhythm by Guru Dhaneswar Swain, dance was choreographed by Guru Pravat

Kumar Swain while the show was directed by Guru Aruna Mohanty.

A group Odissi dance titled *Harihara Shabda* by the members of Suravi led by Guru Pitambar Biswal was the next presentation. Biswal-choreographed *Bhadrakalistik*, yet another group Odissi was the last presentation of the evening.

The dignitaries who graced the occasion include OSNA President Aruna Mohanty, Secretary Prabodh Rath, and Mardala exponent Guru Dhaneswar Swain. The programme was anchored by Srinibas Ghatuary and Nazia Alam. It was aired on DD-Bharti and live-streamed on the Culture Department's social media platforms.

# Pranutan to make Hollywood debut

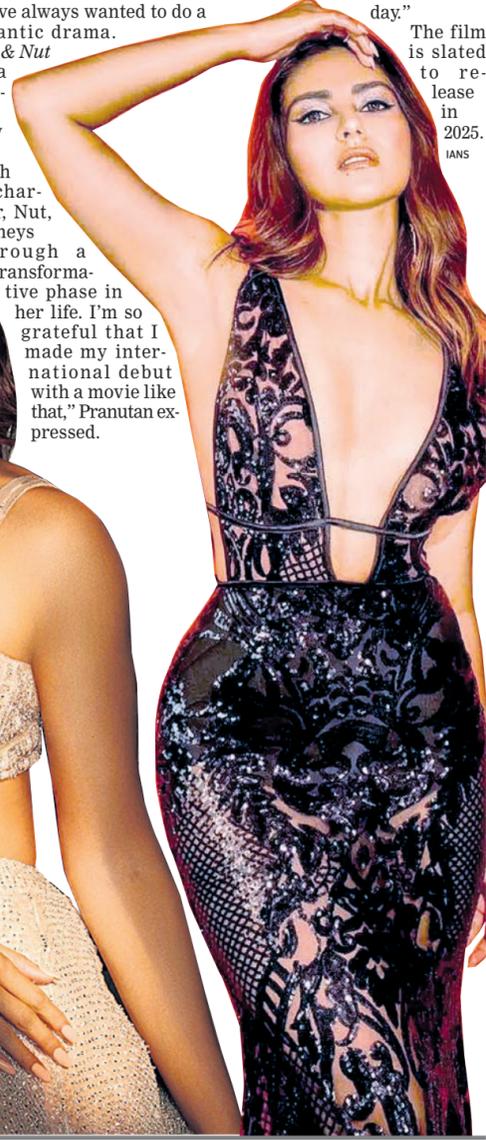
**MUMBAI:** Actress Pranutan Bahl, granddaughter of legendary actress Nutan, who was seen last in *Notebook*, is set to star in her maiden Hollywood feature, *Coco & Nut*, opposite American actor-filmmaker Rahsaan Noor.

"Feeling worthless, an ambitious young woman (Pranutan) fighting to save her marriage gets a pick-me-up from her know-it-all college sweetheart (Rahsaan)," the official logline of *Coco & Nut* reads.

"I've always wanted to do a romantic drama. *Coco & Nut* is a beautiful story in which my character, Nut, journeys through a transformative phase in her life. I'm so grateful that I made my international debut with a movie like that," Pranutan expressed.

Actor-filmmaker Rahsaan Noor said, "I'm really grateful to be getting another opportunity to make a film. I grew up like so many other second-generation South Asian Americans—with a love for our movies from the motherland. That's why we're making *Coco & Nut* in English and in Hindi. It's a privilege to be working with Pranutan on this film. From the moment I saw her in *Notebook*, I was taken by her talent and knew that I had to work with her one day."

The film is slated to release in 2025.



## Sonu shares his deepfake video

**Mumbai:** Actor Sonu Sood recently received a deepfake video of him from one of his followers on social media.

The actor took to his X (formerly Twitter) Thursday and uploaded the video to clear the air that the person featured in the video is not him. In the deepfake video call featuring Sood, the impersonator interacted with a family in need of funds for medical treatment, assuring them of financial assistance.

He wrote in the caption: "My film *FATEH* is inspired by real life incidents involving deepfake and fake loan apps. This is the latest incident where someone tried to extract money from an unsuspecting family, by chatting with them through video call pretending to be Sonu Sood. Many innocent individuals fall into this trap. I request all of you to be vigilant if you receive such calls. #fateh."



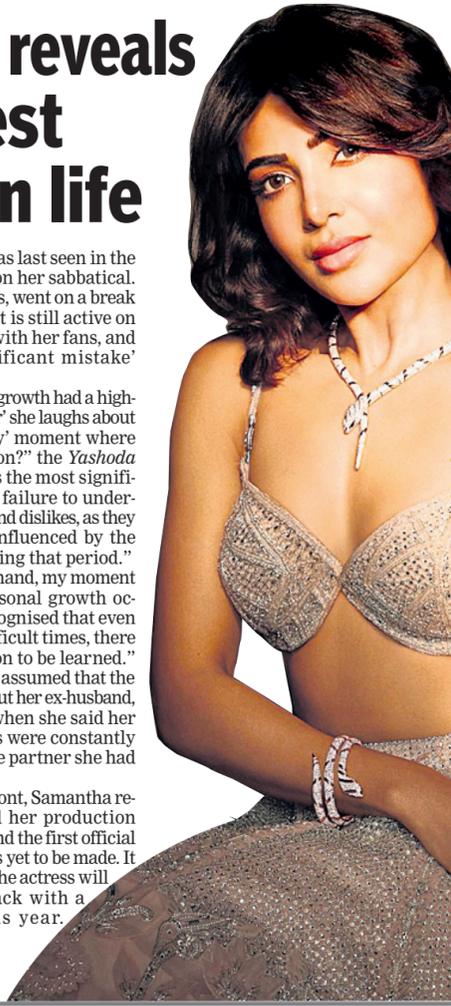
# Samantha reveals her biggest mistake in life

**Hyderabad:** Actress Samantha was last seen in the Telugu film *Kushi* and she is still on her sabbatical. The actress, citing her health issues, went on a break from her entertainment career but is still active on social media. She often interacts with her fans, and now, has pointed out her 'significant mistake' in life.

Answering a question if 'personal growth had a high-light reel, what would be the 'blooper' she laughs about now, and what's the 'Oscar-worthy' moment where she nailed a major life lesson?" the *Yashoda* actress wrote, "Perhaps the most significant mistake was my failure to understand my own likes and dislikes, as they were constantly influenced by the partner I had during that period."

"On the other hand, my moment of immense personal growth occurred when I recognised that even during the most difficult times, there was a valuable lesson to be learned." Fans immediately assumed that the actress was talking about her ex-husband, Naga Chaitanya when she said her likes and dislikes were constantly influenced by the partner she had in the past.

On the work front, Samantha recently launched her production house, Tralala, and the first official announcement is yet to be made. It is expected that the actress will make a comeback with a huge bang this year.



### PEANUTS



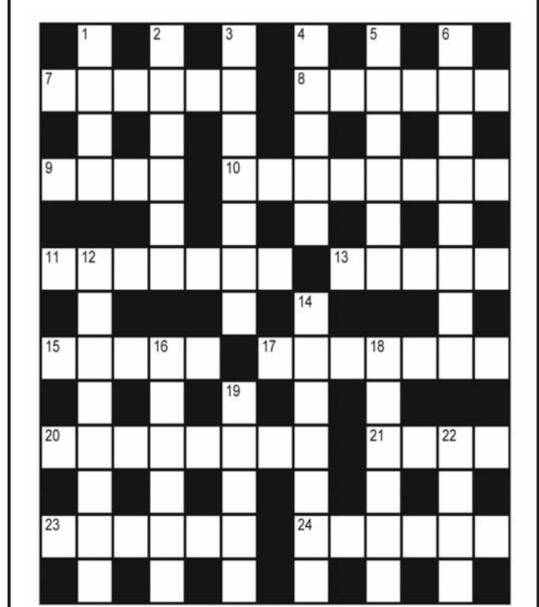
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



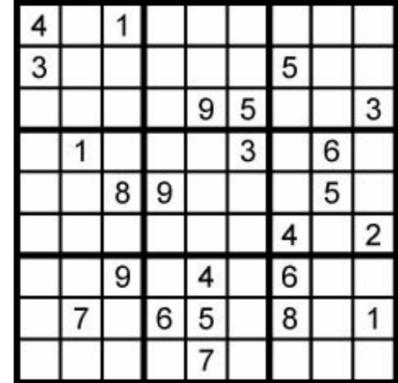
## FUN post CROSSWORD



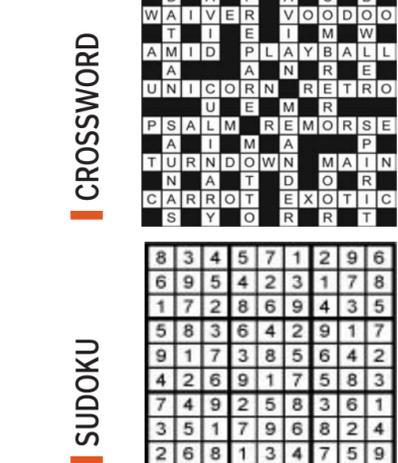
- Across**
- 7 Side-look
  - 8 Attempt
  - 9 Blackjack
  - 10 Concise
  - 11 White ant
  - 13 Synthetic fibre
  - 15 Raid
  - 17 Contempt
  - 20 Boss
  - 21 See socially
  - 23 Elbows
  - 24 Pie chart part
- Down**
- 1 Margarine
  - 2 Song of devotion
  - 3 Google, e.g.
  - 4 Sailing ship
  - 5 Image
  - 6 Green vegetable
  - 12 Extra large
  - 14 Stray
  - 16 Contend
  - 18 Conclude
  - 19 Bohemian
  - 22 2004 Brad Pitt film

### 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

**Burglar gang busted**  
Commissionerate Police nab two members of an interstate gang of burglars, involved in house-breaking cases in City

**Israeli strike kills 16**  
An Israeli airstrike on a home kills 16 people, half of them children, in the southern Gaza town of Rafah

**Growing aviation market**  
With Akasa Air ordering 150 aircraft Thursday, a total of 1,120 planes have been ordered by three Indian carriers in less than a year

**Prannoy progresses**  
HS Prannoy marches into the men's singles quarterfinals at the India Open Super 750 badminton tournament

**SHORT TAKES**

**Half-day holiday on January 22**

**New Delhi:** Government offices across the country, including Odisha, will remain closed for half a day January 22, due to the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya, official sources said, Thursday. The 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony of the new idol of Ram Lalla at the sanctum sanctorum of the Ram temple is scheduled for Monday (January 22). "The Ram Lalla Pran Pratishtha at Ayodhya will be celebrated January 22, 2024 across India. To enable employees to participate in the celebrations, it has been decided that all Central government offices, institutions and industrial establishments throughout India will be closed for half day till 14:30 hours January 22, 2024," the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions said. Later in the day, Odisha government also released a similar notification in this regard.

**Mayurbhanj woman killed over sorcery**

**Baripada:** A 45-year-old tribal woman in Mayurbhanj district's Baripada was killed allegedly on suspicion of practicing sorcery, police said, Thursday. The deceased was identified as Minati Murmu of Lohandakocha village in Baripada, they added. Minati's husband Balei Murmu alleged that two villagers attacked her with a sharp weapon when she was alone in the house. She was shifted to PRM Medical College and Hospital in Baripada where doctors declared her dead, police said. "Police have detained a villager and further investigations are on," said Mruntunjay Pradhan, inspector in-charge (IIC) of Jharpokharia police station.

**Naveen launches spl bus service to Puri**

**Bhubaneswar:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched Shree Jagannath Express bus services under the state government's Location Accessible Multimodal Initiative (LAcMI) here, Thursday. The CM said, "We have started Shree Jagannath Express for the people of state to come to Puri and access the divine sight of the Lord. All of you should take advantage of this and get blessings of Lord Jagannath." Under the initiative, women can avail 50 per cent concession in bus fare during their journey from district headquarters and major subdivisions to Puri.

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**



Look at the positive side- they may not read or write, but they can identify anyone's religion from a mile away

**MARKET WATCH**

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	71186.86 ↓ 313.90
NIFTY	21462.30 ↓ 109.70
DOLLAR	83.22 ↑ ₹0.01
EURO	91.05 ↑ ₹0.06
GOLD	₹61,705 ↑ ₹200
SILVER	₹71,446 ↓ ₹10

**WEATHER**

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	30.2°C	27.8°C
Min Temp	19.5°C	19.4°C
Humidity	94%	96%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

**FORECAST**  
Light to moderate rain/thundershower



**LADDER UP:** BSF women Dare Devils' team performs during a rehearsal for the Republic Day Parade at the Kartavya Path, in New Delhi, Thursday

# No coaching below 16

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 18:** In a move aimed at curbing the rising incidents of student suicides, especially in Rajasthan's Kota, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has issued guidelines barring coaching centres from enrolling students below 16 years of age and making misleading promises for success in entrance examinations.

The MoE also took into consideration fire mishaps and lack of facilities at coaching classes as well as their methodologies of teaching while framing the guidelines that would address the need for a legal framework and manage the unregulated growth of private coaching centres.

"No coaching centre shall engage tutors having qualifications less than graduation. The institutions cannot make misleading promises or guarantee rank or good marks to parents for enrolling students. The institutes cannot enrol students below 16 years of age. Student enrolment should be only after secondary school examination," the guidelines said.

The coaching centres also cannot hire the services of any tutor or person who has been convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude. An institute will be registered only if it has a counselling system as per the requirement of these guidelines.

"Coaching centres shall have a website with updated details of the qualification of tutors, courses/curriculum, duration of completion, hostel facilities,



**It is a welcome step by the Union government. We had approached the NHRC in 2020 for a set of guidelines to regulate private coaching centres. This will definitely control the monopoly of those private entities in education**

**BASUDEV BHATTA | ODISHA ABHIBHABAK MAHASANGHA PRESIDENT**

and the fees being charged," the guidelines stated.

According to new guidelines, due to tough competition and academic pressure on students, coaching centres should take steps for the mental well-being of students and may conduct classes without putting undue pressure on them.

"They should establish a mechanism for providing targeted and sustained assistance to students in distress and stressful situations. The competent authority may take steps to ensure that a counselling system is developed by the coaching centre and is easily available for the students and parents," the MoE said.

The guidelines detailing the framework on mental well-being come against the backdrop of

student suicides in coaching hub Kota in 2023. The rapid increase in the number of student suicides flagged various issues plaguing the coaching industry.

According to the guidelines, the tuition fees for different courses and curricula being charged shall be fair and reasonable and receipts for the fee charged must be made available.

Giving teeth to the policy, the Centre has suggested that coaching centres be penalised up to Rs 1 lakh or their registration be cancelled for charging exorbitant fees that cause undue stress leading to student suicide or for other malpractices.

To ensure proper monitoring of the coaching institutes, the government has proposed registration of new and existing centres within three months after the guidelines come into effect.

The state government will be responsible for monitoring the activities of the coaching centre and enquiring about any coaching centre regarding the fulfilment of required eligibility of registration and satisfactory activities of the coaching centre.

Odisha Abhivhabak Mahasangha (OAM) president Basudev Bhatta welcomed the Centre's move.

"It is a welcome step by the Union government. We had approached the NHRC in 2020 for a set of guidelines to regulate private coaching centres. This will definitely control the monopoly of those private entities in education," the OAM chief said.

## 4 crushed to death in Bargarh

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 18:** Four labourers were crushed to death by a borewell truck when they were asleep under the vehicle in Bargarh district, Thursday.

Sources said five labourers, residents of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, were engaged in rigging a borewell in Birjam village under Melchhamunda police limits in the district when the mishap took place in the wee hours. While four died on the

spot, another, who sustained critical injuries in the tragedy, was shifted to a nearby health-care facility, it was learnt.

"The labourers were sleeping under the borewell truck when the driver unknowingly started the vehicle and put the reverse gear, crushing all of them under the wheels," a police official said.

The official added that the contractor has been detained for interrogation and the identity of the deceased labourers was being ascertained.

## Tusker scare in Baripada

AGENCIES

**Baripada, Jan 18:** A tusker from Similipal National Park (SNP) entered Baripada town in Mayurbhanj district Thursday forcing people to remain indoors for hours.

Panic gripped the town in the early hours of the day when a wild sub-adult tusker entered into the human habitation area. The animal was found roaming in the town unable to find the route to return to his habitation inside SNP. A viral video showed the jumbo running from one place to another in the town. However, no one was injured in the incident, officials said, adding that the animal caused some minor damage by breaking iron grilles and boundary walls of some houses.

The elephant first trespassed into MKC Government High School. It later reached the nearby English medium school. As the jumbo headed towards the centre of the town, police blocked all major roads and asked the people to remain indoors. Later, when the tusker broke the boundary fencing wire, officials from SNP, equipped with a tranquillizer, chased the jumbo and sent it back to SNP after hours-long efforts.

## 9 dead in Iran as Pakistan retaliates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, Jan 18:** Pakistan Thursday used killer drones and rockets to carry out 'precision military strikes' against what it called 'terrorist hideouts' in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province, killing nine people, a day after Islamabad downgraded diplomatic ties with Tehran following Iranian attacks on terror bases in Balochistan.

"This morning, Pakistan undertook a series of highly coordinated and specifically targeted precision military strikes against terrorist hideouts in Sistan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran," Pakistan's Foreign Office said in a statement Thursday.

It said many terrorists were killed during the intelligence-based operation - Marg Bar Sarmachar (Death to Sarmachar). In Persian, 'Marg Bar' means 'death to' while 'Sarmachar' means guerrilla in the Baloch language. The precision strikes were carried out using killer drones, rockets, loitering munitions and stand-off weapons, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the Pakistan military's media wing. It said that 'hideouts used by terrorist organisations namely Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan

Liberation Front (BLF) were successfully struck.' The two groups have carried out several deadly attacks in Pakistan in the past.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kan'ani condemned the attack and said that the Pakistani chargé d'affaires was summoned by the ministry to convey Tehran's protest to Islamabad and provide an explanation about the attack, Iran's state-run Press TV reported.

Quoting Deputy governor of the province Alireza Marhamati, official news agency 'IRNA' said that nine non-Iranian nationals - two men, three women and four children - were killed in the attack, which is being investigated by the Iranian security officials.

There was also an explosion near Saravan city, 347 km south-east of the provincial capital Zahedan, where there were no casualties, he added. Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi confirmed the figures later in the day.

The strikes came two days after Iran launched unprecedented missile and drone attacks on what it said were directed at the bases of the Sunni Baloch militant group 'Jaish al-Adl' in the restive Balochistan province, prompting Pakistan to recall its ambassador to Iran and suspended all planned bilateral visits.

## WATERY GRAVE FOR 14 IN GUJ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Vadodara, Jan 18:** Twelve students and two teachers died after a boat capsized in Harni lake, on the outskirts of Vadodara city in Gujarat, Thursday, while 18 students and two teachers were rescued, state minister Harsh Sanghavi said.

Those on board the ill-fated boat were on a picnic when the tragedy occurred in the afternoon. "Twelve students and two teachers died in the boat capsizing incident. A total of 18 stu-

dents and two teachers were rescued. We have learnt only 10 students on board were wearing life jackets. It proves organisers were at fault," Sanghavi, the Minister of State for Home, said.

An FIR under Sections 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide) of the IPC has been registered and two persons have been arrested, Sanghavi said.

Taking to 'X', Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Distressed by the loss of lives to a boat cap-

sizing at the Harni lake in Vadodara. My thoughts are with the bereaved families in this hour of grief. May the injured recover soon."

"The local administration is providing all possible assistance to those affected. An ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh each from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would be given Rs 50,000," Modi said.

The Gujarat government ordered a high-level probe into the mishap.

## Astronomers detect oldest black hole

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Jan 18:** Researchers have discovered the oldest black hole ever observed, dating from the dawn of the universe, and found that it is 'eating' its host galaxy to death.

The research, published in the journal Nature, used the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) to detect the black hole, which dates from 400 million years after the Big Bang, more than 13 billion years ago.

That this surprisingly massive black hole - a few million times the mass of our sun - even exists so early in the universe challenges the assumptions about how black holes form and grow, the researchers said.

Astronomers believe that the



supermassive black holes found at the centre of galaxies like the Milky Way grew to their current size over billions of years.

However, the size of this newly-discovered black hole suggests that they might form in other ways.

According to standard models,

supermassive black holes form from the remnants of dead stars, which collapse and may form a black hole about a hundred times the mass of the Sun.

If it grew in an expected way, this newly-detected black hole would take about a billion years to grow to its observed size. However, the universe was not yet a billion years old when this black hole was detected.

"It's very early in the universe to see a black hole this massive, so we've got to consider other ways they might form," said lead author Roberto Maiolino, professor at Cambridge University, UK.

"Very early galaxies were extremely gas-rich, so they would have been like a buffet for black holes," Maiolino said.

Like all black holes, this young one is devouring material from its host galaxy to fuel its growth. Yet, this ancient black hole is found to gobble matter much more vigorously than its siblings at later epochs, the researchers said.

The young host galaxy, called GN-z11, glows from such an energetic black hole at its centre. Black holes cannot be directly observed, but instead they are detected by the tell-tale glow of a swirling accretion disk, which forms near the edges of a black hole, they said.

The gas in the accretion disk becomes extremely hot and starts to glow and radiate energy in the ultraviolet range. This strong glow is how astronomers are able to detect black holes.

# CM: State creating cities that leave no one behind 50% fare concession for women in Jagannath Exp

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 18:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday said the state is creating inclusive cities where no one is left behind. He said this while virtually inaugurating the first-of-its-kind International Conclave on Urban Transformation organised by state Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department at a hotel here Thursday.

Participating in the inauguration ceremony, the Chief Minister welcomed more than 400 participants from 20 states and 11 countries to the conference which is being held for the first time in the state.

In his inaugural address, Patnaik said, "Odisha, the land of Lord Jagannath, blessed with rich heritage and adorned with beautiful temples, is on a transformative drive to create smart avenues for all sections of the society."

He also said that the state is creating inclusive cities where no one is left behind. "At the heart of our vision is the empowerment of communities. Our success is not just the physical trans-



CM Naveen Patnaik welcomed more than 400 participants from 20 states and 11 countries to the conference, which is being held for the first time in the state

formation, but also the profound impact it has on urban life. The essence of this transformative journey is community-led urban development under 5T framework," the CM said.

"We firmly believe that community-led urban development is not just the story of Odisha but rather a global paradigm shift in the offering. The International Conclave on Urban

Transformation is a testament to our commitment," he said.

Patnaik extended his invitation to policymakers from all over the world to learn from the Odisha experience, create their own stories, and collaborate to build a better urban future for all.

Addressing the conclave, H&UD Minister Usha Devi said, "Urban development initiatives in Odisha have made possible

remarkable achievements with best practices, new partnership and collaboration for inclusive development."

"Providing safe drinking water, sanitation, livelihood generation support through technological innovation in urban governance are some of our priorities. People centric, participatory and collective approach is our aim to bring quality of life improvement in the cities," she said.

On the occasion, Chief Secretary Pradeep Jena said that the state government has given priority to people-centric and community-led development. "Urban growth is now a challenge not only in India, but also for other countries. Though we all are investing more on infrastructure, its management is a challenge," he added.

During the three-day event, sessions will be held on subjects like water for all, inclusive sanitation and waste management, community-led urban transformation: Odisha's models for sustainable urban management and emergency need for regulatory framework in water, sanitation and hygiene.

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 18:** Under Jagannath Express Bus Services, women of the state can avail 50 per cent fare concession during their journey from district headquarters, major subdivisions to the Pilgrim City of Puri, announced Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik while launching the special-purpose public transportation service under the government's flagship scheme Location Accessible Multi-modal Initiative (LAcMI) here Thursday.

Launching the bus service, Patnaik announced that in first phase the premium buses will serve travellers from 12 districts-Bolangir, Bargarh, Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Rayagada, Sambalpur and Sundargarh. Further, he assured that all the districts will soon have connectivity to Puri through these premium buses.

As many as 80 state-of-the-art buses would be augmented by the government as Jagannath



Express buses, which will be operated and maintained by the Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC).

Launching the service, Patnaik said, "We have started Jagannath Express for the people of state to come to Puri and access the divine sight of the Lord. All of you should take advantage of this and get blessings of Lord Jagannath."

He further said that the Srimandir Parikrama project was inaugurated Wednesday which will enhance the beauty of the temple and will make the environment more devotional. "Darshan facilities are arranged for pilgrims and devotees. A comfortable stay awaits you while you travel to see the Lord," he said.

As per sources, these buses will be equipped with modern passenger amenities and high safety standards. For better passenger comfort, the seats will be made semi-sleeper, with good reclining postures, accessible mobile charging ports, longer wheelbase for better leg space and infotainment system for comprehensive entertainment.

"In terms of safety, these buses will be equipped with fire alarm and protection systems, live vehicle tracking system, panic and SoS buttons for emergency. The fares of these buses have been kept nominal, and the passengers can even book their tickets in advance through OSRTC mobile app or booking website," said an official.

## Centurion varsity's skill training approach hailed



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 18:** Rowan Ainsworth, the Australian Consul General to India, accompanied by Angelina Nair, senior research and visits officer from the Australian Consulate-General, Kolkata, Wednesday visited Centurion University. The exploratory visit looked into collaborative bilateral opportunities in education and skill development.

During her visit to the university campus, Ainsworth expressed her admiration for the

institution's unique approach to education delivery. She commended the varsity for its innovative, hugely diversified and practical methods of imparting real-life skills to students, ensuring they are well-equipped for the challenges they will face after graduation.

She particularly applauded the integration of hands-on skill training and production in every aspect of education, emphasising the university's commitment to preparing students for entrepreneurship. Ainsworth acknowledged the university's efforts in short and long-term skill training for Australia's first nation students. She lauded the university's dedication to this cause and expressed hope that the programme could become a significant collaborative endeavour between Australia and India.



FACELIFT: Workers apply a fresh coat of paint to a horse made of fibre at Netaji Birthplace Museum in Cuttack, Thursday, ahead of the birth anniversary of the noted freedom fighter

## Cops crack Nayapalli flat loot; arrest two interstate burglars

DEBADURLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 18:** The Commissionerate Police here Thursday claimed to have arrested two members of an interstate burglar gang involved in several house-breaking cases in the Capital City.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Prateek Singh said Dinesh Kumar Saha from Gujarat and Pawan Kumar from Haryana were nabbed by Nayapalli police on the basis of intelligence inputs provided by states where the gang had committed over 20 offences. He said three more members of the gang are still at large.

Following the arrest of the duo, the police have seized Rs 2.15 lakh cash and a white Hyundai Aura, which was allegedly involved in looting a flat in Nayapalli police limits.

Singh said a complaint was lodged at Nayapalli police station December 23 last year by Anusha Mohanty alleging some unidentified miscreants broke into her house - flat no. 105 in B-block of Nirupama Apartments - while she was away. The burglars had allegedly gained entry into the flat by breaking open the door, and looted cash and other valuables worth around Rs 13 lakh which were kept in an almirah.

The DCP said the members of the gang, totaling 20, have been listed as most wanted criminals by police in seven states, including Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi. In the past, several mem-



bers of the gang were nabbed in Gujarat in connection with a similar house breaking case, he added.

Giving details on the modus operandi of the gang, DCP Singh said the miscreants would travel to different states in used cars with fake license plates, and avoid staying at a place for long in order to evade police glare. During their stay, they would scout for apartments/homes with minimal security presence, single-door locking system, or those situated in desolate places before striking.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the gang members have expertise in breaking doors with minimal noise, and empty an entire flat within 10 minutes. They would split into smaller groups of five each to carry out simultaneous robberies at a given time. While committing a burglary, two of them would break into the house while the others would wait in a car with its engine running. They would finish the task and swiftly escape in the vehicle before anyone learnt about the burglary, an officer from Nayapalli police station said.

The arrested duo was booked under Sections 110 CrPC and 454, 380 of IPC and later produced before a local court for remand.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Debajani Pradhan, W/o- Jalandhar Pradhan, resident of At- Plot No. 853/1240/1894, Chandimata Colony, Rasulgarh, BBSR, P.O./P.S. - Mancheswar, Dist.- Khordha, PIN- 751010, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.- 9/2024 dtd.- 18.01.2024 that now onwards I shall be known as DEBAJANI ROURTRAY for all future purposes.

I, Pranati Das, W/o- Subrata Kumar Das, At- Akatpur, Mandabagicha, P.O.- Sunhat, Dist.- Balasore declare that in my Passport my husband's name has been mentioned as Subrata Das instead of Subrata Kumar Das. But both the names of my husband is one and same person.

By virtue of an affidavit before the Executive Magistrate, Bhubaneswar on dated 18.01.2024. I Lucy Bastia daughter of Sarat Bastia, At- Anachampa, B- Astaranga, Dist- Puri have changed my name from Musi Bastia to Lucy Bastia and Date of Birth 29.05.2002 to 29.05.2000 for all purpose.

## PM shares Namita's Odia bhajan on X

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday shared Odia devotional bhajan of Lord Shri Ram "Ayodhya Nagari Nache Ramanku Pai" sung by Namita Agrawal. The music is composed by Saroj Rath. Taking to micro blogging site X, the Prime Minister said, "There is devotion towards Prabhu Shri Ram in every part of India. In every language also you'll find several Bhajans devoted to him. Here is one such effort in Odia..."

## Polls ahead, Cong sets up 'War Room'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 18:** Ahead of the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, the Congress has appointed office bearers for its 'War Room' to function in Odisha.

This move came a day after All India Congress Committee released a list of coordinators for all the 147 Assembly constituencies in Odisha.

Senior Congress leader and former minister Panchanan Kanungo will head the war room

of the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) here as its chairman. The party has also named coordinators for its war room. They are- Bismaya Mahapatra, Jinesh Das, Prakash Mishra, Sanjay Tripathy and Tarukanta Mishra, according to a release issued by the party's Odisha in-charge Ajoy Kumar.

Kanungo said the 'War Room' will help the state Congress leadership to prepare strategies, organise party programmes, monitor and supervise the party

works from ground level to the upper level. "The War Room will also coordinate with the observers and coordinators in all the Assembly segments," he said.

Kanungo is also the chairperson of the OPCC's Manifesto Committee and a member of the Pradesh Election Committee. With an aim to strengthen all the Assembly segments in the state, the Congress had Wednesday released a list of coordinators for all the 147 Assembly constituencies.

## 5 diverse trails in 'Ekamra Walks' beginning Jan 20

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 18:** The third edition of the 'Ekamra Walks' will be kicked off Saturday. The event, organised by the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA), will help the residents of the Capital City and tourists immerse in the rich cultural tapestry of the 'Temple City of India'.

The event, beginning January 20, promises to take the participants on exploration trails through the historical marvels of Bhubaneswar every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, till the end of March under the expert guidance of knowledgeable and experienced guides. The walks will also enable them unravel captivating tales that spanned centuries and generations.



This edition of the Ekamra Walks has been divided into five diverse trails - Nature Trail set in three locations in Deras and Nandanakanan, Culture Trail showcasing Odia and tribal cul-

ture, Little Explorer's Trail designed for children, and the Food Trail that delves into forgotten Odia recipes.

Notably, the most important addition to this year's event is the

This edition of Ekamra Walks has been divided into five diverse trails - Nature Trail set in three locations in Deras and Nandanakanan, Culture Trail showcasing Odia and tribal culture, Little Explorer's Trail designed for children, and the Food Trail that delves into forgotten Odia recipes

The most important addition to this year's event is the 'Essence of Odia' trail, which is coinciding with the Biswa Odia Bhasa Sammilani from February 3 to 5

'Essence of Odia' trail, which is coinciding with the Biswa Odia Bhasa Sammilani from February 3 to 5 in the state Capital. Participants will delve into Tantra Sadhana, an ancient spir-

itual practice intricately woven into Odisha's cultural fabric.

While navigating through the City's culinary landscape, one savours traditional dishes like Dalma, Pakhala, and Chhena Poda which are culinary manifestations of Odisha's cultural heritage. Beyond gastronomic delights, participants will explore exquisite temples, ancient structures, and architectural wonders that define Bhubaneswar's enchanting landscape.

There will be interactive sessions with local artisans, craftsmen, and experts, providing hands-on experience of the city's living heritage.

Those interested to take part in the event can register and discover event details at [www.ekamrawalks.com](http://www.ekamrawalks.com), a release issued by the BDA stated.

## CBI books Environics Trust for FCRA violation

**New Delhi:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered an FIR against Environics Trust (ET) for alleged violations of provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) in several bank transfers carried out in 2018, officials said Thursday. The central probe agency has also named late R Sreedhar, who died in December last year, and Vanitha Sreedhar of the trust in the FIR, they said. According to CBI, ET had allegedly transferred Rs 1,250 each in the bank accounts of 711 people November 15, 2020, for distribution among Amphan cyclone-affected people in Odisha but actually the payments were made to protesters for JSW agitation at Dinkia. "Therefore, ET has funded the agitators and is involved in the various activities creating law and order issues in the country. These activities were not as per the object of trust and the same is contrary to the provisions of the FCRA Act, 2010," he said. The agency also cited alleged association of the trust with Advaita activist Deme Oram, earlier arrested by Rourkela Police.

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SEXAGENARIAN SENTENCED TO LIFE FOR MURDER

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, Jan 18: The court of District Sessions Judge of Kendrapara Thursday awarded life imprisonment to a sexagenarian man for killing a fellow villager in 2014.

According to the prosecution, one Bhagirathi Barik and his supporters had attacked ex-serviceman Arjuna Charan Rout, a ruling BJD supporter with sharp weapons April 18, 2014. He succumbed to the injuries while being taken to a hospital here.

Bhagirathi had a scuffle with Arjun when the letter allowed an old woman to cast ballots at a polling booth April 17, 2014.

While adjudicating the case, District Sessions Judge Biswajit Mohanty Thursday after verifying the evidence and hearing the testimony of witnesses sentenced Barik to life imprisonment along with a fine of ₹5,000. The court ordered that in case of failure to provide the fine amount, he would further undergo RI for another six months.

ROURKELA AIRPORT

Hopes take off for regular flights

VFR TRAINING OF FOUR STAFF MEMBERS COMPLETE



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 18: Flight services at the Rourkela Airport, severely affected in the past due to some pressing problems, will likely become regular in a few days with four airport officials completing VFR training.

The four officials have completed their training in visual flight rules (VFR) January 16 and immediately underwent an assessment by a board specially constituted for the purpose. After sustained pressure from all including the media, the most plaguing issue has been taken care of with the completion of

the officials' training.

In all probability, the trained officials will be back here in a day or two. Currently, air connectivity has been stopped at Rourkela Airport till January 22. Ever since the Steel City got air connectivity, it has been witnessing frequent cancellations. Majority of the passengers who bought flight tickets would also purchase tickets for the night train, as an alternative arrangement, in case the flight gets cancelled.

Now with the VFR trained personnel present in the air traffic control (ATC), no planes will be stopped from landing due to

bad weather. "The VFR will help flights to land at 1,500 meter visibility," said one AAI official.

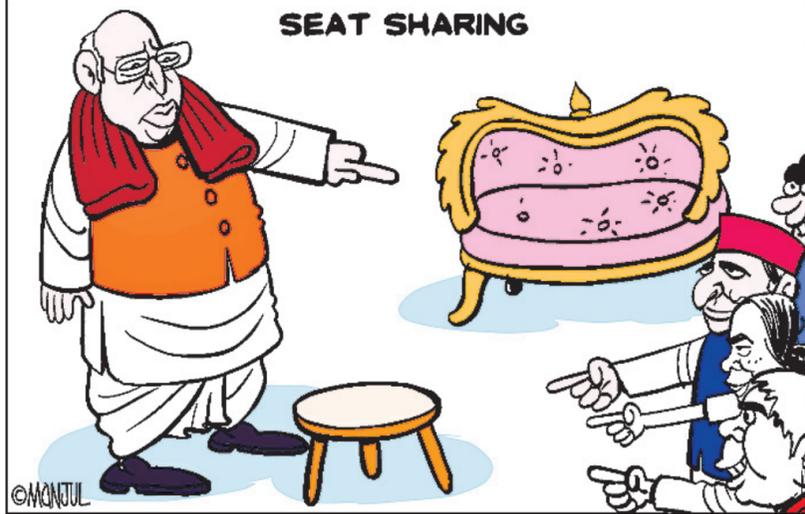
It is believed that the flight connectivity will resume from January 24.

Reacting to this, president of Sachetan Nagarika Manch and former general secretary of Steel Executive Federation of India (SEFI) Bimal Bisi said, "I have already appealed to PM Modi for bringing this airport under AAI so that its fortune will change. At least we can have regular flights to cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, Bangalore and Delhi for which we have the potential."

He further informed the masterplan of the airport, which was prepared by Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) and submitted to AAI, has the provision for landing of A320 aircraft because then the length of the runway will increase to 2,500 metre with 45 metre width."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL

SEAT SHARING



Police nab 8 for trying to loot ATMs in Balasore

Balasore: Balasore district police Thursday arrested eight persons for attempting to loot ATMs. Balasore SP Sagarika Nath said the incidents were reported from Durgadevi market and Rasalpur market recently. The accused were nabbed from Balasore and neighbouring Mayurbhanj districts, police said. A gas cylinder, cutter, oxygen regulator, pipe, crowbar and other materials used to break ATMs were seized from them, police said. The accused are history-sheeters with several cases registered in their names in Sadar and Remuna police stations in Balasore district and in Khunta police station in Mayurbhanj district.

RED CAMP DESTROYED; HUGE CACHE OF EXPLOSIVES SEIZED

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 18: In a joint operation, the Special Operations Group (SOG) jawans of Odisha Police and the District Voluntary Force (DVF) of Boudh destroyed a Maoist camp and busted a Maoist dump Thursday morning.

Acting on a tip-off about movement of Maoist cadres in the forest along the border with Kandhamal district, a joint team of the SOG and DVF launched a combing operation in the Budhakol forest in Boudh district, police sources said.

The Maoist camp was destroyed after an exchange of fire between the security forces and the Red rebels



inside Budhakol forest. The ultras however managed to

flee the spot and the security forces recovered a huge cache of IED landmines, electric wires and other explosive materials besides Maoist literature from the Red dump.

Additional reinforcements rushed to the spot and the combing operation was intensified to flush out the Maoists from the area, they said.

Earlier, Maoist dumps were destroyed during combing operations, which were carried out in the area twice.

However, after Maoist posters were put up in the Manamunda area January 5 combing operation was intensified. Three Maoist dumps were destroyed during these combing operations.

7K MT iron ore lumps seized during raid

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, Jan 18: Mining officials seized over 7,000 metric tonne of iron ore lumps concealed inside iron ore fines for transportation from OMDC (Odisha Mineral Development Company) at Roida under this mining division in Keonjhar district, Thursday.

The seizure was made during a surprise raid at OMDC mines conducted by an internal squad of Deputy Director of Mines. Mining officials said that the action was taken as some officials of mining firms were preparing to transport the iron ore lumps elsewhere by concealing them



inside the iron ore fines.

The mines had come under scanner after mining officials received input that iron ore lumps concealed inside the iron ore fines are being smuggled elsewhere. Since then, the mining officials were keeping a close watch on the mines and conducted a surprise raid at the mines, Thursday.

The doubts arose after the officials verified the mineral stock in the mines. They dug up the stock and

found large iron ore lumps concealed inside the fines. Later, when they verified the stock book and other documents, they found out that transportation of iron ore lumps has not been mentioned in the stock book and then seized 7,000 MT iron ore lumps from the mines.

Later, the squad members asked the mines authorities to submit detailed documents before them. Locals alleged that some transport contractors and unscrupulous officials of the mines are hand in gloves in the illegal trade. They also demanded the state government to intervene and order a high-level inquiry into the irregularities.

Youth awarded life term for double murder

Ghasipura: A local court here Thursday sentenced a man to life imprisonment after convicting him for the 2020 double murder of an elderly woman and her son. The convict was identified as Debashish Dash, 23, son of Nilamani Dash of Kaligaon village under Nandipada police limits in Keonjhar district. The court also slapped a penalty of ₹25,000 on Dash, apart from the punishment. In default, he has to undergo additional one year of imprisonment, the judge observed while delivering the order. The victims were identified as Janjali Jena, 80, and her son Banamali Jena, 60, alias Narayan of the same village. This was stated by additional public prosecutor Aswini Kumar Mallick and special public prosecutor Baidhar Sethy to mediapersons here, Thursday. The Additional District and Sessions Judge Prayjoti Rout in Anandapur passed the order after examining at least 18 witnesses, police charge-sheet and other evidences in the case.

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଶିକ୍ଷା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ପ୍ରାଧିକରଣ ଶିକ୍ଷା ସୌଧ, ୟୁନିଟ୍-୫, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର-୭୫୧୦୦୧. ବନ୍ଧନାମା: ୧୦୧୬ ତାରିଖ: ୧୮.୦୧.୨୦୨୪. କନିଷ୍ଠ ଶିକ୍ଷକ (Schematic)-୨୦୨୩ ପାଇଁ ଆବେଦନ କରି Computer Based Test (CBT) ପରୀକ୍ଷାରେ ସଫଳ ହୋଇଥିବା ପ୍ରାର୍ଥୀ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନୀକ ନିମନ୍ତେ ବିଶେଷ ସୂଚନା. ରାଜ୍ୟ ସରକାରଙ୍କର ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଓ ଗଣଶିକ୍ଷା ବିଭାଗର Resolution No.20366 dtd.22.08.2023 ଅନୁଯାୟୀ ୨୦,୦୦୦ କନିଷ୍ଠ ଶିକ୍ଷକ (Schematic)-୨୦୨୩ ନିମ୍ନଲିଖିତ ନିମନ୍ତେ ତା-୧୫.୦୧.୨୦୨୪ରଖରେ କନିଷ୍ଠ ଶିକ୍ଷକ (Schematic)-୨୦୨୩ ପାଇଁ Computer Based Test (CBT) ପରୀକ୍ଷା ହୋଇଥିବାର ଫଳାଫଳ (Provisional Draft Merit List) ଓସେପା ୱେବସାଇଟ୍ osep.a.odisha.gov.inରେ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହୋଇଯାଇଛି । ପ୍ରାର୍ଥୀ ଓ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନୀମାନଙ୍କର Original document verification ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ଛିକା ପ୍ରକରେ Category-I ପାଇଁ ତା-୨୦.୦୧.୨୦୨୪ ଓ Category-II ପାଇଁ ତା-୨୧.୦୧.୨୦୨୪ରଖରେ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ ହେବ । ଏଥି ନିମନ୍ତେ ସମସ୍ତ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥୀ ଓ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଜଣାଇ ଦିଆଯାଉଅଛି ଯେ, ସେମାନେ ଧାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଦିବସରେ Document Verification ସମୟରେ ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ରହି Resolution No.20366 dtd.22.08.2023 ଓ OSEPA websiteରେ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ବିକ୍ଷପ୍ତି ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ନିୟମାବଳୀ ଅନୁଯାୟୀ ନିଜର ବୈଧ ପ୍ରମାଣପତ୍ରଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଯାଞ୍ଚ ଅଧିକାରୀଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖାଇବେ, ଅନ୍ୟଥା ସେମାନଙ୍କର ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନାକୁ ବିଚାରକୁ ନିଆଯିବ ନାହିଁ ଓ ତାଙ୍କର ନାମକୁ Merit Listରୁ ବାଦ୍ ଦିଆଯିବ । ସ୍ୱା./- ରାଜ୍ୟ ପ୍ରକଳ୍ପ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶକ ଓସେପା OIPR-27068/13/0049/2324

Bank of India Gold Auction Notice. Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House, Jaydev Bihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015, Ph.:0674-2362249. It is hereby brought to the notice of the following gold loan borrowers, their legal heirs, person engaged in the business of gold ornaments and general public that in spite of repeated notices by the Bank, the following borrowers are not repaying their dues to the Bank. Notice is hereby published that if they fail to deposit all their dues in their respective gold loan accounts (including Up-to-date interest and all costs, charges/expenses) by 05.02.2024, their pledged gold ornaments will be auctioned at Concerned Branch Premises on 06.02.2024 at 11.00 AM. For this Bank shall not be held responsible for any inconvenience or damage caused to the concerned borrowers and no allegations or representations will be entertained from any borrowers in this regard. Bank reserves the right to cancel the auction without assigning any reason in case, the bidding price so arrived at is observed to be low or inadequate. Further, if needed be Bank reserves the right to change the date and time of the above scheduled auction or cancel the same without assigning any reasons thereon. Purity and net weight and reserve price of gold ornaments/ coins etc. will be available to interested bidders on auction date and auction venue/auction portal.

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FOCUS INEQUALITY

# CAVERNOUS GAP



At current rates, it will take 230 years to end poverty, but we could have our first trillionaire in 10 years

Oxfam has released the upsetting details of the global rich-poor divide in a report -- as the world's richest people gathered in Davos, Switzerland -- for the annual World Economic Forum meeting of political leaders, corporate executives and the super-rich. The cavernous gap between rich and poor is likely to increase globally, the Oxfam report says, and that since 2020, the richest five men in the world have doubled their fortunes. During the same period, almost five billion people globally have become poorer. Hardship and hunger are a daily reality for many people worldwide. At current rates, it will take 230 years to end poverty, but we could have our first trillionaire in 10 years.

still. Global inequality -- the gap between Global North and the Global South -- has grown for the first time in 25 years.

Governments are finding it impossible to stay financially afloat in the face of mounting debt and the escalating costs of importing fuel, food and medicines. Low- and lower-middle-income countries are set to pay nearly half a billion US dollars a day in interest and debt payments between now and 2029, and they are having to make severe cuts in spending to be able to pay their creditors.

Meanwhile, the dramatic increase in extreme wealth witnessed since 2020 has become set in stone. Billionaires are now \$3.3 trillion or 34 per cent richer than they were at the beginning of this decade of crisis, with their wealth growing three times as fast as the rate of inflation. This wealth is concentrated in the Global North. Only 21% of humanity lives in the Global North, but these countries are home to 69% of private wealth, and 74% of the world's billionaire wealth.

The other big winners in this period of crisis are global corporations. For huge corporations, just as for super-rich individuals, the last two decades have been extraordinarily lucrative and the last few years have been better still: the biggest firms experienced an 89% leap in profits in 2021 and 2022. The

new data show that 2023 is set to shatter all records as the most profitable yet. The report further asserts that we are living through an era of monopoly power that enables corporations to control markets, set the terms of exchange, and profit without fear of losing business. It says that far from being accidental, this power has been handed to monopolies by our governments.

Basically, global corporations drive inequality by using their power to force wages down and direct profits to the ultra-wealthy. Oxfam's analysis finds that 791 million workers have seen their wages fail to keep up with inflation and as a result have lost \$1.5 trillion over the last two years. Around the world, corporate power is relentlessly pushing into the public sector, commodifying and segregating access to vital services such as education, water and health care, while enjoying massive, taxpayer-backed profits. This can gut governments' ability to deliver the type of high-quality, universal public services that can reduce inequality.

The report besides bringing out the glaring inequality globally, also offers remedial steps to ease the balance of wealth. Firstly, it says that corporate power should be reigned-in. It could be done by building a strong and effective state, which is the best bulwark against cor-

porate power. State must guarantee inequality-busting public services including health care, education, care services and food security, by investing in public transport, energy housing, and other public infrastructure.

Secondly, governments need to use their power to rein in the runaway power of corporates and prevent injustices across their supply chains, nationally and internationally. They must also stop the monopoly over knowledge by democratising trade and ending the abuse of patent rules that drive inequality.

Further, corporations must pay living wages and commit to ensure climate and gender justice: dividend payments and buybacks should be banned until this is guaranteed. Trade unions must be supported, protected and encouraged. CEOs' pay should be capped, besides a permanent wealth tax and a permanent excess profit tax.

Thirdly, governments can use their power to reinvent and re-purpose the private sector. They can also use tax and other economic instruments such as public procurement to prioritise equitable business models. No economic aid or government contracts should be given to companies that are missing their net zero targets, paying below living wages, or dodging taxes.

However, in just last three years, we have experienced a pandemic, wars, a cost-of-living crisis and climate breakdown. Each crisis has widened the gulf, not so much between the rich and people living in poverty, but between an oligarchic few and the vast majority. But in reality we are also not confident that the remedial measures suggested by Oxfam will ever see the light of the day, in view of the immense power enjoyed by the oligarchs.

The writer is a Delhi-based senior political and international affairs commentator. ©ANIS



Asad Mirza

**HARDSHIP AND HUNGER ARE A DAILY REALITY FOR MANY PEOPLE WORLDWIDE**



Ashwini Deshpande

**The low proportion of women in paid employment in India is a matter of serious concern, and policymakers should focus more on generating demand for female labour, rather than changing social norms**

The world is deafened with useless words.

THE MOTHER



## Horse Before Cart

In China, the painful custom of binding young girls' feet to alter their shape began in the tenth century and continued for a millennium, until it was outlawed in 1911. Although the practice did not truly end until the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, by 1990 China's female labour-force participation rate had climbed to 73% -- well above the OECD average.

In fifteenth-century Europe, women started wearing corsets, often reinforced with wood, bone, or even metal, designed to mold the upper body into a V-shape. Comfortable clothing that was easier to move in came into fashion only over the course of the twentieth century. And yet today, several European countries have the highest rankings in terms of gender parity across various dimensions.

Both practices -- binding women's feet and constricting their waists -- started among the aristocracy before spreading to the middle and lower classes. Given this trajectory, it is not surprising that adherence to beauty norms made it difficult for women to participate in economic or productive work.

Although China and Europe are poles apart culturally, both pushed women into subservient roles in similar ways. Similarly, both societies were able to shed restrictive social norms -- of which body modification is only one example -- and make significant progress on gender equality.

It is important to understand how this happened, especially because international organisations and academics have increasingly focused on changing social norms as a means of achieving gender equality, designing toolkits and interventions aimed at nudging individuals toward new attitudes and practices. But they tend to forget an important lesson from history: social norms are products of material realities and, as a result, only shift in response to changes in those conditions, not because of a sudden change of heart.

Comprehending the complex evolution of social norms requires examining the long arc of history. The work of Nobel laureate economist Claudia Goldin exemplifies this approach. Focusing on the United States, Goldin found that "increased participation of women over the long run resulted more from a changed nature of jobs, such as decrease in hours of work and the rise of white-collar work, than from shifts in social norms and attitudes."

This insight is particularly useful in India, where the proportion of women in paid work remains very low, despite high rates of economic growth and rapid poverty reduction over the last two decades. The discrepancy has sparked debate about which social norms are constraining female labour-force participation and, equally importantly, whether norms are the only limiting factor.

Our new study identifies the norms that matter. Foremost is Indian women's disproportionate responsibility for domestic chores, including cooking, gathering fuel, fetching water, household maintenance, childcare, and elder care. Indian women spend as much as ten times more time on these activities than men, one of the highest gaps globally. Moreover, with nearly universal marriage and a strong preference for sons, young women enter marriage and motherhood sooner than in other parts of the world and are expected to produce a male heir.

Despite the limiting effect of these norms, our data also reveal unmet demand for paid work on the part of women. Women move in and out of paid employment over short periods, indicating a willingness to take on such work when it is available. Constraints on mobility vary by caste status, with women from lower castes historically participating in the labour market at higher rates and also reporting a greater number of transitions, indicating the precarity of available work.

The low proportion of women in paid employment in India is a matter of serious concern, and policymakers should focus more on generating demand for female labour, rather than changing social norms. That means working to ensure the regular availability of paid work that women can access and incentivising employers to hire them.

Several Indian states have already enacted gender quotas in public-sector employment. But with more than 90% of India's workers in the informal sector, such quotas do not affect female labour-force participation rates substantially. Instead, private employers must hire, retain, and promote women workers. Some leading companies, including Tech Mahindra, Wipro, Hero Motocorp, and Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, have already launched initiatives to increase female workforce participation, and others should follow their lead. More importantly, mandatory reporting of gender-disaggregated data can reveal the exact contours of gender gaps and shape a focused policy response.

Given India's predominantly rural population, there is also an urgent need to create avenues for remunerative employment for women in labour-intensive sectors such as food processing, textiles, leather goods, and small-scale, low-tech manufacturing.

Women in India want to earn their own livelihoods, as shown by the massive number of rural women -- larger than the combined population of Canada and Australia -- who have joined self-help groups under the National Rural Livelihood Mission, the largest and longest-running programme of its kind in the world. There is tremendous potential to promote productive and remunerative female self-employment.

In East Asia, the availability of rural non-farm employment provided a massive stimulus for women to enter the paid workforce, and social norms started to change in response. There is no reason to believe that India is any different in this respect. Policymakers must put the horse before the cart: create conditions for female employment before spending immense sums on efforts to engender a new culture of equality.

The writer is Professor of Economics and Founding Director of the Centre for Economic Data and Analysis at Ashoka University.

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SPECTRUM NATION

## Troubling trends in governance

Max Weber argued that bureaucracy constitutes "the most efficient and rational way in which human activity can be organized and that systematic process and organized hierarchies are necessary to maintain order, maximize efficiency and eliminate favoritism." Robert K. Merton, on the other hand, was anguished by the dysfunction resulting from bureaucratic structures. The negative consequences according to him are displacement of goal, trained incapacity, over-conformity to rules. In the context of India, Francis Fukuyama observes that "India is famous for high levels of corruption and clientelism, excessive rules and bureaucratic red tape." He also believes that India needs much greater state capacity across the board to govern professionally and properly.

Some of the major governance reforms after 1991 are the introduction of local self-government as the third tier of governance (1993), the supplanting of the Planning Commission with a Niti Aayog in 2015, the creation of CDS in defence services (2019), Goods & Services Tax and the substitution of RBI Governor with a Monetary Policy Committee to decide repo rates.

Technology as a major enabler to plug leakages in public services and Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in bolstering our infrastructure footprint are paradigm shifts. Substituting structures like FERA with FEMA, and putting in place regulatory bodies like SEBI and TRAI shifts the focus from control to regulation. A stocktaking of these reforms is in order.

As far as Panchayati Raj is concerned, the empowerment has depended on the way state political leadership has acted upon them. While in Kerala, it has been a success with the state government providing 40% of the plan funds being earmarked to Panchayats, in most other states it is marked by the mismatch between mandate and devolution of funds. The collectors and state officials are reluctant to share power with the PRIs.

After 1956, the Planning Commission provided a unique template for planning, policy design, and evaluation of major programmes. However, with the dismantling of the commission such professional approaches of setting targets, evaluating performances, making mid-course corrections, and most importantly democratic accountability

have been given a go by. The Centre has abdicated its role of promoting balanced growth between states.

The JAM (Jan Dhan, Mobile & Aadhaar) has made a sea change in the spread of banking services and the use of mobile in conducting financial transactions digitally instead of cash. It has also plugged the huge leakages in dispensing cash transfers by the government for many of its welfare programmes. However, the digital divide still needs to be bridged.

Fukuyama believes that there is a direct relationship between the degree of bureaucratic autonomy and the quality of governance. This is where the preponderance of generalists controlling governance is a major area of concern. Aravind Panagariya, the newly appointed Finance Commission Chairman believes that in India governance is skewed in favour of generalists over specialists. The Modi government made an effort to bring in a few joint secretaries from the private sector through lateral entry. This has been like a trickle, which needs to be significantly increasing by surmounting the resistance of generalists. Their capability build-up must be given the highest priority.

Acemoglu and Robinson wrote in 'Why Nations Fail' that it is the quality of institutions that separates the economic success or failure of nations. Apart from the capability dimensions, how constitutional functionaries and major institutional heads are selected would lend credibility and gravitas to these institutions. For this to happen the selection process for major constitutional functionaries like the Supreme Court and High Court Judges, CAG, CEC and the heads of RBI and CBI should be done by a collegium system, with the PM, CJI, LoP of both Houses, and distinguished civil society experts as members rather than by the party in power.

The Economist in a recent editorial has pointed out that liberal democracy is at a crossroads as the governing elite is subservient to the interests of the elite and not of the common man. In this looming dystopia, the civil services, as Weber envisioned of a rules-based, meritorious, rational structure, must uphold the rule of law rather than being complicit with a majoritarian government. The time for redemption has come.

The writer, a former civil servant, is a professor emeritus.



Satya Narayan Misra

**FUKUYAMA BELIEVES THAT THERE IS A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEGREE OF BUREAUCRATIC AUTONOMY AND THE QUALITY OF GOVERNANCE**

WISDOM CORNER

- You can be still and still moving. Content even in your discontent. RAM DASS
- Trying to define yourself is like trying to bite your own teeth. ALAN WATTS
- We have more possibilities available in each moment than we realize. THICH NHAT HANH

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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

A great loss

Sir, Renowned classical singer Prabha Atre, the doyen of Kirana Gharana, died at the age of 92. She wanted to sing till her last breath and she did. Almost. Prabha Atre, the woman who could have been lawyer, scientist or doctor but became a globally renowned Hindustani classical vocalist instead, died in her Pune home hours before she was to leave for a concert in Mumbai. In an era when few women ventured into academia or public life, Atre studied two varying disciplines -- she had a Bachelor of Science degree from Ferguson College in Pune and one from the Law College in the university there. And unlike many artistes born into families where music was a generations-old tradition or those who trained since they were children, Atre found melody somewhere along the way of life. She made a mark as a singer and her loss has created a big vacuum in the musical world. RIP music maestro.

Jayanthi Subramanian, MUMBAI

Space pollution

Sir, Space pollution is a serious issue that affects not only the environment, but also the safety and sustainability of space activities. According to the European Space Agency, there are more than 34,000 pieces of space debris larger than 10 cm in orbit, and millions of smaller ones that could still damage satellites and spacecraft. Space pollution is caused by various human activities in space, such as launching rockets, operating satellites, conducting anti-satellite tests, and colliding or exploding objects. Some of these activities generate more debris than others, and some of them are intentional and irresponsible. For example, in 2007, China destroyed one of its own satellites with a missile, creating more than 3,000 pieces of debris. Space pollution has negative impacts on both the natural and the human-made environment. It can harm the Earth's atmosphere, by releasing harmful substances such as aluminium oxide, carbon dioxide, and black carbon. Space pollution can also endanger the functioning and the future of space exploration, by increasing the risk of collisions and damage to spacecraft and satellites. Space pollution is a global problem that requires international cooperation and regulation.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

# De-affiliation out of question: DU VC UP govt to provide e-carts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 18:** Delhi University Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh Thursday said the varsity would continue to keep under its affiliation 12 of its colleges that are fully funded by the state government.

The Vice-Chancellor's statement came in response to the AAP-led Delhi government's refusal to finance these colleges unless they became a part of the state universities.

Earlier last year, Atishi wrote to the Centre flagging 'irregularities' in 12 colleges of the Delhi University that are funded by the city government.

The interest of students of Delhi," the letter read.

In the letter to the education minister, the Vice-Chancellor also reasoned that the de-affiliation cannot take place since these colleges are the constituent colleges of the University of Delhi as per the Delhi University Act 1922 passed by the Parliament.

It further said that the DU Executive Council in its meeting December 15, 2023 had resolved that all the 12 colleges are constituent colleges of the university, therefore, the question of de-affiliation of these colleges does not arise.

Earlier last year, Atishi wrote to the Centre flagging "irregularities" in 12 colleges of the Delhi University that are funded by the city government. She highlighted several serious irregularities and procedural lapses involving hundreds of crores of rupees from the public exchequer.

"Since these colleges are directly affiliated with DU, they are not answerable to the Delhi government for the judicious utilisation of funds," she had said.

The Delhi government said it will not release funding for the academic year 2024-25 to the 12 colleges unless they are completely transferred under the state. It added that if the demerger does not take place, the funding of these colleges will have to come from the Centre or the University Grants Commission.

"Funding will categorically not be granted unless these colleges are transferred, given the irregularities in these colleges," it added. However, the Delhi University Thursday made public the letter sent by the VC to Atishi dated January 16.

In the letter, Singh requested the minister to withdraw the letter written by her to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and continue the funding of the 12 colleges in the interest of students.

"I request yourself (Atishi) the DO letter dated 01.12.2023 may please be withdrawn and continuity of funding to these colleges may not be disturbed in

the interest of students of Delhi," the letter read.

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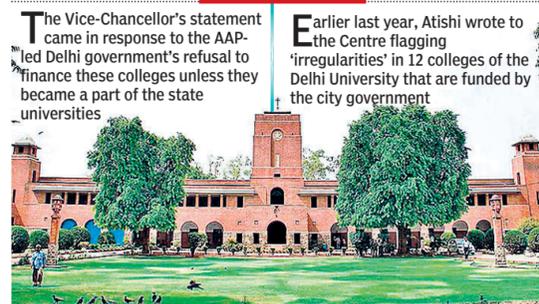
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Singh said a large number of devotees, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, and pregnant women, are expected to visit Ayodhya for a 'darshan' of Ram Lalla after the consecration ceremony January 22.

For the devotees arriving in their vehicles, e-carts will be available at the parking area. Through these e-carts, devotees can visit the Ram temple, Hanuman Garhi temple and other religious sites in the vicinity, he said.

Wheelchairs will also be provided free of cost at the Ram temple for the elderly, persons with disabilities, and pregnant women, he added. The ADA has invited several corporate houses that had earlier expressed their desire to "serve" in Ayodhya to contribute to the e-cart project through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds, Singh said.

After obtaining their approval, the plan will be implemented on a large scale, he said, adding substantial donations for the initiative have been received from the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, the Indian Oil Corporation, and Tata Projects.

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the interest of students of Delhi," the letter read.

In the letter to the education minister, the Vice-Chancellor also reasoned that the de-affiliation cannot take place since these colleges are the constituent colleges of the University of Delhi as per the Delhi University Act 1922 passed by the Parliament.

It further said that the DU Executive Council in its meeting December 15, 2023 had resolved that all the 12 colleges are constituent colleges of the university, therefore, the question of de-affiliation of these colleges does not arise.

Earlier last year, Atishi wrote to the Centre flagging "irregularities" in 12 colleges of the Delhi University that are funded by the city government. She highlighted several serious irregularities and procedural lapses involving hundreds of crores of rupees from the public exchequer.

"Since these colleges are directly affiliated with DU, they are not answerable to the Delhi government for the judicious utilisation of funds," she had said.

The Delhi government said it will not release funding for the academic year 2024-25 to the 12 colleges unless they are completely transferred under the state. It added that if the demerger does not take place, the funding of these colleges will have to come from the Centre or the University Grants Commission.

"Funding will categorically not be granted unless these colleges are transferred, given the irregularities in these colleges," it added. However, the Delhi University Thursday made public the letter sent by the VC to Atishi dated January 16.

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the interest of students of Delhi," the letter read.

## Ayodhya gets special trash bins to keep monkeys away

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Ayodhya, Jan 18:** One of the major problems in Ayodhya are the monkeys who hover around temples and trouble devotees by snatching away mobile phone, spectacles and 'prasad'.

The bigger problem is that monkeys are considered followers of Lord Hanuman and hence, devotees resist any action against them. The Ayodhya administration has now installed specially designed trash bins within the temple complex. These bins have a retractable flap on the top through which trash would be thrown inside.

A locking system would be provided on the rear side of the bin to be opened by sanitation workers to empty it. Monkeys are known to throw out trash from the bin while searching for food. "A lot of monkeys roam around on the Ram temple complex; hence, a locking system was necessary. The trash bin would be designed in the match-box shape to make them easy to use as well as to clean. Senior executives of Tata Consulting Engineers Limited have come up with the design along with



A green signpost with white text in Hindi and English: "अयोध्या नगरी में राम मंदिर आगमन स्वागत करता है U.P. TOURISM WELCOMES YOU TO AYODHYA".

senior engineers deputed by the trust," said an official in the district administration.

The temple trust has outsourced the making of these special dustbins to a Mandawa-based agency in Rajasthan, which makes the product out of pink sandstone. The outer layer of the bin would be covered with stones matching the overall facade of the temple. The trust has asked the vendor to prepare 35 bins with a minimum capacity of at least 200 litre each,

within a fortnight. Each bin would cost about ₹60,000.

Meanwhile, only two towering cranes would remain deployed at the temple site January 22, while the remaining two were pulled out earlier this week. An 80-metre parkota on the front side of the temple would be ready to welcome dignitaries. A toilet block about 300 metres away from the temple would also come up, besides the one being developed within the pilgrim facility centre.

The celebrations have coincided with the beginning of the wedding season in Delhi, which means the bands receiving multiple booking requests, much more than they handle in a regular season. Yet they are trying their best to accommodate them all.

"This year has witnessed a substantial increase in the demand for dhol, and band, baaja due to 'Ram Barats' being taken out. We will start our day at 4 am. Both small and large bands are preparing," said Satya Anil Thadani, who owns Jea Band. He said they have divided band members into smaller teams to handle the requests for January 21 and 22.

## DU students participating in R-Day to sit for missed exams



A group of students in white uniforms marching in a parade, carrying a banner.

According to the official, the varsity is also considering offering a similar relaxation for students who represent the university at national and international level sports events such as the Olympics

**New Delhi, Jan 18:** Delhi University students participating in the Republic Day parade will be given a "special chance" to sit for missed exams, an official said Thursday.

According to the official, the varsity is also considering offering a similar relaxation for students who represent the university at national and international level sports events such as the Olympics.

The final-year students, who are a part of the Delhi contingent of NCC will march at the Kartavya path January 26, will be given this chance to en-

sure that their academic year is not wasted and they get their degrees on time, OSD examination Ajay Arora said.

The university may consider including first and second-year students participating in the Republic Day parade for this opportunity after assessing the number of students who will require the relaxation, he added.

"We will provide a special chance to final-year students of Delhi University who were busy with parade rehearsal and therefore couldn't appear for the examination held during the period," Arora said. A datesheet for the

same will be released soon and the exams will be held keeping in mind the schedule of students to avoid clash with any other paper, Arora said.

"We want to encourage students to learn from experiences beyond the classroom teaching. For that, it is important that they participate in such events and gain exposure. This will also help to instill a sense of nationalism in young minds," Arora said.

This year, 2,274 cadets, including students from Delhi University representing the Delhi Contingent, will take part in the NCC Republic Day march past.

## Wedding bands overbooked in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 18:** Traditional wedding bands in Delhi are gearing up for a busy day on January 22 with hundreds of celebratory events planned at temples across the city to celebrate the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya.

According to industry experts, more than 1,500 such events will take place in markets and temples, and the wedding bands have been booked to perform devotional songs and bhajans during these programmes to enhance the devotional and festive fervour.

The celebrations have coincided with the beginning of



Aircraft fly past during the inauguration of the Wings India Airshow, at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad, Telangana



Cars drive along a serpentine road cleared of snow in Altenberg, Germany



A Sponge Bob-shaped hot air balloon launches during liftoff at an international balloon festival at Laguna Caren Park in Santiago, Chile



A woman holds her dog to be blessed by a priest at the Cathedral San Bernardino de Siena during the ceremony commemorating the Feast of San Antonio Abad, in Xochimilco on the outskirts of Mexico City



A group consisting mostly of women, who call themselves "The Endorphins", gather for a sunrise swim in the chilly waters of Lake Ontario in Toronto, Canada



Women personnel of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) during rehearsal for the Republic Day Parade 2024 at the Kartavya Path in New Delhi



Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, centre, and his daughter Maryam Nawaz, right, wave to supporters as they arrive to address an election campaign rally in Hafizabad, Pakistan



Devotees from Nepal near their tents ahead of the consecration ceremony of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh

## of the day quote

Perhaps, the most corrupt government in India is in Assam. We will raise the issues of Assam during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra

The Business Blasters' curriculum has shaped our school students with a mindset of becoming job givers and not seekers

We have faith in Lord Ram... We are not in a hurry to have darshan of Lord Ram. Once the construction (of Ayodhya temple) is complete, we will go there

## SHORT TAKES

### UP govt raises sugarcane price

**Lucknow:** The Uttar Pradesh government Thursday increased the state-adviced price (SAP) for sugarcane by Rs 20 per quintal, in an effort to garner the support of farmers ahead of general elections. The decision in this regard was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

### Kejriwal refuses to depose before ED

**New Delhi:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Thursday refused to depose before the Enforcement Directorate for the fourth time and termed the summonses issued to him "illegal" and part of a "political conspiracy" to arrest him before the Lok Sabha polls. In his reply to the summons, Kejriwal said he is busy with the budget preparations for Delhi.

### AAP moves HC

**Chandigarh:** The AAP Thursday moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court after the Chandigarh mayoral polls were abruptly postponed with councillors being told that the presiding officer had fallen ill. The administration told the court the elections have been deferred to February 6. The Congress and the AAP, which have joined hands for the mayoral polls, slammed the BJP, accusing it of not allowing to hold the elections in the wake of its "imminent defeat".

## BILKIS BANO CASE

# 5 convicts move SC seeking more time to surrender



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 18:** Days after the Supreme Court quashed the remission the Gujarat government had granted them, five of those convicted of gang-raping Bilkis Bano and massacring seven members of her family during the 2002 communal riots moved the Supreme Court Thursday seeking more time to surrender.

The reasons for seeking extension of the deadline to surrender include failing health, impending surgery, son's marriage and harvesting ripe crops.

The matter was mentioned before a bench of Justices B V Nagarathana and Sanjay Karol which asked the registry to place their applications before Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud.

"It is stated by the respondents that applications have been filed for an extension of time to surrender and report to jail. Since the bench has to be reconstituted, registry to seek orders from CJJ for reconstitution of the bench since time expires Sunday," the bench said.

Senior advocate V Chitambare, appearing for some of the convicts, mentioned the matter and sought its urgent listing Friday since the deadline to surrender expires January 21.

The five convicts who have sought relief are Govind Nai, Pradeep Mordhiya, Bipin Chandra Joshi, Ramesh Chandana and Mitesh Bhatt.

"The respondent himself is an old man who is suffering from asthma and is in really poor health. It is further submitted

that the respondent was recently operated upon and had to undergo an angiography. It is also submitted that the Respondent is yet to undergo another operation for the treatment of 'Hemorrhoids,'" Nai said in his plea.

He also cited his bedridden 88-year-old father's ill health to seek relief. In his plea seeking more time to surrender, Chandana said he was looking after his crops and that were ready for harvest.

He said he is the only male member in the family and has to take care of the crops.

"Further, applicant's young son is of marriageable age and the applicant bears the responsibility to look after this affair and with kind indulgence of this Honourable Court may even complete this affair," Chandana said.

Mordhiya submitted he requires regular consultation with doctors after he underwent a lung surgery.

Another convict Mitesh Bhatt said his winter crops are ready for harvest and he needs to complete the task before surrendering. Joshi has cited a recent leg surgery to seek relief.

The 11 convicts released prematurely were: Bakabhai Vohania, Bipin Chandra Joshi, Kesarbhai Vohania, Govind Nai, Jaswant Nai, Mitesh Bhatt, Pradeep Mordhiya, Radheshyam Shah, Rajubhai Soni, Ramesh Chandana and Shailesh Bhatt.

Excoriating the Gujarat government for remitting their sentences, the apex court had said it "usurped" the power of the Maharashtra government to grant remission.

**“We should resolve to work together to build an India where every woman is empowered and every young woman moves forward with confidence to fulfil her dreams”**

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

## RAM MANDIR POSTAGE STAMPS UNVEILED BY PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday released commemorative postage stamps on the Ram temple in Ayodhya and a book of stamps issued on Lord Ram around the world, and said these are not merely pieces of paper but act as medium to pass on historical events to future generations



Ramamurthy enters the Ram temple ahead of the Pran Pratishtha in Ayodhya

PTI PHOTO

## Merchant ship carrying 9 Indians attacked in Red Sea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 18:** In a swift operation, a guided missile destroyer of the Indian Navy intercepted a cargo vessel with 22 crew members, including nine Indians, little over an hour after the Marshall Island-flagged ship came under a drone strike in the Gulf of Aden Wednesday night.

The strike on the cargo vessel MV Genco Picardy around 60 nautical miles South of Port Aden came amid increasing global concerns over attacks on merchant ships in the Red Sea and Arabian Sea.

There was no report of any casualties and the fire on the vessel was contained, officials said.

The Indian Navy's frontline warship INS Visakhapatnam responded within an hour to the distress call by MV Genco Picardy following the drone attack at 2311 hours Wednesday, they said. The Indian Navy's EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) specialists boarded the vessel early Thursday morning to inspect the damaged area, they said, adding the vessel was cleared further transit following thorough scrutiny.

The vessel is proceeding to the next port of call. "The INS Visakhapatnam, mission deployed in Gulf of Aden for anti-piracy operations, swiftly responded to a distress call by Marshall Island flagged MV Genco Picardy following a drone attack at 2311 hours January 17," the Navy said.

"Indian Naval EOD specialists from INS Visakhapatnam boarded the vessel in early hours of January 18 to inspect the damaged area. The EOD specialists, after a thorough inspection, have rendered the area safe for further transit," the Navy said.

## SNIPPETS

### Ban on GM crops against national interest: Centre

**New Delhi:** Making a strong case for growing genetically modified (GM) crops for enhanced food security, the Centre told the Supreme Court Thursday that India is already importing huge quantities of edible oil extracted from genetically altered oilseeds for domestic consumption and "unfounded fears" of their adverse impact is hurting farmers, consumers and industry. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told the court that approximately 55-60 per cent of edible oil consumed in India is imported.

### Top court refuses to cancel Khaira's bail

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court Thursday refused to cancel Congress MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira's bail in a 2015 drugs haul case, rejecting the Punjab government's appeal challenging the high court's order granting him the relief. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and KV Viswanathan said it was not inclined to interfere with the January 4 order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court granting bail to Khaira in a case registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and the Arms Act.

### EPFO removes Aadhaar as valid date of birth proof

**New Delhi:** Retirement fund body EPFO has said it will no longer use Aadhaar as a valid document for proof of date of birth. In an official circular January 16, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) said the decision to remove Aadhaar was taken following a directive from the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). As per the circular, Aadhaar is also being removed from the list of documents for correction in date of birth. The UIDAI in a circular December 22, 2023, had said an Aadhaar number can be used for establishing identity of an individual, subject to authentication, and thereby, per se, it is not a proof of date of birth.

### Fresh violence erupt in Manipur, 4 shot dead

**Imphal:** Four people were shot dead in Manipur's Bishnupur district Thursday evening as ethnic violence continued in the northeastern state, police said. The incident occurred at Ningthoukhong Kha Khunou. Police said they are investigating the case. Quoting one person who escaped the shooting, an official said, "Five-six armed miscreants came when the labourers were tiling the farmland and shot them from point-blank range."

# Apologise to flyers: Tharoor to Scindia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 18:** Firing a fresh salvo at Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia over the chaos at the Delhi airport due to fog-related flight delays, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor Thursday said it's a pity that since switching sides, Scindia has adopted the Modi government's "uncaring attitude" to the public and asked him to apologise to the flyers.

Tharoor, who engaged in a war of words on X Wednesday over the flight delays and the ensuing chaos at the airport, issued a series of six posts in a point-by-point rebuttal of Scindia's arguments and said the minister would be better



served by shifting his focus from "my arm-chair and my diligent researchers to the agony of the passengers".

"Perhaps, then he would find time to fix the myriad incompetencies, absolute lack of preparation, and the glaring loopholes in his Ministry's functioning," Tharoor said. Scindia had claimed Wednesday that Tharoor is "lost in his esoteric world of

thesaurus", and for him "data mining of selective press articles from the internet qualifies as research".

The minister's caustic response came after Tharoor had alleged in a series of six posts on X that the chaos at the Delhi airport is a result of the "neglect and incompetence" of the Ministry of Civil Aviation which has failed to put in place modern facili-

ties like at other international airports of the world. The minister had also given a point-by-point rebuttal in an equal number of posts.

Responding to those posts by Scindia, Tharoor Thursday said, "I don't need an 'esoteric thesaurus' to respond to @jm\_scindia's selective rebuttal of my thread yesterday. Some 80,000 passengers had their flights cancelled January 14th and 15th alone, with lakhs more suffering through incessant delays." It would be prudent for the minister to apologise to them for the agony and distress that his government has caused, enabled, and overseen rather than engage in "nugatory name-calling", Tharoor said in a statement.

# BHARAT JODO NYAY YATRA: A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, led by Rahul Gandhi, resonates positively in Manipur, Nagaland, Assam, and Meghalaya, where charismatic rallies connect with locals, addressing concerns from ethnic tensions to unemployment, inflation, and the Citizenship Amendment Act

Embarking on the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra (BJNY) from Thoubal (Manipur) January 14, 2024, led by Rahul Gandhi, the Indian National Congress seeks a strategic political resonance. Culminating in Mumbai March 20, the journey transcends mere procession, symbolising a carefully orchestrated ballet resonating with the nation's pulse.

This sequel to the Bharat Jodo Yatra is a commitment to galvanise citizens nationwide. In the inaugural yatra, Congress dissected issues, addressing economic schisms, societal fault lines, and autocratic governance. The BJNY, however, promises an elevated discourse, focusing on justice across social, economic, and political realms for the betterment of the nation's denizens as it navigates the mosaic of the Indian electorate in anticipation of the upcoming national elections.

Under the rallying cry of "Nyay ka haq milne tak," meaning "Until we get our right to justice," the BJNY transcends mere physicality, morphing into a pilgrimage towards a more equitable India. Embarking from Thoubal and culminating in Mumbai, it resonates with the aspirations of millions. The BJNY is a multifac-

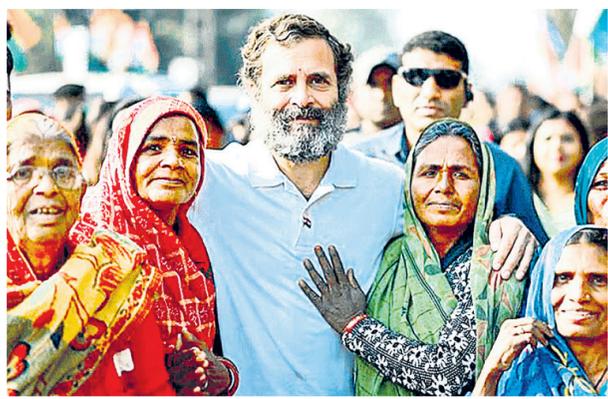
eted initiative dissecting India's political landscape, spotlighting governance under the BJP-led government. It scrutinises issues from unemployment and inflation to farmers' distress, corruption, communalism, and national security.

The political chessboard undergoes a reshuffle as the yatra weaves unity among Opposition parties, fostering the INDIA alliance. Led by the Congress and hosting 28 political parties, this alliance becomes a crucible where dissenting voices harmonise, promising a unified front challenging the prevailing status quo.

### Impact on 2024 Lok Sabha elections

In the lead-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJNY emerges as a formidable force, poised to reshape the political landscape. This calculated journey spans 14 states, and 85 districts, and covers an expansive 6,713 kilometers, enveloping 355 Lok Sabha seats, a significant 65% of the parliamentary terrain. The battleground, historically dominated by the BJP with 236 victories in 2019, becomes the focal point for the Congress' strategic gambit to regain influence, particularly in the Hindi heartland.

Beyond the heartland, the yatra extends its influence into southern and northeastern states, transforming



into a political pilgrimage that transcends geographical confines. As a linchpin for the INDIA alliance, the yatra positions itself as a crucial element in Opposition aspirations. This collective force seeks to capitalise on anti-incumbency sentiments against the Modi government, providing a credible alternative while challenging the BJP's narrative of nationalism and Hindutva.

**BJP's response**  
In a heated political exchange, the BJP dismisses the BJNY as a the-

atrical gimmick, branding it a desperate ploy by the Congress and its allies to cling to relevance. The BJP doesn't mince words, leveling serious allegations against the Congress, labeling them as anti-national, anti-development, and anti-Hindu. The BJP contends that the yatra is an implicit admission of defeat in the 2024 elections. Accusing the Congress of forsaking its inherent strength by seeking alliances, the BJP suggests that the journey serves as a smokescreen, diverting attention from internal con-

flicts and factionalism within the Congress and the INDIA alliance.

Despite the Congress offensive, the BJP raises the stakes by asserting that the BJNY lacks the potency to counter their trump card—the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. The BJP portrays the temple not only as a religious monument but as a symbol of unwavering commitment to the Hindu faith and culture.

In this political skirmish, the BJP not only challenges the credibility of the Congress' journey but also paints a vivid picture of a political landscape where ideologies clash, and personal and communal sentiments become ammunition in the battle for supremacy. The conflict underscores the intense polarisation and strategic maneuvering between the two major parties.

Beyond a political pilgrimage, the yatra strategically positions the Congress to strengthen its hold and form alliances in the northeast, countering BJP advances. However, challenges loom in the BJP stronghold of the Hindi heartland, dismissing the yatra as theatrics, and critiquing Rahul Gandhi's leadership.

**The way forward**  
The electoral trajectory for the Congress and the INDIA Alliance,

stemming from the expansive BJNY, remains uncertain, contingent on intricate factors shaping Indian politics. This political dance involves seat allocations, coordination among allies, campaign strategy, voter turnout, and the performance of political contenders, especially the BJP. Media suggests seat-sharing pacts in strategic states, but challenges persist in battlegrounds like West Bengal, Delhi, and Punjab.

Beyond political negotiations, internal schisms and factionalism threaten the Congress and INDIA Alliance, posing a potential challenge to unity. Navigating this labyrinth, they must articulate a clear vision transcending regional, linguistic, and cultural boundaries, countering the BJP's narrative.

However, electoral triumph is uncertain. The Congress and the INDIA Alliance must navigate challenges, scaling obstacles in the unpredictable currents of public sentiment. As the yatra unfolds, it symbolises resilience, strategy, and the unpredictable nature of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The political landscape awaits the unfolding drama, where success hinges on navigating the treacherous terrain of Indian democracy.

ANIL SINGH, POLITICAL STRATEGIST, NEW DELHI

# international



Amid a hybrid war waged by Washington against Russia, we aren't seeing any basis, not only for any additional joint measures in the sphere of arms control and reduction of strategic risks, but for any discussion of strategic stability issues with the US

**SERGEY LAVROV** | MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

## BIG DAY FOR JAPAN

Japan aims to become the fifth country to put a spacecraft on the moon when it attempts a precision landing Friday, in what would be a boost for a space programme that has suffered a wave of setbacks and been eclipsed by rival China



## of the day quote

Whatever happened in the past shows that Nawaz Sharif is not a ladla... Someone else is

**SHEHBAZ SHARIF** | FORMER PAK PM

Indian Railways plans to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Swiss railway to learn from some of their best practices and procedures including the hub and spoke model and tunnelling technology

**ASHWINI VAISHNAW** | INDIA'S RAILWAY MINISTER

I do believe that the American people are going to vote in favour of what is in the best interest of the future of our country and in particular our children

**KAMALA HARRIS** | US VICE PRESIDENT



People enjoy Ukrainian national dancing in a shopping mall, during a break between Russian missile attacks in Kyiv, Ukraine

PTI PHOTO

## MILITARY BUILDUP

# Japan to buy 400 Tomahawk missiles

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tokyo, Jan 18: Japan signed a deal with the United States Thursday to purchase up to 400 Tomahawk cruise missiles as part of its ongoing military buildup in response to increased regional threats.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government has pledged to double its annual defence spending to around 10 trillion yen (USD 68 billion) by 2027, which would make Japan the world's third-biggest military spender after the United States and China.

Defence Minister Minoru Kihara announced in December a decision to accelerate deployment of some Tomahawks and Japanese-made Type 12 surface-to-ship missiles beginning in fiscal year 2025, a year before the original plan.

The government says Japan is facing its "severest" security environment since World War II because of threats from China and North Korea, causing it to increase military cooperation with the US, Australia, Britain and other friendly nations.

In November, the US approved a USD 2.35 billion sale of two types of Tomahawks—200 Block IV missiles and 200 upgraded Block V versions. They can be launched from warships and hit targets 1,600 kilometres (1,000 miles) away, officials said.

The signing of the purchase agreement Thursday was attended by Kihara and US Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel. Japan and the United States agreed to expedite the deployment "in response to the increasingly severe security environment," Kihara said.

Emanuel said training of Japanese service members for the Tomahawks will start in March. Late last year, Japan's Cabinet eased a ban on exports of lethal weapons, allowing the sale of Japanese-made weapons and components made under license from other nations to those countries. The government quickly approved a shipment of Japanese-made Patriot missiles to the United States to complement the US inventory.

Japan is accelerating its deployment of long-range cruise missiles capable of hitting targets in China or North Korea, while Japanese troops increasingly work side-by-side with the US and other friendly nations and take on more offensive roles.

At a news conference earlier Thursday marking the end of his second year in Tokyo, Emanuel lauded Japan's rapid move during that time to build up its military and strengthen its alliance with the US to meet challenges in the region.

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## SHORT TAKES

### Nine killed

Beirut: An airstrike on southern Syria early Thursday killed at least nine people and was probably carried out by Jordan's air force, Syrian opposition activists said, the latest in a series of strikes in an area where cross-border drug smugglers have been active. There was no immediate confirmation from Jordan on the strike that hit the province of Sweida.

### Spain amends its Constitution

Madrid: Spain's Parliament voted Thursday to amend the country's Constitution for the third time in its history, removing the term "handicapped" and replacing it with "persons with a disability." The change has long been a demand of people with disabilities in Spain. The amendment to Article 49 also added that "public administrations will pursue policies that guarantee the complete autonomy and social inclusion of people with disabilities." Spain's ruling Socialist Party and the conservative opposition Popular Party agreed to make the change in a rare moment of consensus between the European nation's largest political parties.

### William visits Kate in hospital

London: Prince William visited his wife Kate Thursday in a London hospital, where she is recovering after abdominal surgery. British media reported that the 42-year-old Princess of Wales was "doing well" after the operation, details of which have not been disclosed. Royal officials announced Wednesday that Kate had surgery and was expected to remain in the private London Clinic for 10 to 14 days. She is not expected to resume public duties until April.

### Jaishankar arrives in Uganda

Kampala: India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Thursday arrived in the Ugandan capital city of Kampala to represent India at the two-day summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) beginning Friday. "Looking forward to engaging colleagues over the coming two days," Jaishankar posted on X soon after his arrival here. He also shared some photographs of his visit and wrote, "Arrived in Kampala to represent India at the 19th NAM Summit." India has provided Uganda 10 buses, five ambulances, 10 tractors and some flag poles as part of assistance to support the country in hosting summits of the NAM and G77 grouping.

# US military targets Houthi sites in Yemen

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Jan 18: The US military fired another wave of ship- and submarine-launch missile strikes against Houthi-controlled sites Wednesday, US Central Command said, marking the fourth time in days it has directly targeted the group in Yemen as violence that ignited in the wake of the Israel-Hamas war continues to spill over in the Middle East.

The strikes were launched from the Red Sea and hit 14 missiles that the command deemed an "imminent threat." The strikes followed an official announcement Wednesday that the US has put the Houthis back on its list of specially designated global terrorists. The sanctions that come with the formal designation are meant to sever violent extremist groups from their sources of financing.

"Forces conducted strikes on 14 Iran-backed Houthi missiles that were loaded to be fired in Houthi controlled areas in Yemen," Central Command said in a statement posted on X late Wednesday. "These missiles on launch rails presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and US Navy ships in the region and could have been fired at any time, prompting US forces to exercise their inherent right and obligation to defend themselves."



### VIOLENCE CONTINUES

The strikes were launched from the Red Sea and hit 14 missiles that the command deemed an 'imminent threat'

The strikes followed an official announcement Wednesday that the US has put the Houthis back on its list of specially designated global terrorists

Despite the sanctions and military strikes, including a large-scale operation Friday carried out by US and British warships and warplanes that hit more than 60 targets across Yemen, the Houthis are continuing their harassment campaign of commercial and military ships. The latest incident occurred Wednesday when a one-way attack drone was launched from a Houthi-controlled area in Yemen and struck the Marshall Islands-flagged, U.S.-owned and -operated M/V Genco Picardy in the Gulf of Aden.

The US has also strongly warned Iran to cease providing weapons to the Houthis. Thursday a US raid on a dhow intercepted ballistic missile parts the US said Iran was shipping to Yemen. Two US Navy SEALs remain unaccounted for after one was knocked off the vessel by a wave during the seizure and the second followed the overcome SEAL into the water.

Wednesday, Pentagon press secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said the US would continue to take military action to prevent further attacks.

## SINGAPORE MINISTER RESIGNS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, Jan 18: Singapore's Indian-origin former transport minister S Iswaran, who has resigned from the ruling party after being charged with multiple offences, Thursday said he was "innocent" and rejected all graft allegations against him.

Earlier in the day, Iswaran, 61, was handed an array of charges, the bulk of which was for receiving items worth hundreds of thousands of dollars from billionaire hotelier Ong Beng Seng, mainly relating to the Singapore F1 race, The Straits Times newspaper reported.

He pleaded not guilty to 27 charges - two of corruption under the Prevention of Corruption Act, one of obstructing justice and 24 of receiving gratification as a public servant under the Penal Code. He told the court he intends to claim trial.

"I am innocent and will now focus on clearing my name," the former minister said in a statement Thursday, rejecting all allegations against him. Iswaran, who earlier in the day, resigned from the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) and announced stepping down as a Member of Parliament, said that he did that "even without being asked to do so".

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# Israeli strike kills 16 in southern Gaza

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rafah, Jan 18: An Israeli airstrike on a home killed 16 people, half of them children, in the southern Gaza town of Rafah, medics said early Thursday. The military continued to strike targets in areas of the besieged territory where it has told civilians to seek refuge.

There was meanwhile no word on whether medicines that entered the territory on Wednesday as part of a deal brokered by France and Qatar had been distributed to dozens of hostages with chronic illnesses who are being held by Hamas.

More than 100 days after Hamas triggered the war with its October 7 attack, Israel continues to wage one of the deadliest



and most destructive military campaigns in recent history, with the goal of dismantling the militant group that has ruled Gaza since 2007 and returning scores of captives. The war has stoked tensions across the region, threatening to ignite other conflicts.

More than 24,000 Palestinians have been killed, some 85 per cent of the narrow coastal territory's 2.3 million people have fled their homes, and the United Nations says a quarter of the population is starving. Hundreds of thousands have

heeded Israeli evacuation orders and packed into southern Gaza, where shelters run by the United Nations are overflowing and massive tent camps have gone up. But Israel has continued to strike what it says are militant targets in all parts of Gaza, often killing women and children.

Dr Talat Barhoum at Rafah's el-Najjar Hospital confirmed the death toll from the strike in Rafah and said dozens more were wounded. Associated Press footage from the hospital showed relatives weeping over the bodies of loved ones.

"They were suffering from hunger, they were dying from hunger, and now they have also been hit," said Mahmoud Qassim, a relative of some of those who were killed.

# Tensions with Iran add to Pakistan's economic challenges

## THE STANDOFF WITH IRAN COMES AS PAKISTAN IS IN THE MIDST OF A CRIPPLING ECONOMIC CRISIS WITH ITS \$350 BILLION ECONOMY BESET BY HIGH INFLATION AND YAWNING FISCAL AND CURRENT ACCOUNT DEFICITS

REUTERS

Karachi/ London, Jan 18: An escalation of geopolitical tensions between Pakistan and neighbouring Iran Thursday has sent shockwaves through Pakistan's struggling economy, roiling its dollar bonds and hitting its stock market.

Pakistan conducted strikes inside Iran, targeting separatist Baloch militants two days after Tehran said it had attacked the bases of another group within

Pakistani territory.

The standoff with Iran comes as Pakistan is in the midst of a crippling economic crisis with its \$350 billion economy beset by high inflation and yawning fiscal and current account deficits. It is undergoing a tough \$3 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout programme that pulled it from the brink of default last summer.

Pakistan's international bonds fell after its foreign ministry said it conducted strikes inside



Iran Thursday, two days after Tehran attacked the bases of another group within Pakistani territory. The 2026 bond suffered some of the biggest declines at 0750 GMT, dropping 1.2 cents to trade at 71.125 cents in the dollar, data from Tradeweb showed. Earlier in the day, Pakistan's

benchmark share index fell 1.6% after Pakistan said it conducted strikes inside Iran, before recovering some ground. Pakistan's economic ties with Iran, while not huge, are important for Islamabad as it struggles to supply its western-most regions in Balochistan with critical com-

modities, including fuel and electricity.

Iran provides electricity to many areas in Pakistan, and unofficially there is a lot of trade in commodities, including Liquefied Petroleum Gas and Iranian diesel. Last year in June, Pakistan passed a special order to allow barter trade with Iran, along with Afghanistan and Russia, for certain goods, including petroleum and natural gas.

"The bilateral trade, valued at over \$2 billion, is crucial for both economies, especially regions like Balochistan in Pakistan, where the local economies are significantly dependent on trade with Iran, particularly for agricultural products and petrochemicals," said Aneel Salman, chair economic security at Islamabad Policy

Research Institute.

Salman said that interruption of trade routes would have immediate economic impacts, including shortages in Pakistan and a notable decrease in the critical \$2 billion trade volume.

He said the conflict could significantly impact long-term collaborative projects like the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline, known as the Peace Pipeline. The pipeline would transport natural gas from Iran to Pakistan and potentially India. Already delayed, it may now face further delays and funding challenges.

In August, Pakistan's then-minister of state for petroleum said Pakistan was "actively engaged" with Iran to dissuade it from pursuing international arbitration over delays in the pipeline.

## of the day quote

When inflation is still above 5.5%, rather close to 6%, our monetary policy has to remain actively disinflationary and it would be too premature to talk in terms of a pivot in our monetary policy

**SHAKTIKANTA DAS** | GOVERNOR, RBI

Central banks should not tighten prematurely because then they may lose the victory that is now in their hands. But if they are too slow, then they could throw cold water on the economy

**KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA** | CHIEF, IMF

We feel very confident about the aircraft type that we have ... even seeing Boeing's commitment to the way they've handled this problem

**PRIYA MEHRA** | CHIEF LEGAL, REGULATORY AND STRATEGIC RELATIONS OFFICER, AKASA AIR



We see 6-8% consistent growth rate over the next full decade, and this is based on a very clearly thought-out strategy. This strategy has four major engines

**ASHWINI VAISHNAW** | INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MINISTER

## NHPC SHARE SALE: BIDS WORTH ₹6K-CR

The government's 3.5 per cent share sale offer in NHPC Thursday received an enthusiastic response from institutional investors, who put in bids worth over ₹6,000 crore. In the two-day offer for sale (OFS), the government is selling over 35 crore equity shares in power producer NHPC, including a greenshoe option to sell 10 crore more, at a floor price of ₹66 a share



# 1,120 planes in pipeline as Indian aviation booms

## AKASA AIR, INDIGO, AIR INDIA PLACE ORDERS FOR 1,120 PLANES IN LESS THAN ONE YEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 18:** With Akasa Air announcing an order for 150 aircraft Thursday, three Indian carriers together have ordered a total of 1,120 planes in less than one year as they expand their presence in the country's fast growing civil aviation market.

The less than two-year-old Akasa Air has placed a firm order for 150 Boeing 737 Max planes, comprising 737 Max 10 and 737 Max 8-200 jets.

In 2023, which also saw domestic air traffic climbing new highs, Air India and IndiGo together placed orders for 970 planes with Boeing and Airbus.

Tata Group-owned Air India ordered 470 planes -- 250 from



Airbus and 220 from Boeing -- in February last year. Later in June, the country's largest airline IndiGo announced an order with Airbus to buy 500 narrow-body planes.

Now, Akasa Air, Air India and IndiGo together have placed orders for 1,120 planes since

February last year. Besides these orders, Indian carriers are set to take deliveries of new planes that were ordered earlier. IndiGo alone has an order book of nearly 1,000 planes.

Grounded Go First, which has not been flying since May

last year, had an order for 72 aircraft.

Together, domestic carriers are expected to take deliveries of more than 1,600 planes in the coming years, according to an analysis.

Currently, the fleet size of the Indian airlines is 730.

On Wednesday, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said the fleet size of Indian carriers will reach 1,500 to 2,000 by 2030.

India is one of the fastest growing civil aviation markets in the world.

### AIRBUS' INDIA VISION

Airbus expects to double the total value of procurement from India to \$1.5 billion in the coming years, the planemaker's India president said Thursday,

as it looks to ride on the boom in the world's fastest growing aviation market.

Airbus also forecasts that the Indian aviation sector will need 2,840 aircraft by 2035, Remi Maillard, president and managing director of Airbus India and South Asia, said at the "Wings India" event in Hyderabad.

Maillard added that Airbus expects to double the company's sourcing from the country from \$750 million at present.

India is now the world's fastest-growing aviation market, investing close to \$12 billion in building new airports and refurbishing existing ones, aiming to have about 200 airports within five years, up from 150 today.

## PROFIT-TAKING

### Stock markets drop for straight 3rd day



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 18:** Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty fell for the third day running Thursday, dragged by continuous selling in HDFC Bank and profit-taking in consumer durables and utility shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 313.90 points or 0.44 per cent to settle at 71,186.86. During the day, it tanked 835.26 points or 1.16 per cent to 70,665.50.

The Nifty declined 109.70 points or 0.51 per cent to 21,462.25. During the day, it plunged 286.4 points or 1.32 per cent to 21,285.55.

The heavy fall in the markets comes on the back of a recent record-breaking rally. The BSE benchmark hit an all-time high of 73,427.59 Tuesday, and the Nifty also reached its lifetime peak of 22,124.15 the same day.

In three days, Sensex lost 2,141 points or nearly 3 per cent while Nifty retreated by 635 points or 2.89 per cent to fall below the key support level of 21,500 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹10,578.13 crore Wednesday, according to exchange data.

The recent market rally that lasted till earlier this week has the margin funding book of brokers nearly soaring 90 per cent to ₹54,537 crore as of January 16, a lifetime high for the segment, show the data from the exchanges and a research report.

The margin funding, wherein an investor pays 25-35 per cent of the stock value he or she buys and the rest is paid by brokers for a monthly interest of 12-15 per cent, stood at ₹29,000 crore for the whole of January 2023 but jumped to ₹54,537 crore as of January 16, 2024.

The market rally also had the cash segment of the market jumping to a record 25 per cent in December 2023, according to an analysis by Icr Ratings.

## SHORT TAKES

### ICICI Pru slumps

**Bangalore:** Shares of India's ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, opens new tab fell 10% Thursday after weak demand led to a sharp contraction in new business margins. Shares of the company fell to an eight-month low, marking the biggest slide since February 1, when India announced a plan to tax the total returns of policies with returns exceeding ₹500,000 at maturity. The life insurer, which reported third-quarter results Wednesday, said its expected profit margin from new policies declined to 26.7% for the nine months to December 31 from 32% a year earlier.

### SBI raises ₹5K-cr

**Mumbai:** The nation's largest lender State Bank of India has raised ₹5,000 crore through its second Basel III compliant additional tier 1 (AT1) bond sale this fiscal. The bank, in a statement Thursday, said the perpetual bond with a call option after 10 years and every anniversary thereafter, is priced at a coupon of 8.34 per cent. The issue got an overwhelming response with an oversubscription of 2.65 times from a range of investors with 108 bids of ₹5,294 crores against the base issue size of ₹2,000 crore.

### CCEA approves ₹5,607 crore

**New Delhi:** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Thursday approved equity investments of ₹5,607 crore by state-owned South Eastern Coalfields and Mahanadi Coalfields to set up two thermal power projects with total generation capacities of 2,260 MW. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday, an official statement said. According to the statement, South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL) will set up a 660 MW thermal power plant through a joint venture of SECL and MPPGCL. Similarly, Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) will set up a 2x800 MW thermal power plant through Mahanadi Basin Power Ltd (MBPL - a subsidiary of MCL).

### ONGC arm gets \$420mn loan

**Bangalore:** ONGC Videsh, the overseas investment unit of the country's top explorer, Oil and Natural Gas Corp, has received a five-year \$420 million loan from DBS Bank and Bank of Baroda, a company spokesperson said.

# India must secure 7% growth: RBI Bulletin

*The world economy faces divergent near-term growth prospects and emerging market economies led by Asia are poised to outperform the rest of the world, said the article published in the Bulletin*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 18:** India needs to sustain the momentum of strong economic growth in 2024-25 by securing at least 7 per cent expansion in GDP, while bringing down retail inflation to the target of 4 per cent in the coming months, said the RBI's January Bulletin issued Thursday.

The world economy faces divergent near-term growth prospects and emerging market economies led by Asia are poised to outperform the rest of the world, said an article published in the Bulletin.

"The Indian economy recorded stronger-than-expected growth in 2023-24, underpinned by a shift from consumption to investment. The government's thrust on capex is starting to crowd-in private investment. Headline inflation recorded a marginal uptick in December, driven by higher food inflation due to unfavourable base effects," it said.

The article authored by a team led by Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra further said that in India, potential output is picking up with actual output running above it, although the gap is moderate.

"In 2024-25, the objective should be to sustain this momentum by securing real GDP growth of at least 7 per cent in an envi-



ronment of macroeconomic stability," the authors said.

Accordingly, inflation needs to align with the target by the second quarter of the year, as projected, and get anchored there, they added.

Also, balance sheets of financial institutions need to be strengthened and asset quality improved even further, and the ongoing consolidation of fiscal and external balances needs to continue.

"The gains of the transformative technological change that is underway must be harnessed for inclusive and participative growth in a sound risk-free environment. Above all, the virtuous thrust to investment from government capex must be partnered and even led by the corporate sector, supplemented by foreign direct investment," it said.

The article also stressed that the weak global outlook can be brightened if geopolitical conflicts end and their repercussions through commodity and financial markets, trade and transportation, and supply networks are contained.

"Inflation must be vanquished, paving the way for financial conditions to ease in support of growth," it added.

The RBI, however, said the views expressed in the Bulletin article are of the authors and do not represent the views of the

central bank.

The article also observed that in the primary market, fund mobilisation through issuances of certificates of deposit (CD) rose to ₹5.6 lakh crore during 2023-24 (up to December 2023), higher than ₹4.9 lakh crore a year ago.

"In December 2023, banks issued CDs over ₹1.0 lakh crore -- the highest in any month during the current financial year - to bridge the gap between credit growth and trailing deposit growth," it said.

Commercial Paper (CP) issuances at ₹10 lakh crore (up to December 2023) against ₹10.5 lakh crore in the same period a year ago.

Another article in the Bulletin on 'Are Food Prices the 'True' Core of India's Inflation?' said Large and persistent changes in food prices have the potential to affect headline inflation lastingly, as prices of some components of the food group are seen to satisfy core inflation properties.

Policy makers need to determine the sources and nature of food price shocks to minimise the risks of over-reacting to transitory shocks as well as of looking through persistent shocks, it noted.

The central bank said the views expressed in the Bulletin articles are of the authors and do not represent the views of the Reserve Bank of India.

# NSE continues to script history

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 18:** The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) has again emerged as the world's largest derivatives exchange in 2023, in terms of the number of contracts traded, according to the Futures Industry Association (FIA).

This is the fifth straight year when the exchange earned the top position.

Additionally, the exchange has ranked third in the world in the equity segment by number of trades in 2023, as per the statistics maintained by World Federation of Exchanges (WFE).

The year 2023 has witnessed many milestones such as market capitalisation of listed companies surpassing \$4 trillion, SME listed companies crossing the ₹1 lakh crore mark and the Nifty 50 index surpassing the 20,000 index levels for the first time.

Also, the number of unique registered investors on the exchange reached 8.5 crore at the end of the calendar year.

The year also saw a record

high turnover on a single day in the equity segment of ₹1,67,942.47 crore November 30, 2023, and ₹3,81,623.12 crore December 2, 2023, in the equity derivatives segment.

The equity segment completed its transition for settlement of all securities on T+1 (T-plus one working day) basis and the timeline for listing of securities has been shortened to T+3 days in the primary market.

NSE launched the Social Stock Exchange as a segment to facilitate the social enterprises (NPOs) to showcase their work to a wider audience and mobilise funds through issuance of instruments such as Zero Coupon Zero Principal Bonds, allowing participants to participate in philanthropic causes and bring in efficiency & transparency in the overall ecosystem. The segment has seen registrations by 42 Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) and fundraising by one NPO.

In the commodity derivatives segment, the exchange launched 21 new commodity derivatives contracts, NSE said.

National Stock Exchange emerges world's largest derivatives exchange for 5th straight year

## ICC holds Industrial Safety & Occupational Health Conference

**Bhubaneswar:** A conference on Industrial Safety and Occupational Health was organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in collaboration with Directorate of Factories and Boilers. The conference was presided over by ICC State Council Chairman JB Pany who said that there has been a lot of improvement in industries in Odisha on industrial safety and occupational health of the workers and that the main objective of the conference is to prevent accidents. Sarada Prasad Nayak, Cabinet Minister for Labour and ESI Department, inaugurated the conference as the chief guest and said that in the last 20 years, state's industries have grown rapidly in every sector.

Santhanagopalan R IAS, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Labour & ESI Department, Government of Odisha, said accidents are happening in industries for two reasons -- in pursuit to save money and time. He added that focusing on these can prevent many accidents. Anupam Saha, IAS, Commissioner, Labour commission and Malay Kumar Pradhan, Director, Directorate of Factory & Boiler Labour and ESI, Government of Odisha, gave detailed information on the objective of the programme. NR Sahu, Chairperson of the ICC State Council ESH Committee, addressed the conference while Rajesh Kanungo, the host with the ICC State Council ESH Committee, delivered the vote of thanks. This pivotal event brought together industry leaders, experts, and stakeholders to discuss critical aspects of industrial safety and occupational health.



## Pradhan to launch credit outreach programme

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 18:** In a significant move to boost financial inclusivity and economic growth, Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship will inaugurate credit outreach programme January 20 at Pallishree Mela Ground, Dhenkanal.

The inauguration will be done in the presence of Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Choudhary, Govt of India, local MP and MLAs, representatives of DFS, senior officials of state govt, RBI, NABARD, Head of SLBC and controlling heads of all public and private sector banks.

The outreach programme will focus on different flagship schemes of the Central government as PM Svanidhi,

PMEGP, PM Mudra yojna, Kisan Credit Card, Stand-Up India, Education loan, Housing loan, Self Help Group.

The credit outreach programme will feature to maximise the reach of the Union government's flagship loan schemes to all the eligible beneficiaries in Dhenkanal and Angul districts in line with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The event will be a landmark occasion as it will witness over ₹2,500 crore loan sanctions to deserving beneficiaries.

The significant financial injection on to the local economy is expected to have a far reaching impact including the creation of job opportunities, expansion in business, emergence of new entrepreneurs and socio-economic development of Dhenkanal and Angul districts.

## Silver Jubilee: 2024 Cable TV Show a resounding success



**KOLKATA:** The 2024 Cable TV Show, the Silver Jubilee edition of one of the largest trade shows on digital cable television, broadband and OTT in India and the SAARC region, which concluded at the Biswa Bangla Mela Prangan, was a resounding success garnering over 50,000 footfalls and participation of leading brands, MSOs, service operators from across the country and showcasing the latest technological advances in the sector. Minister Sujit Bose, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Govt of West Bengal, visited the Cable TV Show on the second day of the exhibition. "Cable TV Show 2024 was a flagship mega business-to-business (B2B) event representing the whole gamut of the modern cable television sector and drawing huge crowds during the three days of the mega exhibition," said Pawan Jajodia, Chairman, Exhibition Committee, Cable TV Show 2024.

## Evos inaugurates opulent home project

**BHUBANESWAR:** Evos Buildcon, a real estate and property development sector company in Odisha, proudly announced its latest project in Raghunathpur, Bhubaneswar. The luxurious venture, designed by the renowned architect Sanjay Puri who has been featured in Forbes magazine, promises to redefine opulence and sophistication in the heart of the City. The project is nestled in the upscale neighborhood of Patia and stands tall with an impressive 42 storeys and is spread across 28.5 lakh sqft, making it the tallest and largest structure in Patia. The striking architecture, coupled with panoramic views, is set to make this development a landmark in the City. This exclusive offering is tailored for the City's elite, delivering a lifestyle par excellence. The project boasts of palatial 3 and 4-bedroom residences, each featuring grand sun decks that provide a serene and breathtaking ambience.

With four towers rising 42 storeys high, the development is an architectural marvel, setting new standards for luxury living in the region. Residents of this prestigious project can indulge in a plethora of amenities that cater to both relaxation and recreation. The landscaped Podium Deck, Well-being Pool, Yoga Deck, Social Pavilion, Chess Court, and Boulevard Bridge contribute to a serene and rejuvenating environment. The Well-being Garden and Lifestyle Pool provide additional spaces for relaxation, while the Floating Cabanas offer a touch of exclusivity.



# Eves go down fighting

INDIA LOSE TO GERMANY IN SUDDEN DEATH, TO FACE JAPAN FOR PARIS BERTH



Players of India (in blue) and Germany in action during their match in Ranchi, Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ranchi, Jan 18:** The Indian women's hockey team fought with tigerish resolve but lost its nerves in the most crucial phase of the penalty shootout, going down to Germany 3-4 in the second semifinal of the FIH Olympic Qualifier here Thursday.

The match was stretched to a penalty shootout after the teams were tied at 2-2 in the regulation time. With this win Germany secured a berth in the Paris Olympics later this year.

However, India will also have a crumb of consolation as the hosts have another chance to seal their Olympics berth if they beat Japan in the third-fourth place match Friday.

The top three sides from this tournament will qualify for the Paris Games. World No.5 Germany will take on the USA in the final of this event Friday. Deepika (15th minute) and Ishika Chaudhary (59th) were the goal-scorers for India in the regular time, while Germany's both goals were scored by Charlotte Stapenhorst (27th, 57th).

As expected, the Germans came out attacking from the onset and exerted continuous pressure on the Indian defence on a foggy night, where visibility was a problem. The Germans were right on their money with their strategy and made numerous circle entries.

They earned a penalty corner in the opening minute but it was disallowed after India

went for a review. But the visitors kept up the pressure and fetched another penalty corner in the ninth minute but India captain and goalkeeper Savita Punia was up to the task. The Indians too made a few circle penetrations but lacked in finishing.

But egged on by MS Dhoni, the former India cricket team captain who came to watch the game, the home side fought back valiantly to trouble the German defence with their speed.

Just 55 seconds from the end of the first quarter, India secured their first penalty corner and Deepika slammed home with a powerful drag-flick to stun the Germans.

The Indians grew in confidence after the goal and attacked

the rival defence continuously, which witnessed a few goal-mouth scrambles but goals eluded them. The relentless Germans were in no mood to sit back and attacked in numbers after being 0-1 down.

Lack of coordination from the Indian midfield and inability to clear loose balls cost the hosts dearly as Germany equalised three minutes from halftime when Stapenhorst scored from a field effort.

The Germans continued their relentless efforts after the change of ends. But the Indian defence stood tall to deny their opponents. Three minutes from the third quarter, Savita came into the action and pulled off a fine body save to deny Anne Schroder.

The Germans used their strong frame and powerplay to dominate the Indians. In the 35th minute, India got a great chance to take the lead from a counter-attack but Deepika's push from close range was easily padded away by German goalkeeper Julia Sonntag.

Seconds later, Germany bagged their second penalty corner but the Indian backline was rock solid, which weathered several German raids. Eventually, it became too much to handle for the Indian defence. It melted three minutes into the fourth quarter when Stapenhorst scored her second goal of the day to stun the capacity crowd at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Astro Turf Hockey Stadium.

The Indians, however, did not give up and secured back-to-back penalty corners in the 59th minute, the second of which was put into the goal by Ishika from a rebound, forcing the match into the shootout.

In the shootout, it was advantage India as Savita made two fine saves but Navneet Kaur, Neha Goyal, Sangita Kumari and Sonika missed from one-on-one situation in sudden death to hand Germany the match and ticket to the Paris Games.

# Lacklustre India lose to Uzbeks



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Doha, Jan 18:** Bereft of ideas, a lacklustre Indian football team's woes were compounded by its defensive lapses, resulting in a 0-3 drubbing by a dominant Uzbekistan in the AFC Asian Cup here Thursday.

This is India's second successive defeat in Group B, having started their campaign with a 0-2 loss to title contenders Australia, in which their spirited performance earned them plaudits. India will play their final group match against Syria January 23.

However, against the central Asian nation at Ahmed bin Ali Stadium, India's performance was a far cry from their display against the Socceros, a FIFA World Cup regular.

Uzbekistan scored through Abbosbek Fayzullaev (4th minute), Igor Sergeev (18th) and Nasrullaev (45+3) to register their first win in the competition after being held to a stalemate by Syria in their tournament opener. Hoping to start on a positive

note barely days after their promising show against Australia, India, instead, found themselves on the backfoot straightaway and conceded a rather soft goal early on.

The lightning quick Fayzullaev, placed in a favourable position, found the target with a header past the hapless Gurpreet Singh Sandhu after Shukurov headed the ball towards him from a Nasrullaev cross taken at the edge of the Indian penalty area.

Ranked 102 in the world as against their 68-ranked opponents, Igor Stimac's men found the going tough as Uzbekistan looked to rattle the Indian defence with their attacking play.

Unlike the match against Australia, the Indians could not prevent Uzbekistan from splitting their defence wide open in the early part. In a mood to stamp their authority further, Uzbekistan again benefitted from sloppy defending from their opponents.

Rahul Bheke gave the ball away in the halfway line. Akash Mishra managed to touch the ball but his clearance hit the

post before returning to the field of play, and Sergeev did the rest to put his side 2-0 ahead.

Even as the Indians looked to bounce back, there was no letup in Uzbekistan's intensity as they struck their third goal just before the halftime, with Nasrullaev scoring from the rebound as the Indian defence failed to respond to the situation.

Uzbekistan began the second-half with a comfortable cushion and the Blue Tigers needed a miracle to stage a comeback. But all they could do was to avoid a bigger margin of defeat and leave the field a dejected lot.

The damage was inflicted in the first half itself and what did not help the Indians was their ultra defensive tactics which aided their physically stronger and superior rivals. It meant less attacking nous from India.

Lallianzuala Chhangte started on the bench for India, paving the way for Naorem Mahesh Singh, while Anirudh Thapa was included in place of Deepak Tangri. Akash Mishra was brought in for Subhashish Bose.

# PRANNOY, SATWIK-CHIRAG IN INDIA OPEN QUARTERFINALS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 18:** Star shuttler HS Prannoy progressed into the men's singles quarterfinals with a three-game win over compatriot Priyanshu Rajawat at the India Open Super 750 badminton tournament here Thursday.

Playing at the adjacent court, World No.2 Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty too sailed into the last 8 with a dominating win over Chinese Taipei's Lu Ching yao and Yang Po Han in men's doubles.

Rajawat dished out some delectable drops and half-smashes to trouble Prannoy to pocket the opening game but after he twisted his ankle in the middle of second game, things spiralled out as Prannoy prevailed 20-22, 21-14, 21-14. The World No.9 will face the winner of the all-Chinese Taipei match between Wang Tzu Wei and Su Li Yang.

Satwik and Chirag, on the other hand, notched up a dominating 21-14, 21-15 win over World No.25 Lu and Yang. The Asian Games champions will face Denmark's fifth seeds Kim Astrup and Anders Skaarup Rasmussen next.



Big guns crash out

World Champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn crashed out of the tournament after losing his round of 16 men's singles match to Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu on a day of upsets. The 22-year-old defending champion was edged out 21-16, 20-22, 21-23 by Yiu in an hour and 22 minutes.

Two-time World Champion Akane Yamaguchi and reigning All England champion Li Shi Feng too bit the dust. While World No.4 Yamaguchi was sent packing by Thailand's World No.18 Busanan Ongbamrunphan 11-21, 19-21, unseeded Japanese Koki Watanabe outwitted third seeded Chinese Li Shi Feng 21-14, 13-21, 21-9 in a 71-minute clash. Later, Lee Zii Jia of Malaysia beat fifth seed Jonatan Christie 21-15, 21-13 in another second round match.

SHAMBHU DATTA MISHRA, OP

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 18:** Petr Kratky, the newly-appointed Mumbai City FC (MCFC) head coach, is seemingly enjoying the challenge to guide the Indian Super League (ISL) Premiership title holders a step further – to the coveted Championship crown.

Notably, MCFC are the only side to have claimed both the ISL Premiership and Championship titles in a single season – 2021-22 – since the inception of the Premiership title in 2019-20 season.

"Being honest I was excited," said Kratky candidly recalling his first reaction after he was offered the Mumbai job. "It was not new though (moving from one country to another). Sometimes football takes you to places you don't know. But I'm fine with that," he added.

Speaking about his maiden visit to India, the Czech-Australian said, "I have friends here (in India) as well as in Melbourne (who have ideas about Indian culture). I also had some knowledge about Indian culture. So overall, I was excited for my new challenge."

He also shared his thought on

the A-League (Australia) and Indian leagues. "It's quite similar actually. The only difference I found is the use of foreign recruits as in players. In Australia, you can play as many foreign signings as you want, but in ISL you can use only four at a time on the pitch. The weather here is also quite different from Australia," said the 42-year-old.

Kratky, a right-back during his playing days, began his managerial journey as the youth team coach at Melbourne City in 2017 before joining the senior side in 2021 as assistant coach.

He also applauded people who are trying their bits to develop Indian football. "I see potential football talents in India. People are working hard to make the league better. Obviously there are a lot of areas to improve. But they have the right intention which is important."

"Talents are coming through and we also have good Indian players in our team. We just need to give them the opportunities to hone their skills and prove themselves. In 5-10 years' time, ISL will definitely grow bigger and better," he asserted.

Speaking of his mid-season ap-

pointment, Kratky said it was not that difficult considering his style is quite similar to the previous coach Des Buckingham. Notably, Kratky had replaced Buckingham as Melbourne City assistant coach in 2021.

"The transition was smooth actually. I have been in touch with Des and the playing style is quite similar. It was more about what I bring to this team – not playing style but the coaching style, and my personality. The playing style in the City group is quite similar," said Kratky about his mid-season transfer.

City Football Group (CFG) consists of Manchester City – the group's flagship club, Melbourne City, Mumbai City, New York City and few more. "However, as a coach you get a new team, new players, support staff. It's early and we are still

learning. Players are understanding my style and responding accordingly. Gradually it will get better."

Despite his brief introduction, Kratky is getting used to the country. "It's been quite good so far as the people here are friendly and welcoming. Obviously, I'm still learning about the culture and getting to know the food and cuisines."

"I like to explore new things. I have tried Dal before, but now I'm trying new dishes. It's spicy though (he chuckles). This is the difference, but slowly I'm getting to terms with it and implementing the dishes in my diet as well," he signed off.

**I want to be the best version of myself (as coach). There are very good coaches around the world and I am inspired by different coaches in different areas – tactically, technically or according to the demand of the players. So I just try to learn from everyone and be myself**  
PETR KRATKY



# Blinkova stuns Rybakina in a wild game

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Melbourne, Jan 18:** Her hand and her legs were shaking, she'd missed nine match points but also saved six, and Anna Blinkova was 41 points into a wild tie-breaker that was the longest ever in a women's Grand Slam event. Elena Rybakina, last year's Australian Open runner-up, was just as anxious on the other side of the net.

When Blinkova lunged to retrieve a backhand, aiming just to keep the rally alive, and Rybakina's next backhand sailed wide, it finished off a 6-4, 4-6, 7-6(22-20) second-round victory Thursday that she'll never ever forget.

Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion who was runner-up here last year to Aryna Sabalenka, saved two match points in a third set that con-



tained six service breaks.

Blinkova twice served for the match but couldn't finish off, and a double-fault in the 12th game sent it to a 10-point tiebreaker. Once there, 13 minutes after her first match points, Blinkova had two more points at

9-7 but again Rybakina saved them, and so it went on.

Blinkova, smiling, later described it as the "endless tie-breaker." It went on for 32 minutes until Rybakina's backhand error ended it. In terms of points – 42 – it was the longest tie-

breaker ever in a women's major.

Unlike Rybakina, top-ranked Iga Swiatek had a narrow escape in the opening match on Rod Laver Arena when she rallied from 1-4 down in the third set to beat 2022 runner-up Danielle Collins 6-4, 3-6, 6-4. The four-time major winner next faces No.50-ranked Linda Noskova, who beat US qualifier McCartney Kessler 6-3, 1-6, 6-4.

Fifth-ranked Jessica Pegula's run of three consecutive quarterfinals in Australia was ended in a 4-6, 2-6 loss to Clara Burel. Her fellow American, 2017 US Open winner Sloane Stephens, took out No.14 seed Daria Kasatkina 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 and advanced along with No.11 Jelena Ostapenko, No.12 Zheng Qinwen, No.19 Elina Svitolina and No.27 Emma Navarro. The 2021 US Open champion Emma Raducanu's comeback major

ended in a 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 loss to Wang Yafan.

Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz dropped a set for the first time in the tournament before recovering to beat Lorenzo Sonego 6-4, 6-7(3-7), 6-3, 7-6(7-3). He will next face 18-year-old Chinese wildcard entry Shang Juncheng, who ousted India's Sumit Nagal 2-6, 6-3, 7-5, 6-4.

Arthur Cazaux upset No.8 Holger Rune 7-6(7-4), 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 but No.13 Grigor Dimitrov, No.14 Tommy Paul, No.19 Cameron Norrie, No.21 Ugo Humbert and No.27 Felix Auger-Aliassime all advanced.

Two earlier matches went the distance before being decided in 10-point tie-breakers: Alexander Zverev fended off Lukas Klein 7-5, 3-6, 4-6, 7-6(7-5), 7-6(10-7) in 4 1/2 hours and No. 11 Casper Ruud edged Max Purcell 6-3, 6-7(5-7), 6-3, 3-6, 7-6(10-7).

# MBSG, EB renew rivalry with eyes on Super Cup semifinal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 18:** Bitter foes Mohun Bagan Super Giant (MBSG) and East Bengal (EB) will renew their rivalry when they clash in the Kalinga Super Cup with an aim to seal the semifinal spot here Friday.

They have six points each in Group A and are also level on goal difference (+2), but East Bengal have a slight edge on goals scored. A draw will do for Carles Cuadrat's side as they chase their first semi-final appearance in the Super Cup since the inaugural edition in 2018.

Both teams are missing Indian players who are a part of the national team at the ongoing AFC Asian Cup. Friday's meeting is set to be the third Kolkata derby of the season.

While East Bengal edged Mohun Bagan SG 1-0 in the Durand Cup group stage, the Mariners ultimately had the last laugh, defeating their arch-rivals in the final with the same scoreline.

But the scenario is different in the Kalinga Super Cup. With just one team progressing to the semifinals, the losers go home Friday.

"We know the significance of this match, not just in terms of the derby but, more importantly, in terms of a semifinal spot. That's the most important thing," said MBSG coach Clifford Miranda.