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DADLS-76

BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY | JANUARY 6, 2025

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PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS CONVENTION

8th - 10th January, 2025 | Bhubaneswar

- The flagship event commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to India in 1915 on 9th January
 - Indian Diaspora is of 35.4 million, comprising 19.5 million PIOs and 15.8 million NRIs
 - The Nation lauds the contribution of the Indian Diaspora in various fields to both India and their host countries
 - More than 7500 delegates to attend the grand event
 - 27 Diaspora members will be honoured with the prestigious "Pravasi Bharatiya Samman" award

Join us in applauding the Indian Diaspora's Legacy and Contribution for a Viksit Bharat



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SELENA, BLANCO SIGN PRENUP TO PROTECT THEIR ASSETS

Selena Gomez and her fiancé, Benny Blanco, have reportedly decided to sign a prenuptial agreement to ensure financial security. Selena, who has a successful cosmetics brand, has taken a practical approach to ensure her financial security remains intact.

FILMMAKER JEFF BAENA **PASSES AWAY**

Jeff Baena, a filmmaker celebrated for his unique storytelling and collaborative work with his wife Aubrey Plaza, has died at 47. His films, including Life After Beth and Horse Girl, often combined dark humour and existential themes.



accuracy • reliability • trust

You may be alone, but not necessarily lonely. You may want to listen to your inner voice, and express your true self creatively. Spend the evening with a loved one who can hear the music in your silence too, suggests Ganesha

TAURUS

Fortune favours the brave and you will wake up feeling peak today and you will reap the benefits of real estate and construction business. Your peers and boss will extend all the support you need. All in all, a day to bask in the glory of advantages and awards.

You need to bear in mind that you need to concentrate on your own image and standing in society rather than worry about the actions of others. Those in the retail business will see an unprecedented spurt in their profits today, says Ganesha

CANCER

You will try to improve ties with beloved ones. Your de votion and dedication will reap benefits for the future. You will have physical and mental happiness. You will keep your future in mind. This will boost your self-confidence. Ganesha's blessings are with you.

You will be confused with issues relating to the workplace today. You need to accept your present circumstances for what they are, and work towards resolving your immediates concerns to find your way ahead in life. This period of doubt will pass very soon, says Ganesha.

Your beloved will not only give you a surprise today but also demand one, says Ganesha. There may be some good news on the business front. Ganesha says own up to your old mistakes so that you don't repeat them, and chalk out the plans for the future.

LIBRA

Ganesha says you will get the answers to all your questions. You will tend to worry about small things and issues. You will be able to earn from different sources today. Ganeshji assures that if you keep your mind balanced you will achieve amazing

SCORPIO

You may bump into people with different tastes and temperaments, says Ganesha. Some may surprise you, while some may just shock you. Sometimes, it is difficult to understand when people react indifferently to your success. Handle it with smartness and diplomacy.

SAGITTARIUS

Today will be a day for introspection, says Ganesha, as you try and find the root causes of your problems. But the job is only half-done: the rest will depend on the initiatives you may take to implement possible solutions to your problems.

CAPRICORN

Today, you'll like to hold a cup of hot coffee in one hand, relax and go down the memory lane to cherish some golden moments. You may want to give another chance to your romantic relationship as you develop likings for your ex-boyfriend/ girlfriend. Ganesha finds you to be busy in a lot social gatherings today.

AQUARIUS

You speed up your pace and try to do everything in order to complete your targets, but you won't be able to complete the tasks on time. Don't lose hope as tomorrow will be a different day, says Ganesha. Give yourself some time to relax and unwind.

PISCES

You need to concentrate more on your personal life, and seriously think about the changes you need to make. You are guided more by your heart in these matters. However, there is nothing to worry about, as this is a golden period for you. Today should be a progressive day that will bring a lot of positive changes in your life, says Ganesha.



Mumbai: Junaid Khan, who made his debut in 2024 with the Netflix film Maharaj, recently shared his experience of being diagnosed with dyslexia at the age of six or seven. Speaking on a YouTube channel, Junaid revealed that his parents recognised his condition while hearing

script of Taare Zameen Par. Reflecting on this pivotal moment, Junaid said, "When Papa and Maa heard the script, they immediately thought, 'Wait a second! We've seen this in our lives." The parallels between the character in the film and Junaid's own challenges prompted Aamir and Reena to seek professional advice. Following consultations with a specialist, Junaid was diagnosed

Junaid emphasised the role his parents played in creating a supportive and nurturing environment during his formative years. "Neither of my parents placed undue pressure on me to excel academically,' he shared. Instead, Aamir and Reena encouraged him to focus on doing his best, offering unwavering support. "Mom and Dad were like, 'Make sure you do your best," Junaid added, expressing gratitude for their understanding approach.

The actor credited his parents for fostering a balanced and compassionate upbringing, which allowed him to navigate his condition with confidence and resilience.

with dyslexia.

Isha's guide to ageless beauty

staying ing and In an Instahumorously respondquestion, "Do I live in a refrigerator?" as people often wonder how she manages to maintain her evergreen beauty. Isha posted a video of her revealing that her flawless appearance is not just a result of water intake but a combination of mindful self-care, hard work and the right approach to health. In the clip, the Krishna Cottage actress could be heard saying,

ics to some extent.' Isha emphasised the importance of a balanced diet, sharing that she enjoys a variety of fruits, including papaya, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and citrus fruits like oranges. She also makes it a point to consume at least one raw vegetable juice daily to keep her body nourished and energised. "I take lot of fruits, at least 4, 5

her

different types of fruit. Papaya strawberry, blueberries, raspberries', citrus fruits, oranges. I at least have a one raw vegetable juice in a day. I listen to my body," Koppikar

share secret to fresh, glowtimeless. gram post, she ed to the common "It's not only about having water. It's a lot of hard work. You have to be very mindful about your thoughts. It's also about genet-

Mum-

bai:



struggles Mumbai: Triptii Dimri, who rose to fame after her brief but impactful role in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's Animal, has become one of the most promising actors in Bollywood. However, her journey wasn't easy. Reflecting on her debut in Sajid Ali's Laila Majnu, Triptii revealed the challenges she faced as a newcomer without formal acting training. In a recent interview, Triptii shared how she attended workshops with Mukesh Chhabra to prepare

> ing. I kept wondering, 'What are they even talking about? I was constantly confused,' she said. The lack of experience left her doubting herself. "During workshops, thev talked about character depth and pain, and I didn't understand anything. I'd go home and cry, wondering if I had

made the wrong decision," Triptii shared. The role of Laila required im-

mense emotional depth, something Triptii found intimidating. She said, "You can't be yourself on set. You have to fully embody the character. It wasn't easy because I thought acting was just performing in front of the camera, but I quickly realised it's so much more." Despite the struggles.

Triptii's dedication shone through, marking Laila Mainu as the beginning of a stellar career.

4

9

8

9

2

6

3

8

Big B's witty comment on Bipasha lationship, and Big B played the role



Mumbai: An old video featuring Amitabh Bachchan has resurfaced on social media, where the actor humorously made a playful remark about actress Bipasha Basu.

The behind-the-scenes footage is from Simi Garewal's renowned chat show, Rendezvous with Simi Garew*al*, and shows Bachchan alongside



his family members—son Abhishek, daughter Shweta and wife Jaya Bachchan.

This particular segment dates back to the filming of the 2004 thriller Aetbaar, in which Amitabh starred alongside John Abraham and Bipasha Basu. At the time, John and Bipasha were reportedly in a reof Bipasha's father in the movie. In the viral footage, the Sholay

actor humorously recounted an incident from the set when John had contracted conjunctivitis.

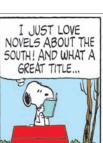
While sharing this story with Simi, she teasingly warned the team to avoid touching anything Amitabh had touched, fearing they might catch the infection. Without missing a beat, Bachchan responded, saying, "Maine toh kiya hi nahi kuch" ("I didn't do anything"). He then added with a playful smile, 'Sari touching toh Bipasha karti hai, main thode na karta hun" ("It's Bipasha who does all the touching. not me").

Last year, Simi Garewal shared this throwback video on her Instagram handle with the caption. 'What's a little gossip among friends?! Rendezvous gems."

PEANUTS



T'S BY MISS HELEN SWEETSTORY, MY FAVORITE AUTHOR AND IT'S A SOUTHERN NOVEL







CALVIN AND HOBBES



BREVITY



POST **CROSSWORD**

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Across

- 7 Bawl out 8 Baseball stat
- 9 Molokai meal
- 10 Breed of dairy cattle
- 11 Snake in the
- grass?
- 13 Living quarters
- 15 Kind of board 17 Riptide

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4 Ruckus

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21 Lopes

22 Showy

23 Assemble

- Down
- 2 Know-it-all
- 1 Chickpea, e.g.

engagement

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

- 18 Prospector's
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5 Cowpuncher

mausoleum

16 Some false teeth

6 Clergyman

12 Agra's

(3,5)14 Redcap's charge

21 Burlap fibre

TRAGEDY ATTAR

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SUDOKU

SUDOKU

8

5 4

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.

2 5

2 5

5 1

SOLUTIONS

9

3



Boost to irrigation

State government plans to bring 1,42,000 hectares of cropland under irrigation, Chief Minister says

DOWNTOWN | P2



Yoon arrest delayed

Chief of security for South Korean President Yoon says he could not cooperate with efforts to arrest the impeached leader

INTERNATIONAL | P8



Couple unfriendly

Unmarried couples will no longer be welcome to check in, as per OYO guidelines effective this year

BUSINESS | P9



India lose BGT

A listless India get knocked out of the World Test Championship final as Oz cruise to a 6-wicket victory in the fifth Test

SPORTS | BACK PAGE

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BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY | JANUARY 6, 2025

2 BJP leaders 'killed' as dumper hits car

SURVIVOR, EX-MLA ALLEGE DELIBERATE COLLISION, MURDER



Sambalpur, Jan 5: Two BJP leaders were killed after a dumper hit their car in Sambalpur district in the early hours of Sunday, police said.

The deceased were identified as Debendra Nayak and Muralidhar Chhuria. Nayak was BJP's Goshala mandal president, while Chhuria is a former sarpanch. Both of them were close to senior BJP leader Nauri Naik.

The incident happened around 1.30am on NH-53 in the Burla police station area. There were six people in the car, including the driver, and they were returning home in Kardola from Bhubaneswar, police said. All six persons were taken

RREGULAR by MANJUL

Sir. if a scam of a couple of crores can

kill a journalist, will money like electoral bonds kill journalism?

BBSR

CTC

WEATHER

Max Temp

Min Temp

Humidity

Rainfall

FORECAST

Fog/mist in the

clear sky later

to a nearby hospital where doctors declared two of them dead. The injured were undergoing treatment there.

Suresh Chhanda, who was injured in the accident, alleged, "The vehicle hit our car from behind twice. Suspecting someone trying to hit our vehicle intentionally, the driver turned the car towards a rural road from the highway near Kantapalli Square. Still, the dumper chased our vehicle and hit it badly. As a result, the car overturned."

Chhanda said he was conscious till the dumper hit their car twice on the highway, but lost sense when it hit the third time.

"I am sure that someone in-

tentionally caused the accident. By mistake, one can hit a vehicle once. Why would someone be hit thrice from behind,' asked the injured BJP worker.

After visiting the injured persons, Naik, a former MLA of Rengali, alleged that it was not an accident but a deliberate collision. Someone has deliberately hit their vehicle thrice,

Meanwhile, a case has been registered at Burla police station based on a complaint filed by the son of one of the deceased. The investigation is underway, with rumours swirling about a possible political motive behind the killings.

SP Mukesh Kumar Bhamoo said, "We have seized the dumper and detained its driver. As the family members of the deceased persons alleged that it was done intentionally, we will investigate that angle."
Union Education Minister

Dharmendra Pradhan and Sambalpur MLA Jayanarayan Mishra have expressed deep condolences and met the families of the deceased and the injured. The incident has sent shockwaves through the BJP community, with many de-

Drone over Srimandir triggers security scare

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: An investigation was started after a drone was spotted over the revered Srimandir in Puri in the early hours of Sunday, police said. The drone was spotted over

the temple around 4.10am and it kept hovering for nearly half an hour, raising security concerns as the area is a no-flying zone.

Different teams have been formed to investigate the incident, a police officer said.

Expressing concern, Law Minister Prithivirai Harichandan said, "Flying a drone over the temple is illegal and not acceptable. Strong legal action would be taken against the person who breached the security."

"The Puri SP has formed teams and started an investigation into the incident. I hope that the person concerned will be identified and the drone will be seized," he added. Harichandan said to ensure that such an incident does not happen in the future,

Drone falls close to CM in Jharsuguda

n a major security lapse, a drone deployed by the administration to ake photographs of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi accidentally crashed on the ground close to him during his visit to Jharsuguda, an official said Sunday. The incident which occurred January 2 came to light during the day after a video clip of the incident was circulated on social media platforms. "As per preliminary investigation, the drone was deployed by the district administration to take photographs and record video of the chief minister and other dignitaries during glitches, it accidentally fell near to he CM," said the police officer of Jharsuguda district.

the government is planning to deploy police personnel round the clock at the four watchtowers around the temple complex.

It was suspected that some vlogger may have flown the drone above the temple. However, ill intention behind it cannot be ruled out, he said.

3 die in ICG chopper crash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Porbandar (Gujarat), Jan 5: Three crew members were killed after a helicopter of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) crashed and caught fire at an airport on the outskirts of Gujarat's Porbandar city, police said.

The incident took place at 12.10pm when the ICG's Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH), which was returning from a routine sortie, crashed while trying to land on the runway of the Coast Guard airport, Porbandar Superintendent of Police Bhagi-



rathsinh Jadeja said. The chopper crashed near

the runway and caught fire.

The blaze was later brought under control with the help of a fire tender, he said.

The three crew members onboard were brought out of the chopper and rushed to a hospital in Porbandar in a severely burnt condition, he said.

While two of them were declared brought dead, one was alive when brought to the hospital and died later, he said.

The incident comes four months after the ICG's ALH MK-III helicopter crashed into the Arabian Sea off Porbandar September 2 last year, killing three crew members.

flags would still be lowered to half-staff in honour of the late President Jimmy Carter during Trump's January 20 inauguration.

Trump miffed as US flags

will be half-staff Jan 20

Washington, Jan 5: Presi-

dent-elect Donald Trump has

complained that American

AGENCIES

flags lowered to half-staff for 30 days from the day of Carter's death December 29, as is custom when a US president dies. Trump, who has announced

President Joe Biden ordered

plans to attend Carter's memorial service in Washington January 9, took issue in a Truth Social post Friday with the flags remaining in the mourning position during his swearing-in ceremony.

"The Democrats are all 'giddy' about our magnificent American Flag potentially being at 'half mast' during my Inauguration," Trump said. employing a term frequently used for the lowered position

when the flag is on a ship. "They think it's so great, and are so happy about it because, in actuality, they don't love our Country, they only think about

themselves," Trump said. Trump said that due to Carter's death last week "the American flag would for the first time ever during an Inauguration of a fu ture President, be at half mast" "Nobody wants to see this, and no

American can be happy about it

Let's see how it plays out," he said. White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said the White House had no plans to reconsider the decision.

Iconic 'Breaking Bad' house up for sale at \$4 million

Albuquerque (New Mexico), Jan 5: The house made famous by the 'Breaking Bad' TV series is up for sale, and the owners of the otherwise unassuming home in one of Albuquerque's older neighbourhoods are hoping the property's role in the long-running series will help

them fetch a pretty penny. Centred on mythical methamphetamine cookers Walter White and Jesse Pinkman, the series wrapped up more than a decade ago, but its legacy continues to draw looky-loos to the home and other associated filming spots around town.

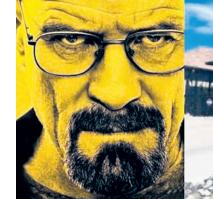
New Mexico's governor also recently tapped the Walter White character, played by Bryan Cranston, to star in a campaign against littering in

While 'Breaking Bad' certainly has left its mark on New Mexico and this quiet block in Albuquerque, the listing is sure to reignite interest.

Time to move on

Fans often flock to the home. sometimes with hundreds of cars driving by in a single day, Joanne Quintana told Albuquerque television station KOB-TV

Quintana said her parents purchased the home in the 1970s and that she and her siblings grew up there. As her parents got older and the show's popularity skyrocketed, it became harder to protect them. The family was forced to put up a metal fence and install securi-



ty cameras to keep fans at bay. Now that her parents are gone, it's time to sell.

"This was our family home from 1973, almost 52 years," she told the station. "So we're go-

Hollywood magic

to fight anymore.'

It was 2006 when a film scout first approached Quintana's mother about shooting a pilot episode at the home. Within months, the equipment was set up and filming began.

ing to walk away with just our

memories. It's time to move on.

We're done. There's no reason

The family got to meet Cranston and the other stars and watched from behind the scenes as crew members worked their magic. Quintana's mother was always sure to have cookies for the cast and crew.

The inside of the home was used to prep, while interior scenes were shot in a studio.

For the famous pizza scene. Quintana remembers boxes of pizza lining the sidewalk. Plenty of unsliced cheese and pepperoni props were at the ready in case Cranston didn't nail it first try. He did — landing the pizza face-up on the roof after his character's wife shut the door in his face.

The homeowners had a hard time keeping fans from attempting their own pizza tosses or trying to sneak dips in the iconic backyard pool

Some online real estate calculators put the estimated market value of the four-bedroom ranch-style home at just over \$340,000. But with the star power of 'Breaking Bad' behind it, the global luxury realty service that is listing the home for Quintana and her family has it priced at just under \$4 million.

CM launches scheme

to reduce dropouts

Bhubaneswar: CM Mohan

Charan Majhi launched

'Shahid Madho Singh

Haath Kharcha Yojana'

here, Sunday. The CM

launched the scheme

Adivasi Mela 2025 at Idco

Under the initiative, which

dropout rate, ST students of Class IX and XI in

Exhibition Ground here.

while inaugurating

aims at reducing the

government and aided

schools will get one-time financial assistance of

₹5,000. As many as 1.6 lakh

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: The

state government has decided

to construct 2,400km-long new

field channels and concretise

1,860km-long old dilapidated

channels by 2028-29 in order to

bring 1,42,000 hectares of crop-

land under irrigation, Chief

Minister Mohan Charan Majhi

Speaking during the conclud-

ing day of 'State-level Pani Pan-

chayat Fortnight' celebration

at Baramunda Ground here,

Majhi said, "Today, Odisha

can feed 140 crore people and

export food grains to foreign

countries, thanks to the re-

search of scientists and hard

work of farmers. For this, wa-

ter supply to agricultural land

is very necessary. Therefore,

The Chief Minister directed

officials to conduct Pani Pan-

chayat elections and audits

of papers as per the rules of

panchayats. He also suggested

said, Sunday

ST students received the

Bhubaneswar, Sunday

18th PBD CONVENTION

DIASPORA'S FEATS TO BE KEY FOCUS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: The Indian diaspora's achievements and contributions across the world and ways to further deepen their engagement with India are set to be the key focus at the three-day Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention to be held in Bhubaneswar from January 8.

India's economic growth, policy reforms and developmental trajectory in several key sectors are also likely to be showcased to woo overseas Indian investors at the convention.

A large number of overseas Indians, including top businessmen, entrepreneurs and economists, from over 50 countries are expected to participate in the 18th PBD convention.

The PBD is celebrated January 9 to mark Mahatma Gandhi's return to India on that day in 1915. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will formally inaugurate the high-profile event January 9. It will feature a virtual address by chief guest Christine Carla Kangaloo, President of Trinidad and Tobago, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

The theme of the convention is 'Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat'.

President Droupadi Murmu will deliver the valedictory address January 10. She will confer the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards 2025 on select members of the Indian diaspora to recognise their achievements.

India's economic growth,

AFFIDAVIT

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No.- A/25, 04.01.2025,

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of Ramayana through a curated juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary art forms, the MEA said Sunday The second exhibition will

be on the diaspora's contribution to technology and Viksit Bharat. It will acknowledge the contributions of the Indian diaspora to the development of technology in the world.

ing one titled 'Vishwaroop

Ram - The Universal Legacy of Ramayana'. This exhibition

would present the timeless epic

Another exhibition would be on the spread and evolution of the Indian diaspora in the world. It will showcase rare documents of people who migrated from Mandvi in Gujarat

PM to arrive Jan 8, Prez Murmu Jan 9

Bhubaneswar: Prime Minis ter Narendra Modi and President Droupadi Murmu are scheduled to arrive here January 8 and January 9, respectively, to attend the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, being held in Odisha for the first time.

Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja Saturday reviewed the state's preparedness for the event and issued directions to all departments concerned to ensure flawless arrangements for dig-

According to the official schedule, "The PM will reach Bhubaneswar airport by a special IAF aircraft at 8pm January 8 from Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. He will spend the night at Raj

policy reforms and the country's developmental trajectory in several key sectors will be showcased at the convention with an aim to strengthen the country's connect with its diaspora, people familiar with the preparation for the event said.

The country will also be showcased as an attractive investment destination, they said.

This year, the PBD convention is being organised by the MEA in partnership with the Odisha government.

Prime Minister Modi will also inaugurate four exhibitions at the PBD convention, includ-

It added, "PM Modi will attend the event's inaugural meet at 10am January 9 at Janata Maidan here. He is scheduled to leave the city around 11:55am.

President Murmu's flight is scheduled to arrive around 4:35pm, the statement said.

"President Murmu is scheduled to reach the event's convention venue at 11:40am Fri day. She will meet Trinidad and Tobago President Christine Carla Kangaloo at the venue," the statement added.

She will also confer the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman during the valedictory session of the event before returning to New Delhi at 5:25pm, according to the o fficial programme.

to Muscat in Oman.

The PBD convention will have five thematic plenary sessions including one on 'Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers: Stories of Migrant Skills' and another titled 'Beyond Borders: Diaspora Youth Leadership in a Globalised World'.

'Green Connections: Diaspora's Contributions to Sustainable Development'. Another will be 'Diaspora Divas: Celebrating Women's Leadership and In-

The MEA said the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will

instructions have been given to complete all irrigation projects on a war footing basis.

The third plenary will be

fluence - Nari Shakti'. also be held January 8 strengthening the panchayats

Over 500 women to learn parliamentary procedures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will Monday inaugurate "Panchayat Se Parliament 2.0" which seeks to give insight on Constitution and parliamentary procedures to over 500 women representatives from Panchayati Raj institutions from across the country.

Organised to commemorate 150th birth anniversary of tribal icon Birsa Munda, the programme will have workshop and sessions, a guided tour of the new Parliament House, Samvidhan Sadan, Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya and Rashtrapati Bhawan for the participants offering them a deeper understanding of India's legislative process and the functioning of democratic institutions.

The programme will bring together 502 elected women representatives from Scheduled Tribes from 22 states and UTs, ensuring a diverse and inclusive group, the Lok Sabha secretariat said Sunday.

It is aimed at empowering elected women representatives from Scheduled Tribes from Panchayati Raj institutions and to enhance their knowledge of constitutional provisions, parliamentary procedures, and governance to foster effective leadership.

and developing them as agricul tural marketing centres.

NOBLE GESTURE: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi being welcomed on the inaugural occasion of 'Adivasi Mela 2025' at Idco Exhibition Ground in

Govt to bring 1.42L-ha under irrigation: CM

"In a bid to bring 1,42,000 hectares of cropland under irrigation, a decision has been taken to construct 2.400kmlong new field channels and concretise 1,860km-long old dilapidated channels by 2028-29,' Majhi said.

"Our priority is to ensure adequate supply of water and maintain equity in the distribution of water to cropland,'

Stating that Pani Panchayats have a big role to play in this regard, he said currently, more than 39,000 Pani Panchayats are taking the lead in water management in the state.

The Chief Minister said more than ₹13, 223 crore has been provided in this year's Budget for the development of water resources in the state.

"The process for starting Bartang Irrigation Project in Navagarh district. Pipalpak Project in Ganjam district, Upper Lanth Irrigation Project in Bolangir district and Samakoi Barrage Project in Angul dis**The Chief Minister** said more than ₹13,223 crore has been provided in this year's Budget for the development of water

trict and 11,886 deep tube well projects have been expedited," He further said that to bring

resources in the state

about a paradigm shift in agriculture, the government has taken steps for extensive use of technology in the field of water management. The Indian Institute of Water

Management and Xavier University have been approached for the development of soil moisture measurement systems and skill development of Pani Panchayats, respectively.

He said both the Central and state governments are implementing many schemes for the welfare of farmers. "This year, ₹33,919 crore has been provided in the state Agriculture Budget for the development of agriculture," the Chief Minister said.

Declaring the unseasonal rains as a disaster, the state government has decided to provide more than ₹291 crore in assistance to the affected farmers. 6.66 lakh farmers will get this assistance, he said.

Speaking on the occasion Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo said, "The state government is with the farmers, and making ade quate arrangements for their growth. Arrangements are al so being made to provide market linkages for the farmers production.'

Development Commissioner Anu Garg said since many women are now taking the lead in Pani Panchayats and doing very good work, the focus of the government now is to include as many women as possible in Pani Panchayats.

a coffee table book 'Irrigation Partnership 3.0'. A short film on irrigation partnership was screened on the occasion.

The Chief Minister released

UDISE+ report: Over 2K schools powerless

The latest UDISE+ report paints a grim picture of Odisha's education sector, stating that over 600 girls' schools lack toilets while only 6% have functional

smart classrooms

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: Despite being a power-surplus state for Jahid. From now I shall the past four years, a total of be known as Md. Jahid 2.182 schools, including 1,672 government schools, in the state reeled under darkness in 2023-24, according to Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+) Survey report 2023-24 released by the Ministry of Education (MoE) last week. The report, however, suggests private schools in Dora (37), D/o S. Bipra the state fared better, with just 90 schools functioning without electricity.

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

The report has flagged serious concerns about the dismal state of infrastructure in schools across Odisha, pertaining to pre-primary till secondary level of education. It stated 611 girls' schools, including 308 government schools and 47 private schools, in the state were lacking toilets, marking a rise from 514 such schools in 2022-23. The situation is even worse

when it comes to male students' hygiene, as 1,159 boys' schools in the state were lacking toilets

on the school premises. Stressing further, UDISE+ report stated that students of 23,387 (38 per cent) schools in Odisha, including 20,257 government schools, consume water from unhygienic sources as there was no access to tap water facility.

The situation of virtual (online) education in state is also not encouraging as only 24.9 per cent (15,389) schools have personal computers (PCs) and desktops. The figure is far behind from the national average of 32.4 per cent in 2023-24. Only 16.1 per cent (7,843) government schools have access to desktops and PCs in 2023-24 while in case of private

schools, it stands at 67.7 per cent. Similarly, there also persists a gap when it comes to smart classrooms, as only 17,008 schools (27.6 per cent) in the state have access to functional smart classrooms.

Fishing communities pledge to curb bird poaching



POST NEWS NETWORK

Astaranga, Jan 5: National Bird Day was marked at the Devi river mouth in Astaranga, Puri district, with an awareness programme jointly organised by the Odisha Paryavaran Sanrakshan Abhiyan Trust, Govind Tripathy Smruti Parishad, and the All Odisha OSWAN Engineering Association, Puri branch. The event, held in Jhadal-

inga village, involved local fishing communities and emphasised bird conservation. Pintu Patra, OPSA's mangrove coordinator, educated over 20 fishing families on the region's avi-fauna diversity, urging them to report bird hunting in wetlands like Nagar, Patsundarpur, Talda, and Nuagada.

Gopal Behera of OSWAN highlighted birds' role in climate resilience and wetland preservation, advocating for community-led conservation efforts. The event concluded with an oath by fishing communities to curb bird hunting. Representatives from local blocks and trust members participated, underscoring collective efforts to protect biodiversity.

CONTACT OUR BOOKING

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CHILIKA
BIRD
FESTIVAL
6 - 12 January 2025



Shri Narendra Modi

Prime Minister

Shri Mohan Charan Majhi

Chief Minister, Odisha

Venue Convention Centre, Lokseva Bhawan

Key Highlights •

Inauguration on 6 January 2025

Guided Bird Watching Tours

Expert Talk & Workshops

Conservation Initiatives

Events

Bird Watching

Chilika & Mangalajodi 7-8 January 2025

Odisha Birder's Conclave

Barkul
11 January 2025

Bird Walk

Nandankanan 12 January 2025

Wildlife Documentary Screening

Regional Museum of Natural History 7 - 12 January 2025



State Wildlife Organization
Forest, Environment & Climate Change Department, Govt. of Odisha



Love is the keynote, Joy is the music, Knowledge is the performer, the Infinite All is the composer and audience.





The 'X' Factor

Ion Musk's takeover of social media platform Twitter at a cost of \$44bn in 2022 has yielded him rich political dividends. The world's richest man is today at his most powerful position having become a part of US President-elect Donald Trump's inner circle. He also is involved in running a string of companies that include Tesla, Space X, Starlink, The Boring Company, Neuralink and OpenAI.

Musk is South African born, of English and Dutch heritage. He emigrated to Canada and took Canadian citizenship before becoming a US citizen in 2002. As Trump has pointed out, 'Elon' is a natural born foreigner and so barred by the Constitution from becoming the actual US President. Therefore, for the next 4 years he will be as close to becoming the PoTUS as is possible.

Armed with the algorithms of his social media platform X on which he has over 210 million followers, Musk has now become a source of concern for progressive thinkers the world over, especially in Europe. From advocating for fresh elections in Britain to supporting Germany's Far-Right and criticising the European Commission, Musk is amplifying extremist ideologies in Europe, where numerous governments are already contending with the surge of populism and Far-Right movements. Each week, the platform appears to intensify a topic that dominates conservative discussions—and often mainstream conversations—resulting in tangible political consequences.

"(Keir) Starmer must go and he must face charges for his complicity in the worst mass crime in the history of Britain," the tech billionaire posted recently. He was alluding to the period when the British Prime Minister served as the chief state prosecutor in England and Wales, a time that overlapped with a child grooming scandal wherein predominantly Pakistan-origin men were the main culprits. He made 23 posts urging King Charles III to dissolve the British Parliament and call for fresh general election, all accompanied by memes and vitriolic remarks aimed at Starmer. Musk has also advocated support for the fringe anti-immigration party Reform UK, whose leader, Nigel Farage, he recently met. Additionally, he shared a message from former UK Prime Minister Liz Truss urging the cessation of state funding for the BBC. Musk, some allege, is spreading misinformation and disinformation targeting what he calls the "legacy media." He has even gone to the extent of calling 'X' the true media.

The Tesla CEO recently referred to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz as a "fool" following the collapse of the latter's coalition government in November. Not just that, in an opinion piece for a prominent German newspaper, Musk expressed his support for the Far-Right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. While Scholz stated that he was not bothered about Musk's personal criticisms, he expressed concern over the US billionaire's involvement in Germany's general election by endorsing the AfD.

Of late, Musk's actions have sparked speculation that he intends to provide financial support to conservative politicians across the world, following his status as America's leading political donor, having spent \$277 million on the US Presidential elections last year. Notably, his brand of politics has always attracted individuals with a Right tilt. Unsurprisingly, he appeals mostly to white conservatives across America and Europe as the algorithms of X boost racist posts and conspiracy theories targeting various groups - people of colour, immigrants, Jews, Moslems and most recently Indian-American Hindoos. Even in India, most Right-leaning users erupted in celebration the moment he took control of Twitter in a hostile takeover. This is exactly the reason why many reputed media outlets and journalist groups have quit the platform over the disinformation that it promotes. Among them are the British daily The Guardian, Sweden's Dagens Nyhater (DN), Spain's Vanguardia, American public radio NPR and the European Federation of Journalists.

Big Tech firms interfering in electoral politics of different countries is not new. Given the sheer number of followers platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram and YouTube have the world over, their algorithms are capable of setting the narrative and turning the tide against any political party. Facebook has been accused in the past of boosting content that promoted the ruling party in India. Already, democracy is on a decline in most parts of the world with the subversion of institutions such as the judiciary, the civil society and the Press. In such a scenario, the political manoeuvres of Big Tech platforms must be carefully scrutinized and observed how their algorithms are aiding in the erosion of democracy.

WISDOM CORNER

If you first fortify yourself with the true knowledge of the Universal Self, and then live in the midst of wealth and worldliness, surely they will in no way affect you.

If you plan on being anything less than you are capable of being, you will probably be unhappy all the days of your life.

Peace in the world starts with peace in oneself. If everyone

lives mindfully, everyone will be more healthy, feel more fulfilled in their daily lives and there will be more peace.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1838:** Samuel Morse presents the telegraph to the public Together with Alfred Vail, the inventor relayed the message "A patient waiter is no loser" over a distance of 2 miles (3 km).
- **1907:** Maria Montessori opens her first school. Montessori's revolutionary educational approach is practiced at about 30,000 schools today.
- **1912:** German scientist Alfred Wegener presents his theory of continental drift. His work laid the foundation for the theory of plate tectonics, which explains why continents move.
- 1941: US President Franklin D. Roosevelt outlined his Four Freedoms in his State of the Union message to Congress.

EATING THE PEANUTS

man visits his aunt in the Anursing home. It turns out that she is taking a nap, so he just sits down in a chair in her room, flips through a few magazines, and munches on some peanuts sitting in a bowl on the table. Eventually, the aunt wakes up,

and her nephew realizes he's



peanuts!" "That's okay, dearie," the aunt replied. "After I've sucked the chocolate off, I don't care for them anyway.'

THE GIG SLAVERY

n an economy struggling to regain momentum, a new threat loomsan exploited class of "slave" workers, lauded by NITI Aayog as gig workers. These low-paid labourers, the fastest-growing segment in India, are trapped in a precarious cycle -- raising their voice against exploitation means risking their livelihoods and pushing their families into starvation. Ironically, the country's think tank celebrates this shift to a gig economy, marked by shortterm contracts and freelance work over stable, permanent jobs. For workers, it brings relentless stress, unpredictable schedules, and a lack of basic social security. While companies benefit from a costfree, unregulated labour force, the human cost is staggering. Lessons from Bangladesh's collapse point to the perils of such an economic model, as rising anger among the jobless youth

contributed to its downfall. The term "gig" is a slang word for a job that lasts a specified period of time. Traditionally, the term was used by musicians to define a performance engagement. And who does not know the exploitation of musicians since ages the world over. NITI Aayog estimates that the gig workforce in India, contributing 1.5% of the GDP, would expand to 23.5 to 30 million workers by 2029-30, over 200% jump from 7.7 million in 2020-21. It throws open a system that is anti-worker and is ordained to thrive as it reduces liabilities of companies. The Aayog recognises that gig work is the worst form of jobs and still promotes it, knowing that it lacks paid sick leave, health and accident insurance, old age



These low-paid labourers, the fastestgrowing segment in India, are trapped in a precarious cycle -- raising their voice against exploitation means risking their livelihoods and pushing their families into starvation

support and pension as well as support to workers in a situation of irregularity of work.

The Aayog projects gig economy as a "free" (not exploitative) market system in which temporary positions are common and organisations hire independent workers for short-term commitments. The Aayog says it is marked by "erosion of traditional economic relationships, lack of job security, irregularity of wages and uncertain employment status for workers." Prior to it, the Aavog led the Labour Ministry to severely compromise with labour laws and replace 44 laws into four labour codes that only worsen workers' woes

E-commerce giants are the worst perpetrators leading the agony globally. As India rides this wave, the real challenge lies in striking a balance. As MNCs navigate new terrain, the future of work in India is being rewritten now - one gig or casualisation at a time by the corporate and the government remains a spectator.

As per the latest available

Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report, the estimated unemployment rate on usual status for youth of age 15-29 years was 12.9%, 12.4%, and 10% during 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23, respectively. The total unemployed in 2016 were 44.85 million or 4.48 crore, supposedly a little less than 48.26 million or 4.82 crore in 2014. The gig economy, according to official statistics, gives an income of around Rs 15,000 a month to a worker in most cases as e-commerce biggies have cut rates for per piece of delivery. Chaos prevails in the society with rising inflation to around 6 to 9% and GDP growth falling to 5.4%. Overall employment in agriculture has fallen and marginally risen in the construction sector.

On 9 July 2024, credit markets rating agency India Ratings said that 63 lakh informal sector enterprises shut down in the country, resulting in a loss of 1.6 crore jobs between 2015-16 and 2022-23. The report blamed the downturn on the shocks to India's economy

due to demonetisation, the introduction of the GST and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The IT sector is in a thaw and perhaps after Trump takes over there could be serious crunch for Indians as the US could shell out fewer projects. The UPA-I and II started a process of jobless growth. There is no uptick in manufacturing or purchasing power but more in IT sector are now losing jobs. Many with experience of a decade or $more\ are\ becoming\ gig\ workers$ in their early 40s. The PLFS report showed that between 2017-18 and 2022-23, there has been a decline in the share of Indians employed in salaried jobs, and a corresponding rise in self-employment, that as per ILO now includes "unpaid helpers in household enterprises.

There is no robust legislation to address concerns about unfair trade practices and data privacy. The Indian Code on Social Security, 2020 recognises gig workers as a separate category, but it has been criticised for lacking legal mandates, universal coverage, and accountability mechanisms. The US has the highest global market for gig workers, but India, Indonesia, Australia, and Brazil are rapidly growing strong. International experts feel illegal immigrants to the US fall into a trap of forced labour that gives a boom to the US economy. The agricultural industry is one of the most troubling industries, where forced labour is rampant in the US. It is assumed that gig is being deliberately promoted for cheap labour. India must move the ILO and other fora for strong global job codes for fair wages in the new employment scenario.

SUSTAINABILITY

Shivaji Sarkar

IRONICALLY,

THINK TANK

CELEBRATES

MARKED BY

SHORT-TERM

AND FREELANCE

CONTRACTS

WORK OVER

PERMANENT

STABLE.

JOBS

THE COUNTRY'S

THIS SHIFT TO A

GIG ECONOMY,

Ban solar geoengineering



Disha Ravi & Heleen Bruggink

IT IS FAR MORE LIKELY THAT SOLAR GEOENGINEERING WOULD PROVIDE AN EXCUSE FOR THE WORLD'S **MAJOR EMITTERS NOT TO END THEIR FOSSIL-FUEL ADDICTION**

TO THE EDITOR

are most welcome to contribute letters

requested to send their contact

address/email ID. They may also send in

their valuable comments, opinion and

suggestions, preferably by email, to:

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(100 words), articles and

words). Contributors are

numbers and full postal

columns (between 600-1000

world where climate change is apparent everywhere. We see it in our stormy skies and in the floodwaters inundating our communities. We feel it in our throats and lungs when we inhale polluted air, and on our skin as we walk down the street during heat waves. World leaders would convene every year to make decisions and deals, compromises and commitments, always falling far short of delivering what was needed to mitigate and, increasingly, to adapt to climate change. Last year's COP29 was no exception.

All this inertia has spurred some to try to find a way around the hard work of ending harmful greenhouse-gas emissions, protecting critical ecosystems, and rethinking economic growth and development. One proposed "solution," being pushed by a small but vocal minority in the Global North, is solar geoengineering, which involves modifying Earth's atmosphere to create a reflective barrier against the Sun's radiation. For today's youth and future generations, however, such interventions threaten to be as catastrophic as climate change

Solar geoengineering can take many forms, including the release of huge amounts

of sulfur particles into the stratosphere to create a reflective barrier against sunlight (stratospheric aerosol injection) and the injection of salt spray into shallow marine clouds (marine cloud brightening). But it never addresses the root causes of the climate crisis, and it involves modifying our planet's atmosphere in ways that cannot be adequately tested at scale, with effects that will last decades or longer.

Geoengineering research has always been controversial for precisely these reasons. Countless scientists and experts have warned that the approach could cause far-reaching unintended consequences. Studies show, for example, that it could disrupt climate and weather patterns, leading to severe droughts, hurricanes, and other extreme weather. These risks are unpredictable, and their effects would be unequally distributed.

In fact, solar geoengineering would amplify existing global power imbalances, not least because decisions about its deployment would be made primarily by rich countries in the Global North – the same countries that created the climate crisis. These countries nurtured a deadly phenomenon, the burden of which is falling disproportionately on

vulnerable communities, and now they propose a highly risky strategy that, even in the best-case scenario, would not solve the problem.

None of these objections has prevented millions of dollars from being funneled - largely by tech and finance billionaires - into solar geoengineering initiatives. Proponents suggest that such initiatives are a temporary fix, a way to buy more time for mitigation and adaptation. To us, such statements sound like dangerous castles in the air - appealing but illusory.

It is far more likely that so-

lar geoengineering would provide an excuse for the world's major emitters not to end their fossil-fuel addiction. This compounds the threat of a "termination shock": if solar-geoengineering efforts were abruptly halted, rapid warming would ensue. Future generations - including today's young people would thus have to confront dangerous spikes in temperature and far more acute crises than those we face now.

If nothing else, we will be the ones footing the bill for the economic and societal transformation that climate change demands – a transformation that is not receiving adequate investment today. Advocates of solar geoengineering like to

frame it as a "cheap" solution, but diverting resources from initiatives that we know work - and do not risk the health of our planet – cannot possibly be considered sound financial management. Instead, it amounts to offloading the hard work of addressing the carbon debt onto our generation and those that follow us. That is why we advocate a full ban on solar geoengineering. And we are not alone. More than 2,000 civil-society organisations, including Fridays For Future, and over 540 academics have called for an International Non-Use Agreement on Solar Geoengineering. Countries on the front lines of the climate crisis, such as Vanuatu and others, have similarly opposed the use of such technologies.

The last thing young people need is to be left shouldering the responsibility of yet another crisis we did not create. But that is precisely what solar geoengineering would most likely mean. Pursuing it amounts to a profound generational betrayal.

Disha Ravi is Co-Founder of Fridays For Future India. Heleen Bruggink is Co-Founder of Mind Our Future: Critical Youth on Solar Geoengineering. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Protect journalists

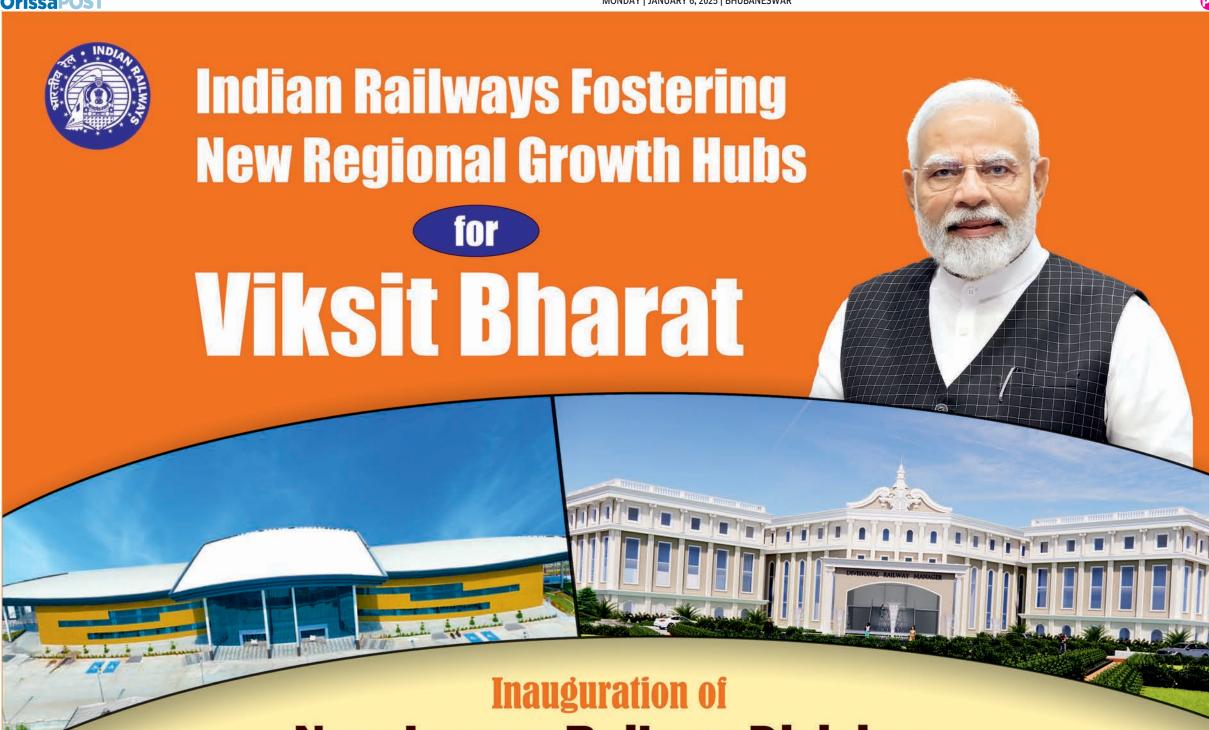
Sir, It is sad that the new year began on a tragic note for India's media fraternity, as a young journalist Mukesh Chandrakar was found murdered, with his body seen lying in a septic tank in Bijapur. The journalist was allegedly killed for his ground reporting of the Maoist conflict in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region. It was reported that Mukesh, a seasoned journalist and the creator of the popular YouTube channel Bastar Junction, garnered millions of views for his investigative reports. The global toll of journalist fatalities reached 179 in 2024, spanning 25 countries. India reported four journalist killings last year, all from central India, a region fraught with challenges for the Press. Mukesh's untimely death has once again spotlighted the perils faced by journalists in conflict zones and the urgent need for stronger protections for media professionals in India. But every attack on the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression only adds to the strength of the Fourth estate in our country

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Virus threat

Sir, An alarming rise in the number of patients infected due to a new respiratory virus HMPV in China has once again alerted the world bringing back horrendous reminiscences of the COVID-19 pandemic which emerged in China five years ago during a winter and spread around the world taking thousands of lives. Symptoms of HMPV often mirror those of common cold and flu, including cough, high fever and breathing difficulty. However, severe cases can escalate into life-threatening conditions such as pneumonia. Patients with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases or weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable to complications. Health officials have stated that as of now there are no specific vaccines or antiviral treatments for HMPV and focus is on prevention to curb the virus' spread. The public have been recommended to wear masks in crowded spaces, practice social distancing, and wash hands frequently as effective preventive measures. They have emphasised the importance of early detection and supportive care in managing the virus

M Pradyu, KANNUR



New Jammu Railway Division of Northern Railway

Charlapalli New Terminal Station in the twin cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad

Foundation stone laying for



Rayagada Rail Division Building in Odisha



Narendra Modi

Prime Minister

(Through Video Conferencing)

On January 6, 2025 | Time 11:00 AM

プラシッシッシッシッシ HIGHLIGHTS

Jammu Railway Division

- Links major cities and towns across India to the Jammu & Kashmir region, fulfilling the longpending demand of its people.
- Acts as a game-changer by promoting trade, tourism and economic opportunities in the region.
- Seamlessly connects regions of Jammu & Kashmir viz. Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla and Leh & Ladakh to major destinations across India strengthening unity and development.

Rayagda Divisional Office Building

- Features a Divisional Control Office, eco-friendly staff residences and modern amenities, enhancing railway operations in Koraput, Rayagada and Kalahandi.
- Streamlines railway management and boosts operational efficiency across Odisha.
- Strengthens connectivity, accelerates development and fosters economic progress in tribal belt of South Odisha for Viksit Bharat.

Charlapalli New Railway Terminal in Telangana

- A world-class, eco-friendly terminal that offers top-tier facilities at Charlapalli in the Twin Cities.
- Relieves pressure on existing terminals in Secunderabad, Hyderabad and Kacheguda.
- Facilitates the operation of new trains and enhances connectivity for the people of Telangana and nearby regions.

In the august presence of

Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati

Governor, Odisha

Mohan Charan Majhi

Chief Minister, Odisha

Ashwini Vaishnaw

Union Minister of Railways, Information & Broadcasting and Electronics & Information Technology

V. Somanna

Union Minister of State for Railways and Jal Shakti

Ravneet Singh

Union Minister of State for Railways and Food **Processing Industries**

Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka Balabhadara Majhi Anita Subhadarshini Pradeep Panigrahi Sukanta Panigrahi

Member of Parliament

Member of Parliament

Member of Parliament

Member of Parliament

Member of Parliament

Member of Parliament

Watch the live programme on

'DHARITRI' JOINS EFFORTS TO CONSERVE HOUSE SPARROWS

Protecting nature a shared responsibility: Satpathy

Berhampur, Jan 5: Protecting environment is everybody's responsibility, said Dharitri and OrissaPOST Editor Tathagata Satpathy, while addressing a programme on conservation of house sparrows held at Banthapalli village under Kukudakhandi block of Ganjam district on the occasion of National Bird Day Sunday.

Satpathy joined the programme as the Chief Guest while the publications' Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy attended it as the Guest of Honour. Wildlife expert Akash Ranjan Rath from Jungle Lore Foundation in Puri attended the event as the chief speaker. Similarly, Banthapalli sarpanch Kamini Nayak and Anchalik Vikash Parishad president Sagar Kumar Patra also attended the programme.

The Dharitri Editor emphasised the shared responsibility of all in protecting the environment. Drawing an analogy to elephants, he ex-

plained how elephants feed on the upper branches of trees, allowing smaller plants below to thrive—a natural cycle showcasing the interconnectedness

He said, "We may think of ourselves as superior, but to nature, we are merely one among many creatures. Just like house sparrows, we, too, play a role in the environment. However, while animals contribute positively, humans often harm nature. We must recognise our smaller role in this vast ecosystem and remain vigilant in protecting the environment.'

Guest of Honour Adyasha Satpathy highlighted the longstanding collaboration between Dharitri and Anchalik Vikash Parishad in promoting environment and wildlife protection initiatives. She noted the importance of involving students, women, and youth in awareness campaigns, emphasising their vital role in shaping a sustainable future.

Dharitri has been actively working towards environment



conservation over the years. The organisation has focused on giving priority to those engaged in such efforts, particularly at the grassroots level and recognising the critical roles of trees, animals, and birds in maintaining ecological balance. Dharitri has always remained with the organisations working at grassroots level on environ-

ment protection, she said. Anchalik Vikash Parishad's

efforts to protect house sparrows have been remarkably successful. This initiative has gone beyond a single village, inspiring interest among children and the youth. Stating that such programmes are critical to environment protection at the grassroots level, she urged the Parishad to continue such initiatives.

Chief speaker Rath emphasised the importance of environment conservation and highlighted Ganjam district's keen interest in it. He noted that Ganjam is rich in biodiversity, but its protection is essential. Citing an example, he said India is home to 1,256 bird species, of which 539 are found in Odisha. Additionally, 236 migratory bird species visit Odisha annually.

The current state of these birds reflects the environmental degradation caused by human activities. He warned that if environment remains unprotected, it will negatively impact everything.

Parishad president Sagar Kumar Patra spoke about the origins of the sparrow conservation campaign, which began at a local get-together. Concerned over the declining visibility of house sparrows the community initiated this programme. Now, efforts to protect sparrows have spread to several villages, with wooden nest boxes being installed for their safety.

He said that 'Dharitri' has

been instrumental in the conservation campaign, and its involvement has brought pride to the community. Patra assured that the programme would continue with Dharitri's support in the future.

Chief Guest Satpathy gave away prizes to individuals working towards environmental conservation, including Durga Madhab Panigrahi, Shivaram Panigrahi of Sabuj Bahini, sand artist Satya Narayan Maharana, snake catcher Ganaists B. Arabind Deshibehara, Banamali Pradhan, Ravindra Sahani, and Birendra Goud.

The Chief Executive award ed outstanding student participants in various competitions, including Sheetal Kumar Sahu, Beauty Nayak, Gudli Bhuyan, Jyoti Pradhan, Aditya Bisoi, Aryan Goud, Subhasmita Sahani, Ashis Kumar Bhuyan, Khushi Pradhan, Smruti Sanghamitra Jena, and Chandra

Secretary Bijendra Majhi delivered a vote of thanks.

Probe starts into Panikoili robbery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jajpur, Jan 5: The Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha Crime Branch Sunday began investigating the day-light robbery of a jewellery shop at Panikoili in Jajpur district, in which two persons were shot dead by a gang of robbers, an officer said.

The STF members visited the spot where the firing took place Saturday. They were accompa nied by a scientific team which thoroughly examined the jewellery shop and the site during the day, a police officer said.

Security has been tightened in and around Panikoili since the incident. Armed police personnel have been deployed at the jewellery shop, the place from where the cash loot at tempt was made and the entry and exit points of Panikoil

Police suspect that the criminals were from outside the state as they were speaking in Hindi

"We have seized a motorcy cle used in the crime besides a handgun and bullets near the crime spot. We are verifying the registered number of the bike and other details of it to get a lead," Jajpur Superintendent of Police Yashpratap

Notably, five reached the shop on two bikes posing as customers Saturday afternoon and fired at one of the employees who was riding his motorcycle to go to a bank to deposit the store's cash.

Hearing the injured man's scream, locals rushed to the spot. Anticipating trouble, the armed men fired on them, kill ing one and injuring another. The employee died later Saturday while the injured person was undergoing treatment in a hospital in Bhubaneswar.

Locals had also caught two of the four miscreants and beat them up. They were hos pitalised.



B'deshi immigrants: A ticking bomb

Pattamundai, Jan 5: Amid ongoing political instability and violence in Bangladesh, especially with the leadership of Muhammad Yunus taking steps against India while strengthening ties with Pakistan, there is a growing concern back in Odisha that Bangladeshi immigrants are fueling unrest in the coastal areas of the state. According to reports, Ban-

gladeshi immigrants have occupied several areas under Rajnagar and Mahakalapara blocks - covering 89 km up to These immigrants are using

boats and other means to cross the maritime borders and settle in coastal pockets of Odisha. According to government reports, 1,649 Bangladeshi immigrants were residing in Mahakalapara and Rainagar areas by 2009. However, unofficial figures are way above which suggest that there were around 80,000 Bengali-speaking people residing in the district at that time. And, now their number has crossed 2 lakh.

The huge influx of Bangla-

deshis has also taken a toll on the state's greenery as they have cleared about 12.000 hectares of forest land for settlement.

In 2000, a fake radio station transmitting information to Bangladesh was found in Rainagar block's Talachua panchayat. On being informed, then district collector had sealed the station immediately.

Similarly, a few Bangladeshi nationals had trampled the Indian tricolour and hoisted a Bangladeshi flag in Kanakanagar village in 2002, triggering a national outcry. Then Kendrapara SP Dayal Gangwar had arrested the culprits. Several valuable stolen items were also recovered from 15 Bangladeshi nationals.

During that time, Bangladeshi immigrants in Odisha were provided with voter cards and government benefits, facilitating their stay here.

Now, with their increased numbers, these immigrants live under the protection of political influence and are availing various government facilities, including those under food security schemes that allow them to receive free rice.

Locals have raised concern that these immigrants will continue to grow in number, especially as they have access to a variety of communication technologies such as VHF, UHF, radio waves, electronic

waves to send information back to Bangladesh.

Insofar as action is concerned, it is few and far between as the three coastal police stations in the district are reeling under staff crunch. As a result the immigrants engage in criminal activities and give the cops slip every time. Local residents apprehend that unless stringent action is taken against the illegal immigrants, the situation will lead to further unrest while illegal occupation of both forest and government lands will continue unabated.

In 2014, a committee was formed by the district administration to monitor the increasing number of immigrants. The committee instructed all district officials to report on the situation. However, political pressure, according to sources, played a spoilsport. Meanwhile, locals are facing a tough task due to increasing number of Bangladeshi immigrants while crimes, including theft and kidnapping, are rising in the coastal areas. Locals have demanded immediate resolution to the immigrant issue.

Woman succumbs to burns in Patana

POST NEWS NETWORK

Patana, Jan 5: A woman succumbed to the burn injuries she had sustained while preparing a torch to drive

away elephants at Jhatipada Sahi in Guludipasi village under this block in Keonjhar district, Friday night. deceased

The was identified as Jhuli Barik, 36, wife of Sankhali

According to sources, a tusker had strayed into the backyard of one Arjun Barik and destroyed his vegetable crops Friday night. Locals apprehended that the elephant might strike back anytime.

Panicked, Sankhali, his wife and four other villagers made a bonfire on the concrete road near his backyard and started preparations to drive away the animal, if it strays into the village. All of them started preparing the torch to drive away the tusker, which got separated from a herd. Jhuli was pouring burnt

engine oil on the torch when her saree caught fire. Soon, the flames engulfed her entire body. Her husband and others rushed her to

Patana CHC and later to the district headquarters hospital in Keonjhar. The doctors at the

DHH, however, advised them to shift Jhuli, who sustained 100 per cent burns, to SCB Medical College and Hospital

in Cuttack. She was being shifted to Cuttack but had to be rushed back to Anandapur Sub-divisional Hospital after her health condition further deteriorated. However, doctors at Ananandapur hospital pronounced her dead on arrival in the wee hours of Saturday.

Dr Niranian Sahu of Patana CHC said, "She had sustained 100 per cent burns." Ghashipura police registered a case and handed over the body to her family members for cremation after a post-mortem.

Science workshop held at OAV ₹105 crore for development projects in Steel City PABITRANAGAR: A block-level

science experimentation workshop was held at Jharaberani Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya (OAV) under Kaniha block in Angul district Sunday. The programme held under the auspices of Indian Association of Physics Teachers (IAPT) initiative, Anveshika aimed to



bridge the scientific understanding gap between rural and urban regions through innovative educational practices. Rajashree Mahapatra, state coordinator for Anyeshika, demonstrated the principles of motion, energy, thermodynamics, electricity, magnetism, and light through innovative experiments. She emphasised the importance of practical learning in understanding core scientific concepts. Shantanu Pradhan, senior system architect at Tektronix, highlighted the necessity of reducing disparities in science education between rural and urban areas. He urged scientists to extend their efforts to rural settings by creating an environment conducive to experimentation and scientific inquiry. Gauri Shankar Sahu, a professor at the Central University in Himachal Pradesh, stressed the importance of fostering scientific temper among students. He underlined the critical role of workshops like this in creating a mindset geared towards inquiry and discovery. Kaniha BDO Debadatta Pradhan spoke about the significance of fostering curiosity through questions, underscoring the impact of an inquiry-driven educational approach. BEO Narottam Pradhan delivered the welcome address, while principal Sumanta Nayak, the principal of the hosting school, gave away the vote of thanks.

Rourkela, Jan 5: The three key public institutions -Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC), Rourkela Smart City Limited, and Rourkela Development Authority (RDA)-are going to execute several development projects worth around ₹105 crore in and around the Steel City. This was revealed by Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Rourkela, Ashutosh Kulkarni, who heads all the three institutions as well as the Rourkela administrative district.

Kulkarni shared that during July and August, he and his team addressed over 500 public grievances through various meetings held across the city. The primary concerns raised

by residents revolved around drainage, streetlights, roads, and drinking water. He claimed that most of these issues have been resolved.

"This year, the RMC plans to invest over ₹105 crore in more than 500 projects, with special emphasis on new wards in Fertiliser Township, Jagda, and Jhartarang. Additionally, improvement in drainage, streetlights, and roads in Bhanda Tola, Tanty Tola, Buru Tola, Singh Tola, Nadi Tola, Balijori, and JK Nagar are also being prioritised," Kulkarni said.

Of the 52 primary and upper primary schools under RMC, 10 schools will undergo modernisation. New buildings will be constructed in seven schools after demolishing the old ones.



'We have allocated ₹7 crore for this initiative," Kulkarni added.

On housing for economically weaker sections (EWS), the ADM said, "500 flats are being constructed for slum dwellers from Mantola, BPUT Basti, and

other areas in Chhend. The relocation process has begun, and we aim to complete it by end of February." Furthermore, he stated, "The RMC's planning and enforcement team has issued notices to 60 illegal buildings and stern action will be taken against the offenders."

About road development projects, "A road is being constructed from TCI to IDCO Gate at a cost of ₹4 crore. Additionally, the sewerage systems in Jagda, Sakti Nagar, Jhirpani, and Koel Nagar are under active consideration, and updates will follow soon.'

A new market complex with provisions for 400 vendors will be built to serve TISCO Hill, Kalinga Vihar, and Pradhan Palli. "The Balughat Wholesale

Market project, which has been long pending, will also commence soon. NAPCONS will conduct a survey for this project shortly," Kulkarni added.

He further mentioned that NSPCL would set up a post-mor tem centre, and work on the COD waste processing plant and animal cremation facility would begin soon, with tendering processes already under way. "The waste disposal area near BPUT will also be cleared shortly," he said.

Modernisation of Rourkela Bus Stand will begin soon "Our target is to complete the ICCC surveillance system, tribal museum, a large recreational park, and the plane tarium within the next three months," Kulkarni concluded

POLITICKLE by MANJUL









RSP logs best ever performance in key areas The steel plant produced 44,48,000 tonnes of Hot

Metal, 41,07,000 tonnes of crude steel and 41,95,000 tonnes of saleable steel in 2024 to register its

best calendar year performance

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5: Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP), a flagship

POST NEWS NETWORK

unit of the Great-Place-To-Work certified Maharatna Company SAIL, concluded the year 2024 with a string of remarkable achievements, demonstrating its best-ever performance in key production areas for any

calendar year. The steel plant produced



44,48,000 tonnes of Hot Metal, 41,07,000 tonnes of crude steel and 41,95,000 tonnes of saleable steel in 2024 to register its best calendar year performance.

The saleable steel production witnessed a substantial growth of 4.3 per cent over the previous calendar year

The state-of-the-art Hot Strip

Mill-2 contributed to the rise by producing 25,22,000 tonnes of HR Coils with an impressive growth 9.5 per cent over the previous calendar year.

Similarly the New Plate Mill produced 9,66,000 tonnes and Plate Mill produced 4,82,000 tonnes of plates to register growth of 9.5 per cent and 8.5 per cent growths over last year.

The steel plant also banked on its strategic decisions to shut down uneconomic units to register remarkable improvements in the techno-eco nomics parameters. Shop productivity with two opera tional Blast Furnaces was all time best of 2.488 tonnes /cubic metre/day in August 2024 while the coke rate stood at 378 Kg per tonne of Hot Metal in the same month. The recent commissioning

of the Treatment System 1 under the Zero Liquid Discharge Project has helped in achieving the best specific water consumption rate of 2.82 cubic metre per tonne of crude steel (m3/ TCS) in De cember, 2024 improving upon its earlier best performance of 2.83 m3/TCS achieved in Sep tember, 2024, RSP sources said.

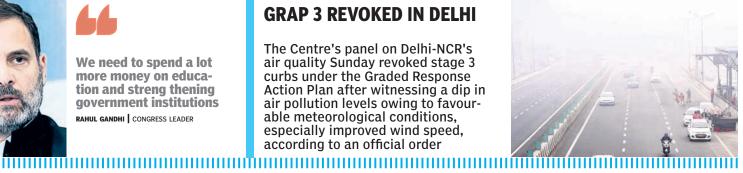
national



We need to spend a lot more money on education and streng thening government institutions RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

GRAP 3 REVOKED IN DELHI

The Centre's panel on Delhi-NCR's air quality Sunday revoked stage 3 curbs under the Graded Response Action Plan after witnessing a dip in air pollution levels owing to favourable meteorological conditions, especially improved wind speed, according to an official order



said that in but as some have said that there is no empirical data, has been formed headed by (Justice) Nagmohan Das. We are committed to providing internal reservation SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

The state government has already filled 55,143 posts in various government departments in the first year of assuming power, and it is unprecedented in the country. Telangana has become a model for the nation A REVANTH REDDY | TELANGANA CM











turned aggressive, he moved Sukhoi squadrons and BrahMos missiles closer to border, raised 2 new

army divisions, and the first ever mountain strike corps. All these together sent the right message to the neighbour.

@rprasannan

SHORT **TAKES**

4 killed as vehicle falls into river

Jammu: Four persons were killed after a vehicle carrying six people skidded off the road and fell into a river in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir Sunday, police said. Two persons, including the driver, are missing and a rescue operation is underway. they said. The accident took place at Sanvas in the Paddar area, when the vehicle, a Camper, skidded off the road and rolled 300-foot down into river Machail, a police official said. Police launched a rescue operation and recovered the

Man found dead inside parked car

four bodies, he said.

Kochi: A 65-year-old man was found dead inside a car parked in front of a hotel here, police said Sunday. The deceased, identified as Joshi V K, was a native of Aluva near Kochi. A professional cab driver, Joshi arrived at the hotel with a quest on Saturday night, His death is suspected to have occurred later that night after he returned to the vehicle, parked at the hotel, after dropping the guest. A police officer stated that Joshi likely suffered a heart attack or another physical ailment and collapsed inside

Married man,

the vehicle suddenly.

lover end life

Barabanki (UP): A 25-yearold married man and his purported lover hanged themselves in separate incidents in the Asandra police station area here, police said Sunday. According to the SHO of Asandra police station, GP Singh, Manish and Nidhi (22), both of whom were from the same village, had been in love for about four years and their families were aware of the relationship.

Tighter anti-spam norms: TRAI pilot soon 4 Naxalites, cop killed in encounter in Ch'garh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: TRAI will start, this month, a pilot to onboard paper-based and past permissions given by customers for receiving commercial communications onto its digital distributed ledger technology (DLT) platform, a process that in the long-run would include scrubbing and verifying their current validity and offering opt-outs to those keen on it, Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti said, adding that tighter regulations on curbing spam as well as new consultation examining an authorisation framework for telemarketers can also be

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has also ruled out any rethink on its latest regulation that mandates service providers to offer separate special tariff vouchers (STV) for voice calls and SMS

Lahoti told PTI in an interview that while consumers can be encouraged to use data, they cannot be "compelled" to do so.

TRAI's focus is to protect not only the interest of the industry, but also the interest of the consumer, who must have the option to pay only for services they need, he said. The regulator is also all set to initiate a massive rehaul of its IT system,



rationalisation and reduction in multiple instances of filings by telecom companies and other industry stakeholders. Deloitte which has been roped in as a consultant is on the verge of submitting its report on revamp of its IT systems. The regulator will thereafter ap-

New Delhi, Jan 5: Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi Sunday

made a strong appeal to peo-

ple to bring the BJP to power

in Delhi, as he attacked the

Arvind Kejriwal-led party with

and the entire exercise will be prioritised and completed this year, Lahoti said. On TRAI's list of priorities

for 2025 are recommendations on satellite communications spectrum -- arguably one of the most keenly watched events in a high-stakes game involving telcos like Jio, and Airtel on one side and Elon Musk's Starlink pitted on the other.

Lahoti declined to comment on the specifics or timeline for release of the recommendation except to say "all comments are being examined on their merits and we will take a balanced view". TRAI's 2025 to-do list

BJP won't stop Delhi govt's

welfare schemes, says Modi

The "AAP-da" government does not have any vision to

develop the national capital, and that is what lotus (the

BJP's poll symbol) is going to bloom in the city and the

BJP would usher in change, the Prime Minister said

also includes framing recommendations for network authorisation, new authorisation framework for broadcasting, and revamp of national numbering plan for fixed line, while work will continue on combating and curbing spam calls and pesky messages. TRAI is in the process of operationalising system of separate 160 series for service or transactional calls by principal entities (say banks, insurance companies or other service providers) to differentiate them from promotional calls. Currently, both types of calls are being routed under 140 series, which will henceforth be used only for promotional calls.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dantewada (Chhattisgarh), Jan 5: Four Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattis garh's Bastar region, a senior police official said Sunday.

A head constable of the Dis trict Reserve Guard (DRG) was also killed in the face-off, he said. The gunfight broke out Saturday evening at a for est in south Abujhmaad along the border of Narayanpur and Dantewada districts when a joint team of the DRG and Spe cial Task Force (STF) was out on an anti-Naxalite operation the official said.

After the exchange of fire stopped late Saturday night, bodies of four Naxalites and automatic weapons, including AK-47 rifle and self loading rifle (SLR) were recovered from the spot, he said. DRG head constable Sannu Karam was also killed in the gunfight, the official said, adding that search operation was still under way in the area. The anti-Naxalite operation, comprising the DRG teams from Narayanpur, Dantewada, Kondagaon and Bastar districts, was launched Friday. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sa Sunday said the fight will continue to end the Naxal menace.

"So far, there is news of four Naxalites being killed in an encounter between security forces and Naxalites in the south Abujh maad region bordering Narayan pur and Dantewada districts, Sai said in a post on X. The chief minister expressed grief over the policeman's death in the gunfight.

"DRG head constable Sannu

Karam was also martyred in the encounter. His sacrifice will not go in vain. Security forces have been fighting very strongly against Navalism and the fight will continue till the menace is eliminated." he said A Naxalite was killed January 3 in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Gari aband district, which falls in Raipur division.

PATANJALI'S 30TH FOUNDATION DAY

Swami Ramdev announces five new revolutions to transform education



POST NEWS NETWORK

Haridwar, Jan 5: In the presence of Swami Ramdev Ji Maharaj, the President of Patanjali Yogpeeth, and Acharva Balkrishna, the General Secretary, the 30th foundation day of the Patanjali institution was celebrated at the Yog Bhavan Auditorium, located at Patanjali Wellness, Haridwar.

In the program, with the presence of more than 6.000 officials from the Patanjali Yogpeeth organization across the country, Swami Ramdev Ji Maharai gave an introduction to the 30 years of service. struggle, and dedication and shed light on the future plans of Patanjali Yogpeeth.

First: Freedom in education

He said that today, 50 to 90. and in some places, 99 percent educated individuals are unemployed, addicted, characterless, and dull children, whose childhood, youth, and our lineage are in danger. We have decided that first in India and then in the entire world, a new education system will be introduced, and its leadership

will be done by India.

Second: Freedom in healthcare "Disease is not our nature; Yoga is our nature." Today. around the world, due to the consumption of synthetic medicines, steroids, and painkillers, people's bodies are deteriorating. For healthcare freedom, through Patanjali Wellness, Yoggram, Niramayam, hospitals, and health centers, and modern research, we are advancing the legacy of sages and science.

Third: Economic freedom

Today, the entire economy is trapped in the cruel claws of a handful of people. Our goal is prosperity for service and wealth for welfare. So far, Patanjali has done charity worth ₹1 lakh crore in education, healthcare, research. character-building, and nation-building

Fourth: Intellectual cultural freedom

India, which first gave the message of spiritual world knowledge to the world, cannot afford to endure intellectual and cultural slavery. Today, India depends on impoverished countries for everything. which have nothing but paper money, dollars, or pounds.

Fifth: Freedom from addictions, diseases, and indulgences

A dangerous game of addiction is spreading worldwide. In India, addiction has destroyed lives through diseases, intoxication, and obscenity.

Remarks by Acharya Balkrishna Ji Maharaj

Acharya Balkrishna remarked that with Swami Ji's unrelenting and extraordinary efforts, Patanjali's contribution is inspiring the world. Patanjali runs campaigns for charity using profits from its business. Patanjali is not a market but a family for India. With a team of over 500 world-class scientists, Patanjali is making evidence-based Ayurvedic medicines like juices, herbs, and tablets accessible worldwide. By integrating India's ancient knowledge with modern science, Patanjali has brought Yoga from caves to the masses, reaching millions in over 200 countries

'AAP-da" and "Sheesh Mahal' jibes and assured Delhiites that no welfare scheme would be discontinued if the saffron party forms the government. Speaking at the BJP's first public rally in Rohini before

the upcoming polls, Modi said every season in the city has turned into a period of "emergency," with drinking water shortages in the summer, waterlogging during the monsoon and pollution during the winter. The BJP has been out of power in Delhi since 1998. It has been making all out efforts to dethrone the AAP which has ruled the city since 2015. Assembly elections in Delhi are likely next month.

"Only when this 'AAP-da (disaster)' is gotten rid of in Delhi, the double-engine of development can come in," Modi said, hitting out at the AAP.

He said the AAP government was a "disaster" that had struck

Delhi, and any more responsibility given to the "AAP-da" means punishment for the people of Delhi. The "AAP-da" government does not have any vision to develop the national

capital, and that is what lotus (the BJP's poll symbol) is going to bloom in the city and the BJP would usher in change, the prime minister said.

"We want to make Delhi such a world capital that reflects the vastness of India's heritage. It should be the centre of new global systems. This can happen only when the BJP government works both at the Centre and state (Delhi)," he told the 'Parivartan Rally'. Modi also accused the AAP

government of spreading fear that a BJP government in Delhi would discontinue several welfare schemes launched by the AAP. The AAP government is cur-

rently providing free electricitv. water, bus rides for women and pilgrimage for the elderly. The AAP also says its government work in the health and education sectors are an example for others to follow

Bidhuri's remark on Priyanka sparks row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: BJP candidate from Kalkaji Ramesh Bidhuri Sunday drew flak for his remarks that he would make roads which are like Congress leader "Priyanka Gandhi's cheeks" in his constituency, with the Congress demanding an apology from him for "insulting women" and some leaders in his party also expressing their disapproval.

Bidhuri, who has courted controversies in the past too over his statements, initially remained defiant, pointing to similar remarks by RJD leader Lalu Prasad on actor and BJP MP Hema Malini.

However, he later posted a message on X expressing regret if his comments had hurt anyone and stated that his remarks



had been misconstrued by some for political gains.

Lalu said in Bihar that he would make roads like Hema Malini's cheeks, but he lied, he

could not do it.' "I assure you that just as we made the roads in Okhla and Sangam Vihar, we will make all the roads in Kalkaji like Priyanka Gandhi's cheeks," Bidhuri is heard saying in the purported video, which went viral on social media. The Congress condemned the remarks, alleging it reflected the "anti-women"

mentality of the BJP. "Ramesh Bidhuri's statement regarding Priyanka Gandhi is not only extremely shameful but shows their ugly anti-women thinking. But what else can be expected from a man who used foul language against his fellow MP in the House and did not receive any punishment?

"Not only Bidhuri, but the BJP's top leadership should apologise with folded hands. Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinate said, adding it was not only an insult to Priyanka Gandhi but to all women.

Asked about the Congress' demand for an apology, Bidhuri sought to defend himself by saying, "If this is a mistake, then the one who committed it first should apologise. Isn't Hema Malini a woman? Accusing the Congress of hy-

pocrisy, he said, "Hema Malini was from a simple family, is she not a woman? The one who is from a known family is a woman, how is it possible?'

"Hema Malini is from the South, does that mean that she is not a woman. Every body should get respect. .. they should have made him (Lalu Prasad) apologise, they did not ask for it because she was from a simple family. It is their hypocrisy,"Bidhuri told

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva stressed that such statements should be avoided and said all should follow proper conduct regarding language and respect for women, while reminding the Congress of the objectionable statements by its leaders and allies in the

MAHA KUMBH Cleric fears mass conversions of Muslims All India Muslim Jamaat president Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi Barelvi, who was in the spotlight recently for advising Muslims not to

visit the Maha Kumbh, urged Adityanath Friday to "thwart plans" to convert hundreds of Muslims during the event

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Jan 5: Ahead of the Maha Kumbh, a senior cleric has written to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressing fears that mass conversions of Muslims will take place during the event, while other community leaders have flagged the alleged demand raised by some Hindu seers' body to keep Muslims out of the mega gathering.

Last year, the Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad (ABAP) had allegedly given a call to procure goods for the Maha Kumbh exclusively from Hindu

shopkeepers to ensure that purchases were made solely from the true followers of Sanatan Dharma. Held every 12 years, the Maha Kumbh will be organised in Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26. All India Muslim Jamaat

president Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi Barelvi, who was in the spotlight recently for advising Muslims not to visit the Maha Kumbh, urged Adityanath Friday to "thwart plans' to convert hundreds of Muslims during the event. Speaking to PTI. Barelvi claimed he received information from reliable sources about plans to



convert Muslims during the Kumbh, and as a concerned citizen, he informed the chief Minister about his apprehen-

"Now it is the responsibility of the state government to act on this," he said. However, Barelvi, who earlier termed the alleged demand to bar Muslims from visiting the Kumbh "undemocratic" and "unconstitutional", put forward a different view on the matter in his letter to the Chief Minister. Maulana Kaab Rashidi, legal

advisor to the Uttar Pradesh unit of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, said perhaps this is the first time that Muslims are at the centre of discussions before the biggest religious gathering of Hindus. On the alleged demand to keep Muslims away from the event, Rashidi said, "Such calls violate the rights enshrined in the Constitution because India

is known all over the world as a secular country. So, talking about banning Muslims from Maha Kumbh is like crushing the soul of the Constitution." Maulana Yasoob Abbas, gen

eral secretary of the All India Shia Personal Law Board, said "If a Muslim goes to Maha Kumbh to increase his knowledge, what's the harm in it? Islam is not so weak that a person of the faith will be in danger just by attending a fair or by visiting a place of worship." On Barelvi's apprehension of conversions, Abbas said, "If the foundation of someone's faith is strong, no one can convert him."

international



Dozens of partner countries will participate in the meeting of the Ramstein group at Ramstein Air Base in Germany Thursday, including those who can help boost our capabilities not only to defend against missiles but also against guided **bombs and Russian aviation** VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

SNOW BLANKETS US

A blast of snow, ice, wind and plunging temperatures stirred up dangerous travel conditions in parts of the central US Sunday, as a disruptive winter storm brought the possibility of the "heaviest snowfall in a decade" to some areas





focus of the Trump II foreign policy will likely be on the China challenge, whether in the form of economic and military competition, the technology race, or countering China's strategy to

dominate the Indo-Pacific LISA CURTIS | SENIOR DIRECTOR, NSC

What we've had to look at each and every time is not only should we give this to the Ukrainians but do they know how to use it? Can they

The upcoming trip to the U.S. will

focus on ensuring a stable business environment for **South Korean firms**

in the United States and seeking to enhance cooperation with the new U.S. government in areas that include industry, trade and energy AHN DUK-GEUN I INDUSTRY MINISTER, SOUTH KOREA

ANTONY BLINKEN | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

SHORT TAKES

Trump appears with **Italian PM Meloni**

Palm Beach: Presidentelect Donald Trump made an appearance Saturday with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who was visiting his Mar-a-Lago club. Meloni follows Argentina President Javier Milei, who became the first world leader to meet with Trump at Mar-a-Lago after his Election Day victory in November. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungry also travelled to Florida to meet with the president-elect, Trump appeared at a screening of a documentary detailing challenges some conservative lawyers report facing in the legal system. He entered the grand ballroom around 7 pm and then returned around two hours later after having dinner.

\$20 bn lending package for Pak

Islamabad: The World Bank is set to approve a \$ 20 billion indicative lending package for Pakistan - a pioneering 10-year initiative to protect its funded projects from political transitions and focus on six targeted areas, according to a media report. The programme, titled "Pakistan Country Partnership Framework 2025-35", aims to improve social indicators in the most neglected but important areas, The Express Tribune newspaper reported, citing official documents. It will focus on reducing child stunting, combating learning poverty, enhancing climate resilience, decarbonising the environment, expanding fiscal space, and boosting private investment to improve productivity.

Syrian foreign minister to meet Qatar's PM

Doha: Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shibani, appointed by the country's new rulers, arrived in Doha Sunday to meet Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, a Qatari official told Reuters. Syrian official news agency SANA confirmed the arrival of the Syrian delegation, which includes the country's Defence Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra and head of intelligence Anas Khattab. The Syrian delegation was set to meet Sheikh Mohammed, who also serves as Qatar's foreign minister, and other senior Qatari officials including Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammed Al-Khulaifi, the official said. The Syrian minister's visit to Qatar is his second foreign trip less than a month since former President Bashar al-Assad was ousted by rebels Dec 8.

Yoon arrest delayed as deadline looms

The dispute over the warrant came against the backdrop of demonstrations by thousands of protesters near Yoon's official residence amid heavy snow in the capital, Seoul, with some rallies demanding his arrest, and others opposing it

Seoul, Jan 5: The chief of security for South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said Sunday he could not cooperate with efforts to arrest the impeached leader, in remarks that could push the political crisis towards another high-stakes confrontation.

With a warrant for Yoon's arrest on grounds of insurrection set to expire at midnight (1500 GMT) Monday, the official, Park Chong-jun, cited the legal debate surrounding the warrant as the reason for the lack of cooperation. "Please refrain from insult-

ing remarks that the presidential security service has been reduced to a private army," he said in a statement, adding that it had provided security to all presidents for 60 years, regardless of political affiliation.

The comments came after a Seoul court rejected a complaint from Yoon's lawyers that the arrest warrant was illegal and invalid, the Yonhap news agency said. Telephone calls to the court to seek comment went unanswered.

"Judging the legitimacy of any legal interpretation and execution is difficult," Seok Dong-hyeon, a lawyer advising Yoon, said on Facebook.

"If there is an error in the legality of law enforcement against the incumbent president, it will be a big problem." Yoon became the first incumbent South Korean president to face arrest

YOON'S

LAWYERS SAY

ARREST WARRANT IS

UNCONSTITUTIONAL

WARRANT EXPIRES AT 1500

GMT MONDAY

COURT REJECTS YOON

LAWYERS' COMPLAINT

US'S BLINKEN SET TO

ARRIVE IN SEOUL

for his botched attempt to declare martial law Dec 3, which triggered political chaos Asia's fourth-largest economy and a key US ally.

The conservative president was impeached by parliament and is suspended from official duties while the Constitutional Court decides whether to reinstate or remove

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was set to arrive in Seoul Sunday for talks with senior officials.

In Sunday's statement, Park dismissed as "preposterous" an accusation by the main Opposition Democratic Party that he had ordered presidential

security officers to use live

ammunition if they got

'caught short" in Friday's standoff. lawvers Yoon's have said the warrant was unconstitutional because the anti-graft force leading his criminal investigation has no authority under South

Korean law to investigate any case involving insurrection accusations.

In a statement Sunday, the lawyers threatened to report to prosecutors Oh Dong-woon, the chief of the Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials (CIO) and the investigators for what they called an illegal effort to execute the warrant, in the absence of authority to do so. The CIO did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

84 Indian Hindus arrive in Pakistan for Sant Shadaram Sahib's birth anniv

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, Jan 5: Eighty-four Hindu pilgrims arrived in Pakistan from India via the Wagah Border Sunday to celebrate the 316th birth anniversary of Shiv Avtari Satguru Sant Shadaram Sahib at a shrine in the Sindh province, officials said.

The issuance of visas is cov ered under the framework of the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of

"Some 84 Hindu pilgrims led by Yushishthar Lal arrived here from India to cele brate the birth anniversary of Shri Guru Swami Shadaram, an incarnation of Lord Shiva," Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) spokesperson Ghulam Mohayuddin told

He added that ETPB Additional Secretary of Shrines Saifullah Khokhar welcomed the pilgrims at the Wagah Border and presented bouquets on behalf of the Board's Chairman Syed Ata-ur-Rehman.

The Hindu pilgrims proceeded directly from Wagah Border to Shadani Darbar Hayat Pitafi, Sindh, where the main celebrations and religious rituals would take place.

During their stay, the pilgrims will also visit other religious sites, including Yog Mata Mandir Aqilpur, Ghotki, Pano Aqil, Sukkur, and the historic Sadhu Bela Temple.

The Hindu pilgrims will spend a day in Nankana Sahib (the birthplace of Sikhism founder Baba Guru Nanak) January 14 and return to India the next day.

180mn denied voting rights: B'desh CEC



Bangladesh's interim Chief Adviser

Muhammad Yunus hinted that the national election could take place between late 2025 and mid-2026

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Jan 5: Bangladesh's Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin Sunday said that almost 180 million people have been denied their voting rights and the Election Commission wants to end their deprivation, The Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

The CEC, while addressing the inaugural ceremony of a training programme for election officers ahead of a voter list updating exercise, said the Election Commission (EC) wants to remove the fact that the people have been deprived of the voting right for so long.

"We want to remove the pain of their deprivation. We are steadfast in our commitment,' he said. The countrywide doorto-door data collection for updating the list of possible voters will start January 20.

The CEC said they are here to hear the 180 million people who have been suffering from the deprivation of voting rights. "We've taken the responsibility so that we can remove their deprivation," he said.

He said the commission's main goal is to arrange a fair and cred ible election. "It's a marathon race beginning from today up to the delivery of the result," he said

"Our goal, commitment and promises to the nation is to present a free, fair and credible election as the nation has been deprived of it for so long," the CEC said. Meanwhile, the EC has decid

ed to investigate irregularities and shortcomings in all pre vious elections, including the three preceding elections that have been controversial during the Awami League-rule in 2014, 2018 and 2024. The 2014, 2018 and 2024 nation-

al elections are widely regarded as some of the most controversial in the country's history. The newly formed EC, which assumed office November 21 has already initiated several re form measures while preparing for the 13th National Election.

A few days ago, CEC Nasir Uddin said that ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awa mi League may participate in elections unless the government or the judiciary issues a ban against the party.

SNIPPETS

Austrian People's Party nominates Christian Stocker as interim leader

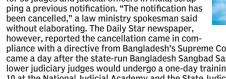


VIENNA: Austrian People's Party has nominated its General Secretary Christian Stocker as interim leader after the expected resignation of Chancellor Karl Nehammer, Austrian news agency APA reported. Stocker, a lawyer and member of the Austrian Parliament, has served as general secretary of the People's Party since 2022. He is seen as an experienced and calm crisis communicator who has frequently appeared in Austrian media to defend controversial decisions. Nehammer announced Saturday he would resign in the next

few days after coalition talks with the Social Democrats collapsed. Nehammer is ed to meet with Austria's President Alexander Van der Bellen Sunday. The president will then make a public statement to announce the next steps. Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said Saturday he will resign in the coming days after talks on forming a new government failed a second time. The announcement came after the People's Party and the Social Democrats Saturday continued coalition talks a day after the liberal Neos party's surprise withdrawal from discussions.

Bangladesh cancels planned training of judges in India

DHAKA: Bangladesh's interim government Sunday cancelled a planned training programme for 50 judges and judicial officers in India, scrapping a previous notification. "The notification has been cancelled," a law ministry spokesman said without elaborating. The Daily Star newspaper, however, reported the cancellation came in com



pliance with a directive from Bangladesh's Supreme Court. The cancellation order came a day after the state-run Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha reported that 50 lower judiciary judges would undergo a one-day training programme from February

10 at the National Judicial Academy and the State Judicial Academy in Madhya Pradesh. The trainee judges selected under the programme were district and sessions judge or its equivalent officers, additional district and sessions judge, joint district judge, senior assistant judge and assistant judge. The Indian govern was supposed to bear all the expenses for the training programmes







A statue depicting the late Syrian President Hafez Assad is seen destroyed on the top of a mount in Dayr Atiyah, Syria, Sunday

Singapore concerned over increasing 'sham marriages' with foreign women

'Sham marriages' in Singapore often involve a

foreign woman paying a Singaporean man money for a union to be arranged, so she can get a permit to stay or work here

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, Jan 5: Singapore authorities are concerned over the increase in "sham marriages or marriages of convenience" between Singaporean men and foreign women, which most of the time involves a syndicate and could lead to social problems.

The Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) has

highlighted the concern and

reported that "sham marriag-

es" have increased to 32 cases

ber last year compared to just four cases during the same period in 2023.

A media report cited ICA as saying that arrests of people involved in "sham marriages" followed vigorous investigations into a suspected syndicate arranging such arrangements between Singaporean men getting paid for marrying foreign women.

"Sham marriages" in Singapore often involve a foreign woman paying a Singaporean man money for a union to be arranged, so she can get a permit to stay or work here, reported The Straits Times Sunday. A marriage of convenience is

when two people tie the knot for the sole intention of acquiring an immigration advantage. Inspector Mark Chai, deputy officer-in-charge of ICA's intelligence division, said the

increase in such cases was

concerning as it could lead to a

Singapore, where these foreigners could get involved in illicit activities. He attributed the increase to more foreigners wanting to extend their visit passes to continue staying and working here.

"The idea of such marriages is often spread through word of mouth. And to some Singaporean men, it can be seen as easy money," the broadsheet had

Insp Chai as saying. "But it is illegal, and the ICA

is stepping up enforcement efforts to bust such arrangements," he warned.

Those convicted for their in volvement in a marriage of convenience can be jailed for up to 10 years, fined up to SGD10,000, or both.

Superintendent Goh Wee Kiat, a senior assistant director at

A marriage of convenience is when two people tie the knot for the sole intention of acquiring an immigration advantage

ICA's intelligence division, added that most marriage of convenience cases were flagged to the ICA by tip-offs from the public.

He said, "The couple can try to hide the fact that their union is a marriage of convenience, but there are telltale signs that our officers are able to spot."

He cited one case of a Singaporean mother not being aware of her son's marriage which is usually not the case for such a milestone event in

someone's life. A case was also cited of sham marriage where the "wife" lived away from the house of her "husband". He was arrested for making a false declaration, saying his "wife" lived with him but her clothes were

elsewhere Goh encouraged the public to report any suspected cases of RISE, WITH 32 CASES marriage of conve-EPTEMBER 2024, UP FROM nience here, noting that all infor-PERIOD IN 2023 mation provided will be treated

HOSE CONVICTED FOR THEIR with the strictest NVOLVEMENT IN A MARRIAG confidence. In June 2024, 13 AILED FOR UP TO 10 YEAR people - six Vietnamese women and 0,000, OR BOTH seven Singaporean

men - were charged over their alleged links to marriages of convenience.

between January and Septemsocial problem in multi-ethnic

Businessi



The challenge from D2C brands and the growth in quick commerce will continue to put pressure on margins

ANAND RAMANATHAN | PARTNER (CONSUMER

PLI SCHEME FOR STEEL SECTOR

The government will launch another round of production-linked incentive scheme for the steel sector Monday. The 'PLI scheme 1.1' will be launched by the steel minister HD Kumaraswamy. "Union Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries...will launch 'PLI scheme 1.1' for the steel industry and call for applications...on January 6," the steel ministry said



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

the biggest hit.

Mcap of four of top companies erodes by ₹96,605.66cr

New Delhi, Jan 5: The com-

bined market valuation of four

of the top-10 most valued firms

eroded by ₹96.605.66 crore last

week, with HDFC Bank taking

While Tata Consultancy Ser

vices (TCS), HDFC Bank, ICICI

Bank and State Bank of India

suffered erosion from their

valuation. Reliance Industries

Bharti Airtel, Infosys, ITC, Life

Insurance Corporation of India

(LIC) and Hindustan Unilever

were the winners. Together

they added ₹82,861.16 crore in

The market valuation of HD

combined market valuation.



ing the earnings season, markets' focus is expected to shift towards

the upcoming Union Budget and the policy decisions of the Trump 2.0 administration PRAVESH GOUR | SENIOR TECHNICAL ANALYST,

If you compare the Indian market to the western market,

the overall leasing market in India is 1-2 per cent of the total number of automobiles sold VIVEK WADHERA | MD AND CEO, ORIX

We have been continuously thriving for expansion of our business and b part of India's



ASISH MOHAPATRA | CO-FOUNDER AND CEO,

SHORT **TAKES**

Nayara to expand retail network

New Delhi: Nayara Energy, India's largest private fuel retailer, plans to add 400 petrol pumps this year to expand its retail network across various states, the firm said Sunday. With 6,500+ retail outlets across India, Nayara Energy has been adding new retail outlets to its network and has been growing steadily across various states such as Guiarat. Maharashtra. Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan. In a statement, Navara said it "is well on track to add 400 retail outlets this year". In line with its plans to aggressively grow in India, Nayara Energy has also revamped its dealer programme to onboard new dealers and give a boost to local entrepreneurship.

NHAI prepays loans worth ₹56K-crore

New Delhi: National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has pre-paid loans of worth ₹56,000 crore during the current fiscal, helping the state-owned agency to save interest cost of around ₹1,200 crore, a senior government official said Sunday. The official told PTI that NHAI's total debt at the beginning of the current fiscal year was pegged at ₹3.35 lakh crore, which stood at about ₹2.76 lakh crore at the end of third quarter of 2024-25 fiscal year.

New Delhi, Jan 5: Indian-origin tech companies cornered a fifth of all H1B visas issued by the US with Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services leading the pack, an analysis of data from the US immigration department showed.

Out of these, Infosys took the lead with 8,140 beneficiaries, followed by TCS (5,274), and HCL America (2,953). Infosys

Unmarried couples no longer welcome in OYO

The couple-friendly travel booking major changes check-in rules, starting in Meerut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: Travel booking major OYO has launched a new check-in policy for partner hotels, starting from Meerut, introducing guidelines effective this year whereby unmarried couples will no longer be welcome to check in.

Under the revised policy, all couples will be asked to present valid proof of relationship at the time of check-in, including for bookings made online. OYO has empowered its partner hotels' discretion to decline couple bookings based on their judgment, aligning with local social sensibility, the company said.

New Delhi, Jan 5: Foreign in-

vestors pulled out ₹4,285 crore

from Indian equities in the first

three trading days of the month

driven by apprehensions ahead

of the third-quarter earnings

season and high valuations of

This came following an in-

vestment of ₹15,446 crore in the

entire December, data with the

depositories showed. The shift

in sentiment comes amid global

A depreciating rupee

against the dollar has

further weighed on

FPI sentiment, as the

currency risk makes

"FPIs are likely to continue

selling as long as the dollar

remains strong and US bond

yields offer attractive returns.

The dollar index at around

109 and the 10-year bond yield

above 4.5 per cent are signifi-

cant deterrents to FPI flows,"

VK Vijayakumar, Chief Invest-

ment Strategist at Geoiit Finan-

According to the data, For-

eign Portfolio Investors (FPIs)

offloaded shares worth ₹4,285

crore from Indian equities in

the first three trading sessions

eign investors is reflected in the

sions surrounding the poten-

tial economic policies of US

President-elect Donald Trump

and their implications for

global markets have added to

the cautious approach," Hi-

manshu Srivastava, Associate

Director-Manage on Research

at Morningstar Investment Re-

search India, said.

ongoing trend of outflows.

The uncertainty among for-

"Additionally, apprehen-

of the month (January 1 to 3).

cial Services, said.

Indian investments

less attractive

and domestic headwinds.

domestic stocks.



OYO has given the directive to its partner hotels in Meerut to ensure this with immediate effect. Based on ground feedback, the company may expand this to more cities, people familiar with the policy change said.

GLOBAL HEADWINDS

FPIs remain wary

Foreign investors withdraw ₹4,285cr in three trading sessions amid high valuations

FIIs remain net buyers

via primary market in India

As foreign institutional investors' (FII) selling in India continues to dominate headlines, the clear message is that FII selling is due to high

valuations in the secondary market and in the primary market where the

valuations are fair, they have been sustained investors, market watchers

investors (DIIs) have also maintained their optimistic stance. According to

sustained FII selling during the last three months is largely true. "However

experts, the general perception that the market has turned weak due to

what is not generally appreciated is that even while selling in the cash

market through exchanges, FIIs have been buyers through the primary

Placement (QIP) route," said Dr VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment

market. They have been big investors through the Qualified Institutional

Strategist, Geojit Financial Services. For the month of December, FIIs sold

equity for ₹2,590 crore through the exchanges, but they bought equity for

₹18,036 crore through the 'primary market and others' category. In 2024,

bought for ₹427 crores in 2024. Despite stock market volatility amid geo-

political uncertainties, FIIs remained net investors in the country, as the

fair, FPIs have been sustained

investors," Vijayakumar said.

a cautious approach by foreign

investors, who scaled back in-

vestments in Indian equities

significantly in 2024, with net

This contrasts sharply with

the extraordinary ₹1.71 lakh

crore net inflows in 2023, driv-

en by optimism over India's

strong economic fundamentals.

In comparison, 2022 saw a net

outflow of ₹1.21 lakh crore amid

aggressive rate hikes by global

inflows of just ₹427 crore.

The overall trend indicates

FIIs sold equity heavily for ₹121,210 crore but they bought equity for

₹ 121,637 crore through the primary market. Therefore, FIIs have net

country's economy showed tremendous resilience.

Investors have adopted

a cautious stance ahead

of the Q3FY25 earnings

Compounding this, the US

Federal Reserve's indication

of fewer rate cuts this year has

failed to lift investor confidence.

valuations in the secondary

market. In the primary mar-

ket where the valuations are

"FPIs selling is due to high

season, contributing to sub-

dued market sentiment

VK VIJAYAKUMAR I CHIEF INVESTMENT

STRATEGIST, GEOJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

said Saturday. Amid persistent FII outflows, domestic institutional

will be asked to present valid proof of relationship at the time of check-in, including for bookings made online

"OYO has received feedback in the past from civil society groups especially in Meerut urging action to address this issue. Additionally, residents from few other cities have pe-

Under the revised policy, all couples

titioned for disallowing unmar-

and civil society groups in the micro markets we operate in. We will continue to review this policy and its impact periodically PAWAS SHARMA | REGION HEAD, OYO NORTH INDIA

ried couples to check-in at OYO

The initiative is a part of

hotels," they said.

OYO's programme to transform outdated perception and project itself as a brand providing safe experience for families, students, business, religious and solo travellers, the company said. Additionally, the programme aims to encourage longer stays

branding, it added.

and repeat bookings, enhancing customer trust and loyalty.

OYO is committed to upholding safe and responsible

freedoms and personal liberty, we also recognise our

hospitality practices. While we respect individual

responsibility to listen to and work with the law enforcement

OYO has started pan-India initiatives such as joint seminars on safe hospitality with police and hotel partners, blacklisting hotels reportedly promoting immoral activities and initiating actions against unauthorised hotels using OYO

FC Bank tumbled ₹37,025.46 crore to ₹13,37,919.84 crore.

ICICI Bank's valuation slumped ₹29,324.55 crore to ₹8,93,378.50 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of TCS tanked ₹24,856.26 crore to ₹14,83,144.53 crore and that of State Bank of In dia declined ₹5.399.39 crore to ₹7.08.168.60 crore. However the mcap of Reliance Indus tries surged ₹41,138.41 crore to

The valuation of Hindustan Unilever soared ₹15,331.08 crore to ₹5,65,194.18 crore. The mcap of LIC jumped ₹13,282.49 crore to ₹5,74,689.29 crore and that of Infosys zoomed ₹9,031.19 crore to

ITC's valuation climbed ₹3,878.63 crore to ₹6,03,064.44 crore and that of Bharti Airtel went up ₹199.36 crore to ₹9,10,934.58 crore. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 524.04 points, or 0.66 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 191.35

Reliance Industries retained

Wilmar to emulate ITC

The firm to leverage cash-cow oil business to expand FMCG portfolio

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: Adani Wilmar Ltd (AWL), India's largest edible oil company, is adopting a strategy similar to ITC's by leveraging its core business and extensive distribution network to drive growth in its high-margin FMCG portfolio after the Adani group exit, according to sources. Just as ITC used its strong

cigarette business to expand into FMCG, AWL is set to use its dominant edible oil business as a foundation for FMCG growth.

Following the exit of the Adani Group, Wilmar may further capitalise on this approach by introducing more global FMCG brands into the Indian market, sources aware of the matter said.

In the December quarter, AWL's FMCG business achieved a 24 per cent year-on-



year growth in volume, underscoring its efforts to expand both its food and FMCG product offerings. Consequently, the share of food and FMCG in overall volumes increased to 20 per cent, while its share in total revenues rose to 9 per cent, up from 10 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively, in FY21 This shift mirrors the strate-

gy pursued by ITC.

"In the foods category, key packaged products such as wheat flour, rice, nuggets, pulses, poha, and sugar have experienced robust double-digit growth," the company had stated in a filing with stock exchanges recently.

₹16,93,373.48 crore.

₹8,04,834.34 crore.

points, or 0.80 per cent.

the title of the most valued firm followed by TCS, HDFC Bank Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, In fosys, State Bank of India, ITC LIC, and Hindustan Unilever.

CII suggests 7-point agenda

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Seven fresh IPOs

to hit Dalal Street

Mumbai, Jan 5: The second week of the New Year 2025 is set to be very busy as seven public issues (mainboard and SMEs) will open to the investors in the stock market and six companies will be listed during the same period.

Standard Glass Lining Technology's IPO will open from January 6 to 8. Its issue size will be ₹410.05 crore and the price band of this public issue will be from ₹133 to ₹140.

This company, which manufactures engineering equipment for the pharmaceutical and chemical sector, has already raised ₹123.02 crore through an anchor book January 3

Quadrant Future Tek's IPO will open for investors from January 7 to 9. The issue size of this company will be ₹290 crore. Its price band will be between ₹ 275 and ₹290. The IPO of Capital Infra Trust InvIT will open from January 7 to January 9.

for employment generation With a median age of

just 29 years, India is a young country, and is set to add 133 million people to its working-age population by 2050

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: The upcoming annual budget for FY26 could announce further measures to boost employment generation, CII said Sunday, emphasising that job creation at a mass scale is important to engage the young population productively, and drive inclusive growth in the world's most populous nation.

The industry body has suggested a seven-point agenda to harness India's demographic dividend, including an integrated national employment policy, support to labour-intensive sectors, and setting up an international mobility authority, among other targeted measures. The government could con-

sider launching an internship programme in government offices in rural areas for the college-educated youth, CII said.

India also

CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE

It argued that this initiative would create short-term employment opportunities in government offices while bridging the gap between education and professional skills

The programme would also help augment the available manpower resources for the effective implementation of various rural programmes and government initiatives.

CII has also proposed introducing a new provision under income tax rule in lieu of Section 80JJAA to encourage new employment. The new provision should continue as Chapter VIA deduction from gross



total income, which is available even if a taxpayer opts for concessional tax regime.

It has proposed an integrated national employment policy which could subsume under its ambit the slew of employment generating schemes currently in works by

various ministries/states. In addition, the unified policy could also build on the single integrated employment portal --National Career Service (NCS) -- wherein all the data can flow into this from various minis-

tries and state portals. Highlighting that increasing women's participation in the workforce, which currently is low, can further boost the Indian economy, CII said, new initiatives including the construction of dormitories using CSR funds, the formalisation

of sectors like care economy and establishing government-supported creches **Coupled with** in industrial clusters higher employment, could be taken to in-

crease female labour force participation. needs to ensure that

Moreover, rollproductivity goes up ing out labour codes while ensuring social security coverage to the

gig and platform workers would further strengthen the employment landscape. Many parts of the world are facing workforce shortages due

to ageing populations, and India should leverage this opportuni ty. The government could con sider setting up an internation al mobility authority under the Ministry of External Affairs. This authority could facilitate G2G collaborations for helping Indian youth tap the overseas employment opportunities.

PIO tech firms corner 1/5th of H1B visas

As Indian companies continue to benefit from the programme, ongoing developments indicate a need for adaptation in response to regulatory changes and public sentiment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

According to data from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, in April-September 2024 period, out of the total 1.3 lakh H1B visas issued to different employers, about 24,766 visas were issued to Indian-origin companies

came second to only Amazon

topped with 9,265 visas.

ed in Chennai but now has headquarters in New Jersey, ranked third in the list with

The H1B visa programme allows US companies to temporarily employ foreign workers in specialty occupations. Indian companies have been significant beneficiaries of this programme, particularly in the

firms such as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Wipro, and HCL Technologies have consistently ranked among the top employers for H1B visa holders. Wipro was lower down this time with 1,634 visa grants.

Com Services LLC, which Cognizant, which was found-

technology sector. Major Indian IT services

VISAS ISSUED TO DIFFERENT EMPLOYERS, ABOUT 24,766 VISAS WERE ISSUED TO INDIAN-ORIGIN FIRMS

OUT OF THE TOTAL 1.3 LAKH H1B

■INFOSYS TAKES THE LEAD WITH 8,140 BENEFICIARIES, FOLLOWED BY TCS (5,274), AND HCL AMERICA (2,953)

tation in response to regulatory

Tech Mahindra stood close by, having been issued 1,199 visas. While these companies continue to benefit from the

programme, ongoing develop-

ments indicate a need for adap-

changes and public sentiment. The future of the H1B visa will likely depend on balancing the needs of the US businesses for skilled labour with broader im-

Elon Musk, a former H-1B visa holder whose company Tesla utilises this programme, has publicly supported the tech industry's reliance on foreign In a post on X December 28, Musk emphasised the impor-

migration policy reforms.

tance of welcoming individuals from all backgrounds who contribute to the US through hard work. He passionately advocated for preserving America as a land of freedom and opportunity. Musk's statement also re-

ceived backing from President-elect Donald Trump whose first administration restricted the programme in 2020, arguing that it allows businesses to replace Americans with lower-paid foreign workers.

Aussies reclaim BGT after a decade Gambhir wants stars to play domestic cricket

Ruthless Australia knock rudderless India by 6 wickets

While Australia would be eyeing a second **successive WTC** mace, it would be the first time since the event's inception that India won't be in the finals. The team had finished runner-up in the previous two summit clashes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Jan 5: A listless India was knocked out of the World Test Championship (WTC) final as Australia cruised to a six-wicket victory in the fifth Test here Sunday to reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after 10 years, leaving the visitors with much to deliberate in a difficult transition phase made worse by over-the-hill

Australia won the five-match series 3-1 and qualified for the WTC final against South Africa slated at the Lord's from June

On Sunday, the target of 162 could have been trickier for Australia had India's new Test captain Jasprit Bumrah been in a position to bowl despite painful back spasms. But once 'irat Kohli led the team out, it was as clear as the Sydney skyline that defending the total would be next to impossible.

Bumrah deservedly walked away with the player of the series honour for his astonishing haul of 32 wickets in five matches. But it was hardly a consolation for the shambolic team performance that India managed, showing resilience only in brief phases

"Little frustrating but sometimes you have to respect your



body, you can't fight your body. Disappointing, probably missed out on the spiciest wicket of the series," Bumrah said of his inability to bowl in the second innings during the presentation ceremony

Prasidh Krishna (3/65 in 12 overs) and Mohammed Siraj (1/69 in 12 overs) were not a patch on Bumrah and despite multiple breakthroughs, they bowled too many poor deliveries to make it easy for the hosts to canter home in just 27 overs.

Usman Khawaja (41), Travis Head (34 not out) and debutant Beau Webster (39 not out) completed the formalities, putting an end to India's misery in a tour that has exposed all of the team's batting frailties and an unhealthy reliance on Bumrah.

Once Bumrah was ruled out after he tried some shadow bowling during the morning warm-up session and didn't feel comfortable, the writing was on the wall.

The magnificent Scott Boland (6/45) and the ever-reliable Pat Cummins (3/44) polished off the Indian tail for just 157 in 39.5 overs. If one takes out Rishabh Pant's flesty 61 and Yashasvi Jaiswal's 22, the other nine players collectively contributed a mere 74 runs.

The series would leave the men who matter in Indian cricket establishment with a lot on their minds when they deliberate on ways to get the house back in order.

With six of the completed innings yielding less than 200 runs, one doesn't need a soothsayer to tell what went wrong

ma and batting talisman Virat Kohli flopped with technical issues troubling them throughout the season.

Regular skipper Rohit Shar-

Jaiswal (391 runs) was the top-scorer despite three ducks followed by rookie Nitish Kumar Reddy (298 runs), KL Rahul (276 runs) and Pant (255

As much as one wants to take a nuanced view of Rohit and Kohli's poor form but it is undeniable that both veterans are finding it increasingly difficult to stem the rot that has set in their batting.

There are a few good youngsters in the fringes and the new World Test Championship cycle would demand that they be given a chance to develop over

While a tough call on Kohli and Rohit is awaited, the BC-CI brass also needs to seriously look at whether coach Gautam Gambhir is the right man to be in-charge across formats.

Under Gambhir, India have lost six Tests out of 10 during the season going by apart from being defeated in an ODI series in Sri Lanka.

If Kohli and Rohit are held accountable, Gambhir can't he let off merely because the team is in transition. The head coach's head-strong approach is a pen secret and it is not earning him too many friends in the dressing room.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, Jan 5: India head coach Gautam Gambhir said Sunday that struggling stars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli "still have the hunger to excel" but urged all senior players, including the duo, to play domestic games and show their "commitment" towards red-ball

Known for his plain speak, the two-time World Cup hero also didn't give any assurances on whether Rohit or Kohli will be a part of the Test set-up moving forward.

Both the stars were woefully out of form during the just-concluded Test series against Australia that the visitors lost 1-3 to surrender the Border-Gavaskar Trophy as well as a spot in the World Test Championship final.

"It's not the right moment right now for me to talk about where we are going to be after five months. A lot of things change in sport. Forms change, people change, attitude changes, everything changes in sport. And we all know that five months is a long time," Gambhir said at the post-series press conference.

'So let's see before the England series (in July) what's going to happen. But whatever will happen, will happen for the best interest of Indian cricket," asserted the former opener.

Rohit scored 31 runs in five innings before dropping himself from the playing eleven

get. If you don't give lomestic cricket, you vill never get the desired players that you want in Test cricket

GAUTAM GAMBHIR I INDIA HEAD COACH

and Kohli managed 190 in nine knocks, including a second innings century after India had taken a lead of more than 300 A glaring failure for Kohli was his inability to avoid being dis missed on deliveries that were bowled outside the off stump.

Asked if he would like the seniors to play at least one round if not two, of Ranji Trophy starting January 23, Gambhir sent across a clear message. "I would always like everyone

to play domestic cricket. That is how much importance domestic cricket needs to be given. Not only one game, if they are available and they have the commitment to play red-ball cricket, everyone should play domestic cricket," Gambhir said.

Kohli last played a Ranji Trophy match in 2012 while Rohit's most recent domestic red-ball game was in the 2015-16 season.

The tough-talking former player refused to be drawn into a discussion on the much-spec ulated future of Kohli and Ro hit, insisting that they are the best judge when it comes to analysing their role in Indian



SHORT **TAKES**

Nagal makes main draw

Auckland: India's number one singles player Sumit Nagal qualified for the main draw of the ASB Classic, an ATP 250 event. with a straight set win over higher-ranked Frenchman Adrian Mannarino, here Sunday. The 26-year-old Indian, ranked 98th. faced a stiff resistance from the world number 66 before prevailing 7-6(5) 6-3 in the final round of the qualifiers. Nagal has been striving to shrug off poor form as he made a number of first round exits before managing to keep his place in the top-100 at the end of 2024 season. The main draw competition will serve as good preparation for Nagal ahead of Australian Open, season's first Grand Slam, starting January 12 in Melbourne. The win against Mannarino, who featured in top-20 last year around the same time, will also work as a confidence booster for Nagal, who has decided not to compete in India's upcoming Davis Cup tie against Togo in New Delhi.

Man City turns corner

London: Erling Haaland and Manchester City might just be turning the corner after the team's worst run of results under Pep Guardiola. Haaland scored twice in a 4-1 win over West Ham Saturday as City secured back-to-back victories in the Premier League for the first time since late October, when a shocking and unthinkable six-week meltdown began. In that time, the defending champions played nine league games and won just once, dropping them out of the Champions League qualification spots and raising questions about Guardiola's stomach for a rebuild. Now, City can hope for better times ahead especially after making up ground on second-placed Arsenal and fourthplaced Chelsea after they both dropped points in draws at Brighton and Crystal Palace, respectively, Saturday. "I'm very pleased for the result," he said, "but you cannot ask me if the old City is back. If you saw the game, we are not." However, while the 2-0 win at Leicester last weekend was unconvincing, there were better signs against West Ham – at least in attack with Haaland looking sharp. The Norway striker headed in Savinho's cross to make it 2-0 in the 42nd minute and chipped the goalkeeper for 3-0 in the 55th after running onto another pass

from Savinho.

TENNIS TROPHIES

Sabalenka, Lehecka win Brisbane titles

Sydney: Aryna Sabalenka and Jiri Lehecka got their 2025 seasons off to the perfect start by winning the singles titles at the Brisbane International tennis tournament Sunday night Sabalenka, the world number one, dropped her first set at



Kudermetova, but recovered to win the match 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 in one hour and 47 minutes. It extends Sabalenka's winning streak in Australia to 12 matches and means she has won four of the last five tournaments she has entered in the country, including the Australian Open in 2023 and 2024. In the men's final, world No 28 Lehecka won his second career title when Reilly Opelka was forced to retire from the men's final due to a back injury when trailing 4-1 after just 13 minutes of play.

US claim second United Cup tournament



Sydney: A dominant United States lifted their second United Cup mixed team tournament title in three years after they beat Poland 2-0 on Sunday with Coco Gauff and Taylor Fritz both winning top seeds in the \$10 million tournament that began with

18 nations in contention clinched the trophy when Fritz defeated Hubert Hurkacz 6-45-77-6(4) after Coco Gauff outclassed Iga Swiatek 6-46-4 in Sydney. The Americans had also won the 2023 title in the inaugural edition of the tournament, which serves as a tune-up event for the Australian Open Grand Slam.

Want to be wiser leading into LA Olympics, says Lovlina

Boxing was not on the initial programme for the Los Angeles Olympics and a decision on its inclusion is awaited

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, Jan 5: Lovlina Borgohain is eyeing her third straight summer Olympics but will take it one step at a time from here on. Lovlina, who won a bronze at the Tokyo Olympics but returned empty-handed from Paris 2024, said Los Angeles 2028 was very much in her plans.

"Tokyo was during COVID times. Paris was a real learning curve. I did my best and have no regrets that I could not win a medal. For every athlete, there are lessons to be learnt and I want to be wiser leading into LA," Lovlina told SAI Media in



an interaction on the sidelines of the ASMITA Women's Under-17 football final at the SAI campus in Guwahati Sunday afternoon.

India's versatile lawn bowler. Navanmoni Saikia on Sunday, accompanied Loylina, Nayanmoni is a multiple gold

will be the same, to give my

best, to keep improving myself,

and win as many tournaments

as possible. So, I am looking for

ward to a fun year with a lot of

learning, a lot of improvements

Games and the Ariuna Awardee is a popular face in Assam. Both Lovlina and Nayanmoni took part in the Fit India Sundays on Cycle mission and stressed on the "no drugs" campaign undertaken by the Union Ministry of Sports.

Lovlina was the darling of the media Sunday. Assam's 'own daughter' will be touching 31 when Los Angeles arrives but the middleweight (75 kg) boxer is confident that she will be "stronger and more experienced" if she can convert her Paris learnings into action.

"But I am not going to rush my preparations. LA is a long way off and proper weight and injury management will be part of my core plans. Right now, I am not looking beyond the upcoming National Games in Uttarakhand and to do well for Assam is uppermost in my mind," said Lovlina.

SHOOTING NATIONALS

Men's 10m air pistol: **Varun Tomar shines**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 5: Reigning Asian champion Varun Tomar grabbed the spotlight by clinching both the senior and the junior men's 10m air pistol titles at the 67th National Shooting Championship Competitions

(NSCC) here Sunday. The 21-year-old Army marks man, who narrowly missed out on last year's Paris Olympics overcame a sluggish start in the senior final to snatch his maiden national crown at the expense of teammate Prad hyumn Singh, who fell short by 0.8 points.

Rajasthan's Aakash Bhard-

waj won the bronze. Tomar then had a similar slow start in the junior final, but quickly made up ground staying in touch with eventual silver winner Nikhil Saroha of Uttar Pradesh who was on a start-to-finish mission.



Gukesh setting new goals after 2024 milestones

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Jan 5: D Gukesh climbed dizzying heights in the past one month, a World Championship triumph getting garnished by the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award recently, but the chess prodigy now wants to reset his focus and goals to tackle a "challenging" 2025. Gukesh will be seen in action

in the Tata Steel tournament in Wijk aan Zee in Netherlands, beginning January 17.

The event will see participation from frontline players such as Anish Giri, Arjun Erigaisi, Fabiano Caruana and R Praggnanandhaa among others.

'Yeah, 2025 will offer a very tough challenge. A lot of new and interesting tournaments are coming up. The world championship was in the past. I'm very happy about it and all the awards and receptions,' Gukesh told a select media



gathering during the felicitation ceremony organised by WestBridge Capital here Sun-

and hopefully a lot of good results," he added. However, Gukesh will have to carry with him the tag of world champion and 2025 will offer along with loads

a very tough chalof expeclenge. A lot of new and tations interesting tournaments and inare coming up. The world creased championship was in the scrupast. I'm very happy about tiny. it and all the awards and

D GUKESH | CHESS WORLD

to stand in the limelight. "Yeah, I have been used to being under the attention for

a while. Obviously, after the

But the

is

19-year-

old

prepared

world championship, it will be more. But the basic things I remember are to keep improving myself and accepting failures when they come.

"I think in general, I have high expectations of myself. So, I think my aim is to meet my own expectations rather than that of others," he said.

But has he been able to handle all the adulation that has deservingly come his

"I had thought that it (winning the World Championship) would be somewhat similar to the Candidates, but obviously it's much more. I'm grateful for all the attention and recognition. I guess one thing is to manage these things with the training. But after the (World Championship) match, I also need some recovery period. I've started training a bit. But it will be more serious

soon," he explained

Tomar's patience finally paid off after the 21st shot as Nikhil blinked with an 8.5, handing the senior pro an easy double gold in the end at the Dr Kar ni Singh Shooting range. His score in the senior final was 238, while he was clearly more confident in the junior final resulting in greater accuracy with a tally of 246.2.

Pradhyumn also rounded off a fruitful day with a second medal, a bronze in the junior men's air pistol.

The youth final saw a UP 1-2 when Chirag Sharma overcame the 14-year-old Dev Pratap by margin of 1.3 after 24 shots. Chirag finished with 241.8.

Rajasthan's Mayank Choud hary won bronze. Haryana, Ra jasthan and Maharashtra stood 1-2-3 on the medal tally at the Pistol Nationals with 23, 22 and 13 gold medals respectively.

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thinking about new goals, new

tournaments and new ways to

prepare. The goal, the approach