

## ₹20K/mth pension for those jailed during Emergency

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 13:** The Odisha government Monday announced a monthly pension of Rs 20,000 and other benefits for people jailed during Emergency nearly half a century ago. Along with pension, the state government will bear the medical expenses of all the people jailed during the Emergency, according to a notification by the state Home department. The benefits will be available to all eligible people who are alive as of January 1, 2025, it said. Hundreds of people were imprisoned in various jails across the country for opposing the Emergency period which lasted from June 25, 1975, to March 21, 1977, when Indira Gandhi was the prime minister. **P4**



**MEGA EVENT:** Devotees gather to take a holy dip at the Sangam on the first day of Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Monday. Around 1.65 crore people took a dip in their quest for 'moksha' at the world's largest gathering. **(MORE P7)** **PTI PHOTO**

## RUPEE HITS RECORD LOW

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 13:** The rupee logged its steepest single-day fall in nearly two years and ended the session 66 paise down at its historic low of 86.70 against the US dollar Monday, weighed down by a stronger American currency and surging crude oil prices. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.12, and moved 1 paisa during intraday to 86.11 before closing the session with a loss of a staggering 66 paise at its lowest-ever level of 86.70 against the greenback. The fall of 66 paise in one session was the steepest since February 6, 2023 when the unit had lost 68 paise. The Indian currency has witnessed the deepest plunge of more than Re 1 in the past two weeks from the closing level of 85.52 December 30. Rupee had breached the 85-per-dollar mark for the first time December 19, 2024. On Friday, the local currency had declined 18 paise to settle at 86.04 against the US dollar, a day after registering a marginal gain of 5 paise. In the preceding back-to-back sessions Tuesday and Wednesday, it had plunged 6 paise and 17 paise, respectively. The unprecedented fall was attributed to the relentless chase of the US dollar by investors, which also led to a massive withdrawal of foreign capital from Indian equities. FIIs offloaded equities worth ₹4,892.84 crore Monday. **P3**

According to analysts, the RBI has allowed the fall in rupee's exchange rate versus US dollar amid dwindling forex reserves and declining emerging market currencies. "RBI will allow the weakness as demand keeps moving up and supplies dwindle," said Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director, Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP. The RBI Friday said the country's forex reserves dropped by USD 5.693 billion to USD 634.585 billion in the week ended January 3. At the same time, the dollar strengthened on better-than-expected job growth in the US market, which also fuelled the rising benchmark treasury yields amid expectations of a slower interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve, analysts said. Besides, the US has imposed more sanctions on Russia, resulting in Brent oil prices higher to USD 81 per barrel. This comes at a time when investors are already cautious in anticipation of restrictive trade measures by the new regime under President Donald Trump. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said rising crude oil prices and risk aversion in global markets may weigh on the rupee. **P7**

## PM Modi inaugurates Z-Morh tunnel in J&K

AGENCIES



**Srinagar, Jan 13:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday inaugurated the strategically important Z-Morh tunnel in the Sonamarg area of Jammu and Kashmir which will make the tourist resort accessible round the year. After inaugurating the Rs 2,700 crore project, the prime minister went inside the tunnel and interacted with the project officials. He also met the construction workers who worked meticulously amid harsh conditions to complete the tunnel. Union minister Nitin Gadkari, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah were also present at the inauguration. This is his first visit to Jammu and Kashmir after the Assembly elections in September-October last year. The 6.5 km-long two-lane bi-directional road tunnel between Gagangir and Sonamarg in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district is equipped with a parallel 7.5-metre escape passage for emergencies. Situated at an altitude of over 8,650 feet above sea level, the tunnel will enhance all-weather connectivity between Srinagar and Sonamarg en route to Leh, bypassing routes prone to landslides and avalanches. **P7**

## Ayushman Bharat in Odisha

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 13:** Odisha Monday became the 34th state to join the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY), seven months after the BJP came to power in the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the people of the state and took a swipe at the previous BJD dispensation for not adopting the scheme. Odisha's Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department inked a pact with National Health Authority (NHA) in New Delhi to become the 34th state to implement the health assurance scheme. The agreement was signed in the pres-

ence of Union H&FW Minister JP Nadda, CM Mohan Charan Majhi and other dignitaries. Speaking on the occasion, Majhi said, "This significant development will change the health status of about 86 per cent of Odisha's population. It is going to revolutionise the approach from top to bottom." He claimed that though the Centre introduced the Ayushman Bharat in 2018, the then Odisha government did not implement it for political reasons. The CM also announced that the state will set up Ayushman Arogya Mandir, a health centre, in each GP. Majhi said the state will implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme in convergence with

Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY). The convergence scheme, for which one bilingual health card will be issued to the beneficiary, will provide cover of ₹5 lakh per family per annum with an additional ₹5 lakh for women members, benefiting around 1.03 crore families. With Aysuhman Bharat scheme coming into effect, over 23.13 lakh people aged 70 years or more would also be covered under medical insurance irrespective of their financial status. The beneficiaries will be able to avail cashless treatment at over 30,000 hospitals across the country in place of only 900 hospitals under the previous BSKY. **P3**

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Rupee has been falling for years... when will it finally land near us?

DSPL-320

**ଶ୍ରୀ ନରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ମୋଦୀ**  
ପ୍ରଧାନମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ

**ଆୟୁଷ୍ମାନ ଭାରତ**  
**ପ୍ରଧାନମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଜନ ଆରୋଗ୍ୟ ଯୋଜନା**  
ଓ  
**ଗୋପବନ୍ଧୁ ଜନ ଆରୋଗ୍ୟ ଯୋଜନାର**  
ସମନ୍ୱିତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଏମା ଜାନୁଆରୀ ୨୦୨୫, ନୂଆଦିଲ୍ଲୀ ଠାରେ  
**ବୁଝାମଣା ପତ୍ର ସ୍ୱାକ୍ଷରିତ**

**ଶ୍ରୀ ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀ**  
ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

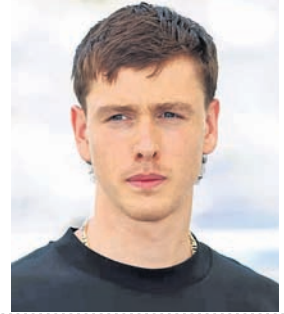
**ଗରିମାମୟ ଉପସ୍ଥିତି**

<p><b>ଶ୍ରୀ ଜେ. ପି. ନନ୍ଦା</b> କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ, ରକ୍ଷାୟନ ଓ ସାର ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ</p>	<p><b>ଶ୍ରୀ ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀ</b> ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା</p>	
<p><b>ଶ୍ରୀ ଧର୍ମେନ୍ଦ୍ର ପ୍ରଧାନ</b> କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଶିକ୍ଷା ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ</p>	<p><b>ଶ୍ରୀ ଜୁଏଲ୍ ଓରାମ</b> କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଆଦିବାସୀ ବ୍ୟାପାର ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ</p>	<p><b>ଶ୍ରୀ ଅଶ୍ୱିନୀ ବୈଷ୍ଣବ</b> କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ରେଳ, ସୂଚନା ଏବଂ ପ୍ରସାରଣ ତଥା ଇଲେକ୍ଟ୍ରୋନିକ୍ସ ଓ ସୂଚନା ପ୍ରଯୁକ୍ତିବିଦ୍ୟା ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ</p>
<p><b>ଶ୍ରୀ ଜନକ ବର୍ଦ୍ଧନ ସିଂହ ଦେଓ</b> ଉପ-ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା</p>	<p><b>ଡଃ. ମୁକେଶ ମହାଲିଙ୍ଗ</b> ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ, ସଂସଦୀୟ ବ୍ୟାପାର, ଇଲେକ୍ଟ୍ରୋନିକ୍ସ ଓ ସୂଚନା ପ୍ରଯୁକ୍ତିବିଦ୍ୟା ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ</p>	

ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

OIPR-1000113/0019/2425

# leisure



## HARRIS DICKINSON STILL FEELS LIKE 'CHUBBY BOY'

*Babygirl* star Harris Dickinson has admitted he still feels like the 'chubby boy' despite losing weight when he was in his late teens and isn't used to 'being desired.'

## EVA DONATES \$50,000 TO LA FIRES-HIT FAMILIES

Actress Eva Longoria is extending a helping hand to the victims of the Los Angeles wildfires. In an emotional video, Longoria said she's donating \$50,000 to the organisation This Is About Humanity to support frontline workers and families who have been impacted by the fires, reports *People* magazine.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
You will achieve things today, not by the sleight of your hand but by your communication skills, says Ganesh. Your eloquence shall win many hearts. The stars suggest monetary benefits, but you need to guard against injury and minor ailments.

**TAURUS**  
Financial gains are on the cards today, predicts Ganesh. Happiness will fly in as you receive some good news from an overseas friend. If you have feelings that you haven't expressed to someone you dearly love, today is a good day to go ahead and let them know. The evening promises rejoicing and relaxation, says Ganesh.

**GEMINI**  
Emotional and material security will hold equal importance today. You want to be in love, but you know that love can't buy you dough. In academics, you will be able to solve whatever problems you set your mind on. Your spare time will be spent on devising methods of making the best use of your knowledge.

**CANCER**  
When the going gets tough, it's better to go with the flow. But you belong to a school of thought that believes that in such troubled times, it's better to stay out of water altogether. Since it is not your day today, you are likely to postpone all important decisions and work.

**LEO**  
Call it an epiphany of sorts, but today promises to be a day of revelations for you. Finally, things fall into place as your Odyssey nears its end, and you come to terms with your hidden talents, says Ganesh. Follow your heart and dive into the bottomless pool of your imagination.

**VIRGO**  
There is a strong indication that you will dabble in writing or performing arts, and emerge with excellent results. Since these are your passions, you may cultivate hobbies in these fields, if they are not already your profession. Enjoy the power you have over people today as you grip them with sweet words, swinging to your whims, says Ganesh.

**LIBRA**  
Your family is the cornerstone of your success. And today is no different. Your auspicious day starts from your home, and you manage to carry this luck everywhere you go with the same tempo and gusto, predicts Ganesh.

**SCORPIO**  
The target is locked in and the arrow is shot. It is only a matter of time before Cupid celebrates a bull's eye and you find yourself in the mush of things. Sentiments and romance will be the order of the day. There is a good chance that marriage proposals or new relationships will find their footing today, says Ganesh.

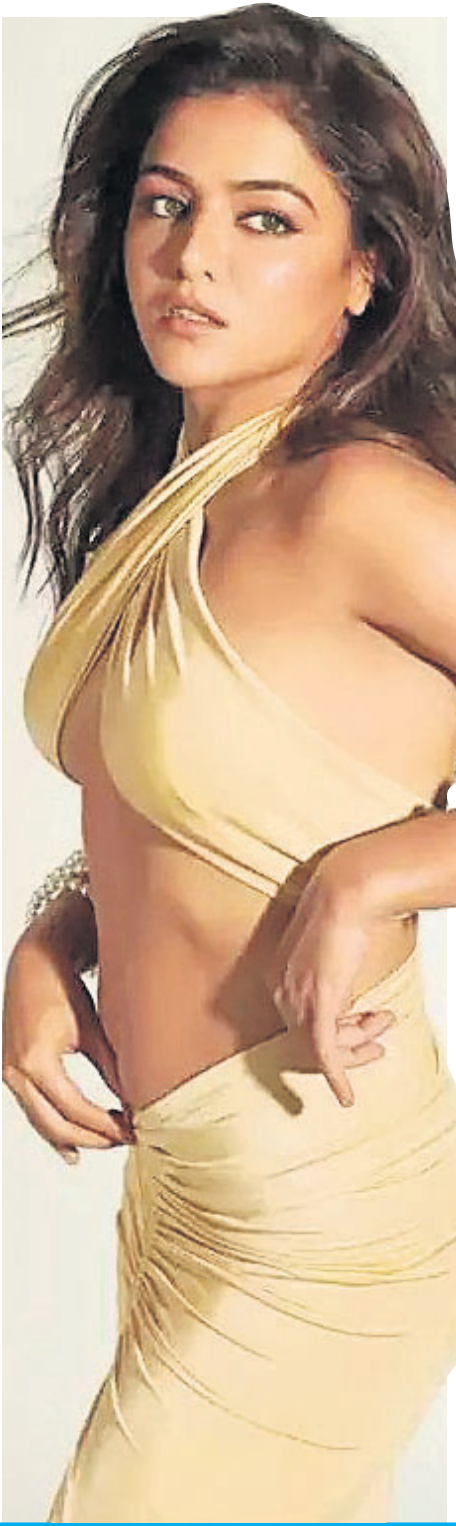
**SAGITTARIUS**  
Today, you will most certainly put your heart and soul into your work. But it is rather unlikely that you will get the returns in proportion to the efforts you put in. Yet, at the end of the day, you will be more than satisfied that you have got the chance to display your innate talents, says Ganesh.

**CAPRICORN**  
New projects and partnership will keep you busy today, says Ganesh. If a meeting is scheduled, you may be praised vociferously for your ability to make the right decision at the right time. You may also bag rewards for the commendable efforts you'd put in the past.

**AQUARIUS**  
If Elvis Presley is who you dreamed of being, today may be your day! You seem to impress one and all, and even money flows in! You play smart today and everything seems to work in your favour.

**PISCES**  
You can probably count your chickens before they hatch today, for it is likely that every nest-egg you expect to mint money will. A good day to trade in the stock markets as well, as long as you keep in mind that the horns of a rampaging Bull market can be every bit as deadly as the paws of a lumbering Bear market, says Ganesh.

# Wamiqa schools media influencer



**Mumbai:** Actress Wamiqa Gabbi has given it back to a social media influencer named Nadeesh Bhambi after he posted a troll video about her "PR team meeting" discussing strategies. The video comes after clips started to do rounds on social media, which drew comparisons between Wamiqa and Bollywood star Aishwarya Rai Bachchan.

The video, which has "Wamiqa Gabbi's PR Team meeting" written on it, begins with the influencer saying that they have to do the PR for Wamiqa, who is talented and beautiful. So, "ideas?"

Other characters start to throw out ideas such as "new national crush" and "Triptii Dimri who". One says, "If Aishwarya had a daughter, she would look like Wamiqa." "Wamiqa can eat 100 Rashmika and 200 Disha for breakfast" and "What Deepika thinks she looks like", with all the ideas getting approved in the enacted meeting. Bhambi captioned the post: "Wamiqa Gabbi's PR team got

no chill." After noticing, Wamiqa took to the comment section and dropped a sarcastic reply. "Talented aur Khoosurat bhi? Uff, Thaaaank you. And baki sab ka pata nahi but we did try 'Wamiqa for next President!' approve nahi hua," she wrote in the caption section. On the work front, Wamiqa, who was last seen in *Baby John*, will next be seen in *Bhoot Bangla* starring shay Kumar and Tabu. IANS



### MANANA'S 46TH FOUNDATION DAY DRAMA FEST



Members of host troupe Manana Natya Sanstha performed Odia play *Astha* at Rabintra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Monday. Written by Sudhanshu Nayak, the play was directed by troupe's president Manoj Patnaik. Apart from Patnaik, popular TV and film actors Ayaskanta Swain and Manisha Rath played key roles in the drama. Among the luminaries eminent film director Himanshu Sekhar Khatua, Odissi dance Guru Ratikanta Mohapatra and Korei MLA Akash Das Nayak were present on the occasion. PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

# Ira on her relationship dynamics with parents

**Mumbai:** Amir Khan's daughter Ira Khan has been extremely vocal about her struggle with mental health. Talking to actress Ahsaas Channa recently, Ira shared how her relationship with her parents has evolved over time. Ira was quoted saying "During my depression, I learned a lot of things that I wish I had been taught earlier. For a few years you have been hearing that marriage is compromise and you have to work on your marriage and things like that. But that's the same with your parents also. Like in any relationship you have to work on it." She continued: "Nobody real-

ly tells you that you have to build a relationship with your parents. Also, because you're a child and at some point you turn into an adult where you are supposed to no longer see your parents as parents. You are supposed to see them as people." Ira was of the opinion that kids should see their parents not just as parents but also as people. Elaborating on the matter, she said, "I realised that when my therapist said, so what do your parents like? I was like, I don't really know them as people. I only know them as my parents. And how can I have a relationship with someone of I don't know them as them? And it's really weird and interesting to get to know your parents as peoples." IANS

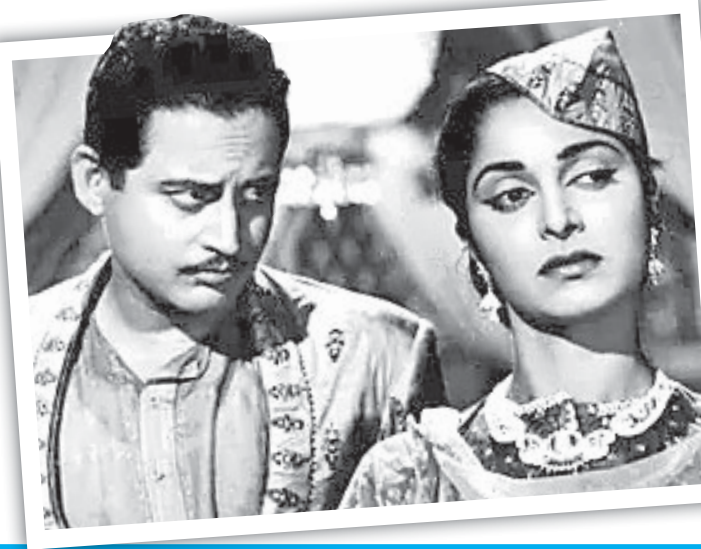
# Guru Dutt asked Waheeda to change name as it 'lacked sex appeal'

**Mumbai:** In her illustrious career spanning over five decades, Waheeda Rehman has graced Indian cinema with iconic performances in films like *Neel Kamal*, *Bees Saal Baad*, *Khamoshi*, *Pyaasa*, *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam*, *Guide*, *CID*, and *Chaudvin Ka Chand*. At the recent Jaipur Literature Festival, Waheeda revisited her early days in Bollywood, recounting her decision to

retain her name despite pressures to change it. Reflecting on her debut with the 1956 film *CID*, she said, "When I came as a newcomer from Chennai to Mumbai, I was called to sign a contract by Guru Dutt ji. My mother also came along with me. He said that we want to change your name because it's long and not good. When they said that they don't like it, I felt really bad. That was so

rude! My mom and dad kept my name, who are you to tell me that it's not good? I refused to change it. The screen can show Waheeda Rehman and you can call me Waheeda while working, it shouldn't matter if it's long." Waheeda shared that Guru Dutt, following the industry trend, tried to convince her with examples of renowned stars who had changed their

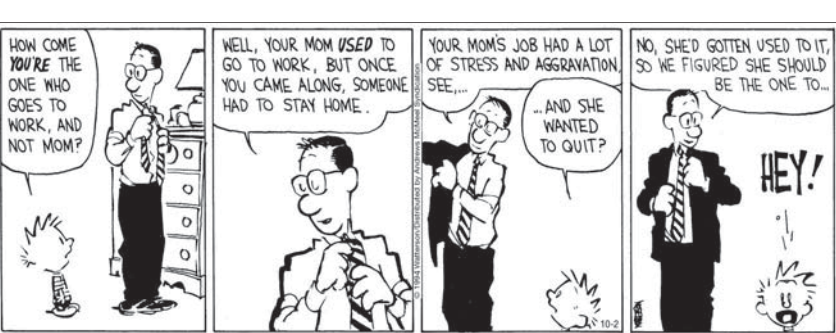
names. "He gave examples of Dilip Kumar, Madhubala, Meena Kumari, and many others. I had a lot of pride in myself at that time, I have mellowed down with maturity. I told them a clear no, because my parents gave me this name and I like it. They said that the name doesn't have glamour and sex appeal. I said that whatever you say, I will not change it," she added. AGENCIES



### PEANUTS



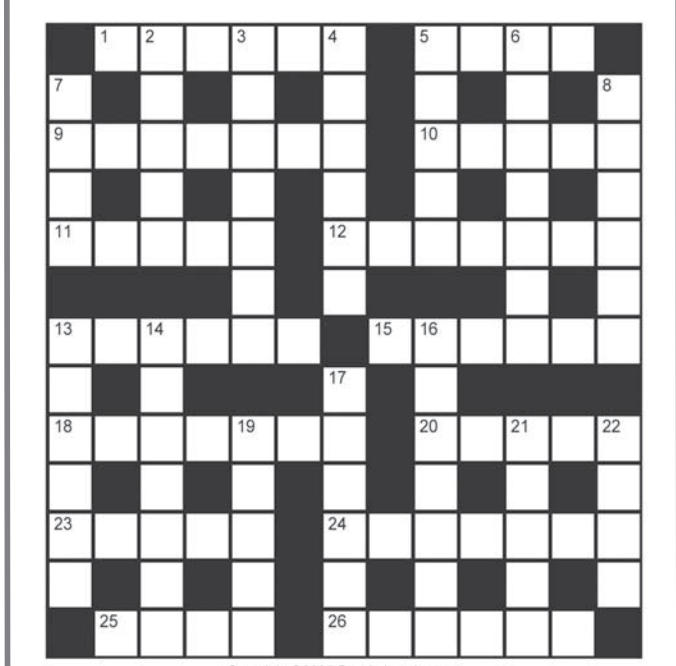
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



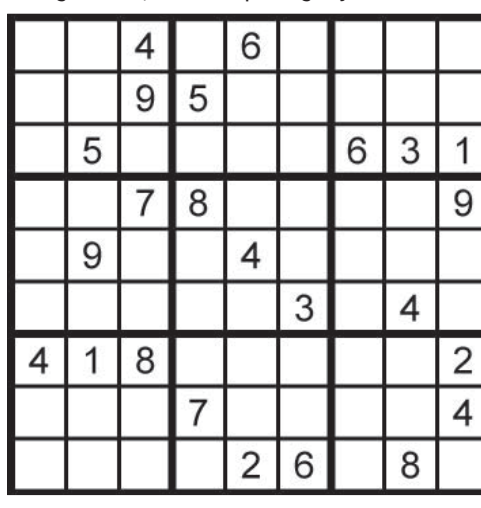
### FUN POST CROSSWORD



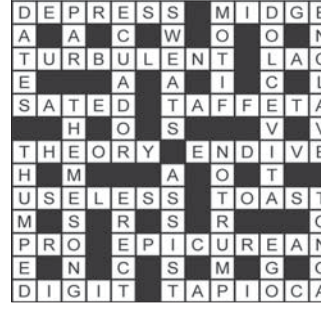
- Across**
- 1 Nitwit, to some
  - 5 Scottish church
  - 9 Witness
  - 10 Motivate
  - 11 Ziti, e.g.
  - 12 Hamlet
  - 13 Take for granted
  - 15 Before partner, movie or treatment
  - 18 In reality (Lat.) (2,5)
  - 20 Bean tree
  - 23 Deep pink
  - 24 Top dog
  - 25 Ignore
  - 26 Resides
  - 7 It's available in bars
  - 8 Even though
  - 13 Shanghai
  - 14 Orange yellow
  - 16 Joss stick
  - 17 Like some tongues or lightning
  - 19 Luminary, briefly
  - 21 Drive back
  - 22 Out of shape

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# Modi guarantees highest quality healthcare in state

## Two killed in Janla mishap

**PNN & AGENCIES**  
**New Delhi, Jan 13:** Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri-Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) will ensure highest quality of healthcare to people, especially the women and elderly, of Odisha, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Monday.

The National Health Authority (NHA) inked a pact with Odisha government's Health and Family Welfare department at Vigyan Bhavan here to implement the AB PM-JAY in the coastal state.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who attended the MoU signing ceremony, expressed his gratitude to the PM for extending AB PM-JAY to Odisha.

"It is an honor for me to attend, on behalf of the people of Odisha, the MoU signing ceremony between the National Health Authority, Government of India, and the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Odisha, for the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, alongside Hon'ble Health and

### AYUSHMAN BHARAT

Family Welfare Minister Shri @JPNadda Ji and other distinguished officials. I express my heartfelt gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji for bringing Odisha on board this transformative scheme, which is focused on providing quality and affordable healthcare for all. In Odisha, beneficiaries will have access to cashless treatment at over 30,000 government and private hospitals across the

country. Nearly 3 crore individuals from 1.3 crore families are set to benefit from this initiative," Majhi posted on X.

He also announced that 'Ayushman Bharat Mandirs' will be established in every panchayat of Odisha.

"Ayushman Bharat Mandirs will be established in every Panchayat of Odisha with the goal of delivering healthcare services to rural areas. An instructor will be present at each Mandir, and

we will also provide additional facilities and services alongside healthcare workers.

The Government of Odisha remains committed to transforming the healthcare sector through various initiatives, paving the way toward a "Viksit Odisha" by 2036 and a "Viksit Bharat" by 2047," he posted on X. Replying to Majhi's X post, Modi congratulated the people of Odisha as it became the 34th state/Union Territory to implement the flagship health coverage scheme of the Centre. The PM wrote, "Con-

gratulations to the people of Odisha! It was indeed a travesty that my sisters and brothers of Odisha were denied the benefits of Ayushman Bharat by the previous Government. This scheme will ensure the highest-quality healthcare at affordable rates. It will particularly benefit the Nari Shakti and the elderly of Odisha."

Meanwhile, Union Health Minister JP Nadda, who was also present at the MoU signing ceremony, said Odisha joining AB PM-JAY is a historic moment.

**Bhubaneswar:** Two people were killed after a car hit one of them, crashed into the median and then collided with a pick-up van coming from the opposite direction near Janla outpost on NH 16, Monday afternoon, police said. The deceased were identified as Harendra Singh, 55, a native of Nayagarh district, and the pick-up van driver Pratap Nayak, 30, of Angul district, they added. The car was travelling towards Bhubaneswar when the incident happened, police said. A total of four persons were travelling in the car, and one of them was injured in the accident, they said. Both the vehicles have been seized and a probe has been started, they said.

## HC: Matric pass must for photographers at Konark

**POST NEWS NETWORK**  
**Cuttack, Jan 13:** The Orissa High Court Monday upheld its earlier order that validated a policy requiring matriculation as the minimum qualification for grant of licence to those undertaking photography business on the Sun Temple premises at Konark.

The move came from a division bench of Chief Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh and Justice Savitri Ratho.

According to the case details, 110 persons were issued identity cards by the Tourism officer of Konark in 2001-02 to operate as photographers.

The Centre February 1, 2007 introduced a new guideline for photography business on Konark premises and accordingly, invited applications from aspiring candidates. Of the applicants, licence was provided to 110 while 45 applications were rejected. The photographers, whose applications were rejected, moved the HC challenging the rejection.

While the case was sub judice at HC, the ASI introduced a new rule in 2017, requiring matriculation as minimum qualification for conducting photography business on Konark premises.

A single-judge bench of the HC ruled in favour of the rule.

Meanwhile, fresh applications were invited from photographers March 10, 2022. Those who fulfilled the eligibility as per the 2017 norm got licence.

## Odia scientist's AI intervention to protect mangroves



**POST NEWS NETWORK**  
**Bhubaneswar, Jan 13:** In what would further strengthen the mangrove conservation efforts, a groundbreaking initiative is underway in Devi River Mouth, connecting Puri and Jagatsinghpur areas, as US-based renowned Odia scientist Anjan Kumar Panda is all set to pioneer this initiative through Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Mangroves have long proven themselves to be the guardians of Odisha's coastline, shielding the state from numerous natural calamities. However, despite their importance, mangroves in major estuarine ecosystems like Devi River Mouth, Brahmani, Baitarani, and Budhabalanga have lacked protection due to the absence of a special policy for natural mangrove protection.

During his recent trip to India to attend the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention held in Bhubaneswar, Panda had the opportunity to visit a community-led mangrove conservation site in Devi River Mouth.

During his visit, Panda, based in San Francisco, USA, explored the natural mangroves and met the community working at the grassroots level to popularise mangrove conservation in India.

He also interacted with young mangrove conservationist Soumya Ranjan Biswal, who has been working tirelessly to promote community-led mangrove conservation.

Panda is set to develop an AI-led initiative, in collaboration with conservationists, to preserve mangroves and Olive Ridley turtles.

"This groundbreaking initiative aims to harness AI capabilities to conserve these fragile ecosystems at an unprecedented scale, connecting with global mainstream efforts from Astaranga mangrove conservation bases," said Panda.

The initiative will leverage AI technology to monitor mangrove health, predict climate impacts, optimise conservation efforts, enhance community engagement, and inform policy decisions.

By harnessing the power of AI, this project has the potential to revolutionise mangrove conservation and protecting biodiversity.

The initiative will also involve consultation and collaboration with state government agencies to expedite efforts and ensure the preservation of natural mangroves.



# A Spiritual Sojourn Begins

## 'Mahakumbh 2025 Prayagraj'

# Sanatan Garv

# Mahakumbh Parv

(13 January - 26 February)

First Amrit Snan

# Makar Sankranti

14<sup>th</sup> January, 2025

## Ekta Ka Mahakumbh

### Upcoming Major Snan Dates

- Mauni Amavasya - 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2025
- Basant Panchami - 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2025
- Maghi Purnima - 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2025
- Maha Shivaratri - 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2025







Emergency Assistance



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Tricolour hoisted on Kanika Sands Island

World will be safe if Hindus are protected, says Shankaracharya

Chandbali, Jan 13: Kanika Sands Island, located near the Dhamra estuary in Bhadrak district, has witnessed the hoisting of the national flag, marking a significant event amid the ongoing debate over its ownership.

island's status has reached the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, prompting them to direct local authorities to gather further details and report to the government.



The island has been at the centre of a territorial dispute between the governments of West Bengal and Odisha since 2005

The ceremony also included the installation of signboards featuring photographs of the Prime Minister of India and Chief Minister, symbolising the significance of the occasion.

was included in a larger survey along with other nearby islands in Dhamra region. However, due to various unresolved issues, it was not recorded in the land records of Chandbali tehsil.

Bhograi: Sanatan Dharma is the foundation and essence of existence, with no alternative or substitute. Amid rising global 'adharma' (lawlessness) and increasing atrocities against followers of the Sanatan tradition, the lack of safety for adherents is deeply concerning.

Croc census: Bhitarkanika shut for visitors from today

Kendrapara, Jan 13: The Bhitarkanika National Park will remain closed to tourists for eight days starting Tuesday to conduct the 2025 status survey of estuarine crocodiles and the mid-winter waterfowl census.

prohibition on visitors has been enforced to prevent noise pollution during the survey. This measure is intended to ensure the smooth execution of the census in a tranquil atmosphere, he added.

Payal scripts history in Nat'l Para Archery Championship

Bolangir, Jan 13: A 17-year-old girl from Bolangir, who lost both her arms and legs after coming in contact with a high-voltage electric wire while working as a migrant labourer outside the state, has brought laurels for Odisha by becoming the champion at the Sixth National Para Archery Championship held in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

round January 12, Sunday, earning the championship title. She emerged victorious against noted para-athlete Sheetal Devi.



electric wire while pouring water on an under-construction

building, resulting in the loss of both her arms and legs. After reports surfaced, the district administration enrolled her at the Parbati Giri Bal Niketan in Bolangir, where she continued her education and received support.

half years. Recently, Payal qualified for the National Para Archery Championship. The former district collector has congratulated Payal while, expressing hope for her continued success in future.

Government of Odisha Office of the Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Jharsuguda. Bid Identification No. Online - SEJSG - 14 of 2024-25. NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR ROAD WORK IN ODISHA NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION, PATNAGARH. e-Procurement Notice IFB Identification No. EEPTNG-Online-11/2024-25.

EAST COAST RAILWAY Tender No. 47-KUR-TRD-OT-2024-25. EXECUTION OF OHE MODIFICATION WORK IN CONNECTION WITH CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROPOSED ROAD OVER BRIDGE (ROB) IN LIEU OF LEVEL CROSSING (LC) NO. 169 AT KM 383/15-17 IN BETWEEN DHANMADH-BYREE STATIONS ON HOWRAH (HWH)-VISAKHAPATNAM (VSKP) MAIN LINE UNDER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION OF EAST COAST RAILWAY.

DICGC नक्षेप बीमा और प्रत्यय गारंटी निगम DEPOSIT INSURANCE AND CREDIT GUARANTEE CORPORATION. Unidentifiable and untraceable depositors in claims prepared by liquidators.

EAST COAST RAILWAY WALK-IN-INTERVIEW FOR ENGAGEMENT OF PART TIME DENTAL SURGEON AT CENTRAL HOSPITAL, BHUBANESWAR. Employment Notice No. : 01/2025 (PTDS), Dated: 09.01.2025.

Bank of India E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE. Where as the Bank acting through its Authorised Officer in exercise of its powers under-Section 13(4) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (SARFAESI) has decided to put up for E-auction of the following properties "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis for realization of the debts due to the Bank.

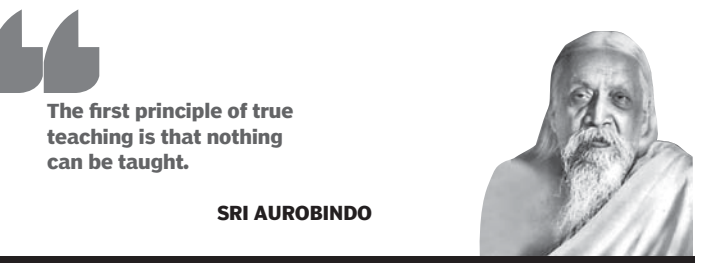
भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान पटना Indian Institute of Technology Patna Recruitment Notice for the Post of Registrar. For details, please browse the website: https://iitp.ac.in

EAST COAST RAILWAY E-AUCTION FOR LEASING OF PARCEL SPACE AUCTIONING OF 25 SLRS. Table with columns: Sl. No., Train No. & CC in Tonnes, STATION FROM - TO, Front/Rear SLR, Frequency, Lot Start Time, Lot End Time.

Bank of India E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE (continued). Details of properties for auction, including branch names and descriptions of land/building parcels.

Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice Bid Identification No. : 41/2024-25. Table with columns: Name of the Work, Estimated Cost, Period of Completion, Date & time of availability of bid, Last Date/Time for receipt of bids, Name & Address of Officer inviting Bid.

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, KEONJHAR DIVISION. WALK IN INTERVIEW. No.MM-414 : In continuation to this Office Notice No - 467 dt. 02.12.24. The Divisional Forest Officer, Keonjhar Division invites further Applications, from interested candidates for re-engagement of retired Engineering personnel (Retired E.E/A.E/A.E/J.E) in OMBADC cell of Keonjhar Division.



# Argentinean Lessons

Argentina stands out as a glaring example of how the common man is affected when a political outsider subscribing to extreme-right rhetoric assumes power. In his first 12 months, the country's President Javier Milei has introduced drastic economic measures sparking protests since they have only augmented the distress of a population already plagued by economic ills. It may not be a coincidence that the first foreign leader to meet Donald Trump after his victory last November was Milei. He has been invited to the inauguration of the new President of the United States of America, Trump. This justifies Milei's rightist credentials beyond any doubt. Milei wanted support from Trump to shore up the floundering economy for which his policies are responsible, while Trump needed an avid follower from Latin America.

Milei had declared a war on bureaucrats, imposed drastic public spending cuts and sweeping deregulation of Latin America's second-largest economy. The outcome has been one of unmitigated disasters. A recession has already plunged more than half the country into poverty within the first six months of 2024. It is an irony of history that Milei did not so much win the last election as the previous government gifted victory to him. It is worth remembering that when voters gave their verdict in October 2023, monthly inflation stood at about 8 per cent. This caused so much anger and frustration with the established parties among the people, who feared an uncertain future, that they were looking for a change of leadership outside the ambit of known political outfits. Milei skilfully exploited their sentiments. Soon after his victory monthly inflation surpassed the level of the earlier government and soared to 25 per cent. However, it dropped back to about 3 per cent in November. One is persuaded to believe that Milei's public sector cuts were painful but necessary. Milei also devalued the peso, making domestic prices go up. However the later situation seems to have improved. His election campaign centred around replacing peso with dollar. There are reports of a very high social cost attached to Milei's austerity programme of slashing services and jobs. Many among the populace, just like India, are unable to afford health insurance, further straining underfunded public hospitals. Violent protests against these measures were witnessed in Buenos Aires last summer. Though the economy is showing signs of tentatively recovering from Milei's shock therapy, reports suggest more unrest is likely if living conditions do not improve in the next few months.

As things stand now, Milei's ability to prevent a backlash depends on external factors, which is why, experts say, he rushed to Trump to seek his blessings even before he could start his presidency. For, Argentina's \$44 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is running out and the government is seeking additional funds to ease currency controls without bringing about further devaluation of the peso. Such an eventuality may again cause inflation and damage Milei's popularity rating ahead of key congressional elections. The IMF, despite its support to Milei's measures so far, is wary of its dollars being used not for the purpose for which they are given. Since its 2018 financial crisis, Argentina has relied on IMF bailouts, while loans from Beijing have stood it in good stead. It has become Latin America's largest recipient of Chinese commercial funds. The problem is this dependency on China may prove counterproductive for Argentina as Trump is known for his insistence on disengaging from China.

## WISDOM CORNER

- If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.** - HENRY DAVID THOREAU
- Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.** - ALBERT EINSTEIN
- The greatest day in your life and mine is when we take total responsibility for our attitudes. That's the day we truly grow up.** - JOHN C. MAXWELL

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1526:** The Treaty of Madrid was signed by the Habsburg emperor Charles V (Charles I of Spain) and his prisoner Francis I, king of France, who had been captured during the Battle of Pavia in February 1525 and held prisoner until the conclusion of the treaty, when he was allowed to return to France.
- 1784:** The Continental Congress ratified the Peace of Paris (1783) with Great Britain, which recognized the independence of the United States.
- 1900:** Premiere of Giacomo Puccini's opera Tosca. The opera Tosca—a psychological drama of deceit and doubt composed by Giacomo Puccini, one of the greatest exponents of operatic realism—made its world premiere in Rome's Costanzi Theatre on this day in 1900.
- 1943:** Churchill, Roosevelt and de Gaulle meet to discuss WWII strategy. During the secret Casablanca Conference, the leaders agreed that the allied forces would accept nothing less than the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers.
- 1953:** Tito becomes President of Yugoslavia. The authoritarian leader became a unifying symbol in his country and is still known by many today.
- 1967:** The Summer of Love is launched with the Human Be-In. San Francisco was the epicenter of the Hippie Revolution, which soon influenced cultures around the world.
- 1997:** Greek archaeologists announced that they had discovered an ancient site in Athens that may have been Aristotle's Lyceum.

### LOL

#### PULL THE CAR

An out-of-towner drove his car into a ditch in a desolated area. Luckily, a local farmer came to help with his big strong horse named Buddy. He hitched Buddy up to the car and yelled, "Pull, Nellie, pull." Buddy didn't move. Then the farmer hollered, "Pull, Buster, pull." Buddy didn't respond. Once more the farmer commanded, "Pull, Jennie, pull." Nothing. Then the farmer nonchalantly said, "Pull, Buddy, pull." And the horse easily dragged the car out of the ditch. The motorist was most appreciative and very curious. He asked the farmer why he called his horse by the wrong name three times. The farmer said, "Oh, Buddy is blind, and if he thought he was the only one pulling, he wouldn't even try!"

## FOCUS WORK-LIFE BALANCE

# QUESTIONS FOR CMDs

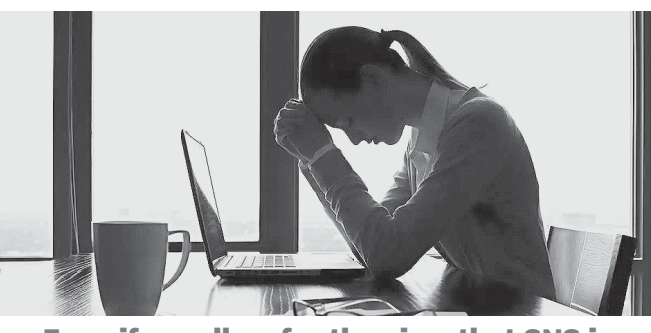
**S**NS, as the 60-year-old L&T CMD SN Subrahmanyan is known within the company, has raised quite a firestorm. He is not known to be the headline-seeking CEO living the high life, as some upstart CEOs tend to be. Here's a head honcho who chairs a conglomerate with a glorious history of some 80 years, with more than 50,000 people operating across 50 countries and with an annual turnover of over ₹2.2 lakh crore in 2024. It is almost unbelievable that such a senior leader would make the remarks of the kind he indeed has in a video that has now leaked – that, if he had his way, he would make employees work on Sundays since the other option, in his words, is to sit at home and stare at your wife. Who would want to do that! Never mind that many women are a proud part of the L&T success story, so that SNS comes across very poorly in more ways than one. Deepika Padukone is right in pointing out that the attempted recovery from this sorry mess only made it worse. Instead of making light of the remarks, which included a prescription of putting in 90 hours a week, the later attempt at explaining it as a call to nation building points to the insidiousness of the remarks. Was SNS hiding behind or doing one better than the obnoxious call of IT leaders like NR Narayana Murthy ("satanic" in the words of The Centre of Indian Trade Unions) in all seriousness seeking 70-hour weeks? The L&T explanation only makes it more likely for people to conclude that the remarks could not have been banter that misfired.



**THE CASES THAT COME TO LIGHT NOW AND THEN OFFER BUT A TINY PEEK INTO A LOT MORE THAT IS WRONG AT INDIA INC**

Even if we allow for the view that SNS is known for these kinds of detours and doesn't really mean it, there are larger issues that come to the spotlight on what CEOs in India can get away with. The cases that come to light now and then offer but a tiny peek into a lot more that is wrong at India Inc. This is not how the strength of "India's Yuva Shakti will make India a developed nation," to quote the Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking just this weekend at the 'Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2025'. These CEOs may want the political leadership to think they are singing the tune of the day but it's in the interest of the political leadership to be wary of such pretence. The disdain for Murthy and now SNS among employees and in general Gen Z is to be heard and seen (who will measure this important variable?) to be believed.

To the other issues that must be discussed so that all CXOs, not just SNS, are appropriately held to account and where required restrained by strong regulatory measures. Consider that SNS was paid a total remuneration of ₹51.05 crore for FY24, which is 534.57 times the median remuneration at L&T. It represents growth of 43.11% over what was paid to him last year. The remuneration is the highest of all employees, some 40% higher than the second highest paid employee at L&T, who is



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the President & CFOR Shankar Raman. How are employees who on average get one-fifth-hundredth of this meant to react to the comments of SNS? In this context, the first issue on the agenda for a "developed" India should be to put a ceiling on the amount that CXOs pay themselves, never mind the guardrails or formalities that they don't decide their salaries and that the Board does. In the Indian context, these formalities have not worked well enough, partly because our company Boards in themselves are often pliant and work as birds of a feather flocking together, a chosen few keeping themselves in the seat. Note that in the developed economy of Denmark, the home country of the L&T founders, the late Henning Holck-Larsen and Soren Toubro, the variable remuneration of executive directors comprises on average 37% of the fixed, according to a Deloitte report. In the case of the L&T CMD, it is 980% (salary of ₹3.6 crore, commission of ₹35.28 crore, as reported by L&T for 2024). Without grudging these packages, can it be fairly claimed that the performance of the group (the

basis on which commission is usually calculated) is because of the leadership being provided? And how does L&T calculate the losses on account of SNS' remarks, given that many talented candidates will now think twice about joining the company.

The next significant question that comes up is the complete absence of dissent in India's corporates. The language of sustainability, the appeal to innovativeness and the claim of DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) policies all ring hollow when it becomes clear that no one in Indian corporations, including in the biggest and the so-called best, challenges the boss. Why? The simple answer is that questions are not asked because questions are not encouraged, building a culture where hierarchy rules, the boss is to be always deemed right, and creativity almost by definition cannot thrive. The inner collapse of L&T is seen from the fact that no one challenged SNS in the undated video that has now become the cause of his misery. The problem is not that the video leaked. The problem is that SNS was not asked how he could even make such a statement. He got away for the moment, as our CEOs often do, only for the world outside to pull him down.

For India to harness the power and thinking of a new generation of leaders, the older lot will have to learn to live with more questions, with less judgement and some deeper realisation that they are not quite as extraordinary as they may imagine themselves to be. Since there is no evidence that is likely to happen anytime soon, the Indian establishment must act with a new set of regulations to bring the house to order.

*The writer is the Managing Editor of The Billion Press.*  
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## SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

# AI alone won't save the planet



**THE PARADOX IS THAT WE CONTINUE TO DEGRADE THE SYSTEMS THAT SUSTAIN LIFE ON EARTH DESPITE KNOWING MORE ABOUT THEIR FRAGILITY THAN EVER BEFORE**

At least 420 million hectares of forest globally have been lost to deforestation since 1990, causing biodiversity loss to accelerate and fueling climate volatility. Freshwater resources have declined so precipitously – owing to rising temperatures, groundwater mismanagement, saltwater intrusion, pollution, land degradation, and increased population density – that demand is predicted to exceed supply by 40% by 2030. And wildlife populations in freshwater habitats fell by 85% between 1970 and 2020.

**T**his year's annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, where participants will address the theme of "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age," comes at a critical juncture for the planet. Ecosystems are straining under the pressure of climate change, and the interconnected cycles that maintain freshwater availability, soil moisture, ocean health, and plant growth are spinning out of balance at an alarming pace.

While AI models can identify patterns, they often use incomplete or biased data, and thus lack important context. This is where "augmented intelligence" comes in. Augmented intelligence combines powerful algorithms with human knowledge and lived experience to ensure that these advanced tools account for cultural, economic, and ecological considerations.

For example, indigenous communities have learned how to manage resources sustainably by tracking nature's cycles and observing the environment for centuries. This expertise can help reveal subtle trends that data fail to capture, ensuring that technology serves real-world needs. Using both indigenous insights and scientific data has provided a more accurate picture of polar bear populations in Canada's Northwest Territories, while an AI-driven model that factored in such traditional knowledge has helped Inuit communities in

often look to technology – especially artificial intelligence – as a panacea. But AI alone cannot save the planet. Instead, we must ensure that AI complements, rather than replaces, human capabilities to realise its full potential.

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the Arctic identify new fishing grounds amid changing climate conditions.

But indigenous populations are not the only ones with valuable insights. Local communities and private-sector actors, from smallholder farmers to multinational corporations, accumulate site-specific data when responding to droughts, adopting regenerative agriculture practices, investing in biodiversity projects, and decarbonizing their supply chains. Sharing this knowledge, which reflects cultural traditions and economic realities and is enriched by human judgment, strengthens the data on which AI models rely. Humans and machines learn from each other, creating a feedback loop that leads to more effective solutions.

Greater openness fosters trust, which in turn accelerates the adoption and refinement of AI tools. Before long, the willingness to share data, insights, and innovations will be seen as a mark of leadership and prestige, rather than a risk. Those who advocate data sharing will facilitate collective progress, demonstrating the cooperation and wisdom needed to guide us toward a safe and healthy planet.

should be at the heart of global strategies for biodiversity conservation and climate mitigation and adaptation. Policymakers can take steps to bridge the gap between digital innovators and local environmental stewards. Businesses can align their investments with nature-positive goals and share any resulting knowledge. Innovators can create accessible tools that take into account cultural contexts and input from communities – turning top-down interventions into agile, responsive, and collaborative efforts.

When political leaders and executives convene in Davos, they must acknowledge that technology is not a cure-all for climate change and biodiversity loss. Without human guidance – bolstered by our capacity for empathy, cultural understanding, and ethical reasoning – it will be impossible to unlock AI's potential. In the Intelligent Age, coupling advanced tools with lived experience will enable us to transcend the zero-sum mentality that pits people against machines.

*The writer is Director of the Group on Earth Observations Secretariat.*  
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## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgah Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Making biopics

**Sir,** Film makers rush to cash-in on a popular, or unpopular, personality's fame to produce biopics or biographical films. These non-fictional films in the usual course should have evoked considerable curiosity. However, after "Gandhi" by Richard Attenborough, only a couple of biopics have turned heads in India. Biopics require extraordinary acting skills to do justice to the film's main protagonist, and casting has always been a challenge. The director's deft handling of the characters and his ability to maximise research are integral to the biopics. Ironically, the more the lead actor imitates the central role, the more the artificiality that is infused into the film. Obviously, when a politician is the centre-piece, the director's task will be herculean because knives will be out to dissect his intentions. Biographies, Mark Twain said, and it can apply to biopics as well, "are like clothes and buttons of an individual, the biography of the person himself cannot be written."

**Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA**

### Heavenly voice

**Sir,** He came, he sang, he conquered our hearts and he has left leaving behind melodies, memories and moments that every music lover and everyone who loves music and melody will cherish forever and ever. P Jayachandran is truly a legend - a 'bhavagayagan' - the emotional singer as he is called, who with his heavenly voice could mesmerise listeners and tune their hearts and souls in whichever way he wanted. He had a magical voice that could render soulful renditions that beautifully expressed emotions such as love, longing, and devotion. The singer, who recorded over 16,000 songs in Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Hindi sang songs that had repeated value. He sang from his heart that reached soothingly to the hearts of the listeners. A recipient of National Film Award he also won the Kerala government's J C Daniel award, Kerala State Film Awards five times and Tamil Nadu State Film Awards twice, besides an infinite number of awards for his contribution to music.

**M Pradyu, KANNUR**

# 1.65 crore take dip as Maha Kumbh begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mahakumbh Nagar (UP), Jan 13:** The fog was thick, the cold intense and the waters freezing as the Maha Kumbh, the world's largest gathering, began Monday with 1.65 crore people taking a dip in the Sangam in their quest for 'moksha' and the belief it will cleanse their sins.

Spirituality and astrology, culture and religion, tradition and modern-day technology... it all fused into one in the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati in Prayagraj.

More than 40 crore people, including many from abroad, are expected over 45 days in the mela being held after 12 years. Besides, seers claim the celestial permutations and combinations for the event are taking place after 144 years, making the occasion even more auspicious for the faithful.

And so it was that a sea of people converged in Prayagraj for the fabled Maha Kumbh. Ash smeared sadhus from their abode in the Himalayas, the religious from across the country and abroad and those just curious to take in the sights and sounds of the biggest religious spectacle of all, the Maha Kumbh beckoned them all.

Thirteen Akharas of seers from different sects are participating in the Maha Kumbh.

And as the famed mela formally began in the darkness of pre-dawn on the occasion of 'Paush Purnima' to the sound of conch shells and bhajans, the excitement was palpable in the sprawling Sangam area as devotees -- mostly in groups -- walked towards the waters chanting "Jai Ganga Maiyya", "Har Har Mahadev" and "Jai Shri Ram".

Former US Army soldier-turned-ascetic Michael joined the Juna Akhara and is now known as 'Baba Mokshapuri'.

## DEVOTION, TECH AND TRADITION FUSE IN SANGAM



Sharing his journey of transformation, he said, "I was an ordinary man with a family and career. But I realised that nothing in life is permanent, so I embarked on a quest for salvation. This is my first Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, and the spiritual vibes are extraordinary."

**Mahakumbh Nagar is the world's largest temporary city, accommodating 50 lakh to 1 crore devotees at any given time**

Also in the teeming crowd was Julie from Spain. "I am feeling grateful for this opportunity to dive into the sacred river here at the sacred point. I am fulfilled with bliss," she said.

"I practise yoga in Brazil, I have come here for 'moksha'. This one is very special, once in 144 years. India is like the spiritual height of the world. Sanatan Dharma is my mission of life and it changed my life, it changed the way I see the world, my family. Jai Shri Ram," added a devotee from Brazil.

In his message on the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a post on X that Maha Kumbh brings together countless people in a sacred confluence of faith, devotion and culture.

"The Maha Kumbh embodies India's timeless spiritual heritage and celebrates faith and harmony," he said.

A group of women from Uttar Pradesh's Siddharth Nagar was busy singing folk songs. And there was a team of YouTubers from South Korea capturing various shots of the Maha Kumbh as was a team from Japan.

Contingents from states across India were seen too at various ghats of Prayagraj. Appreciating the arrangements made for the devotees, Kailash Narayan Shukla from Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh said, "Good arrangements were made for the pilgrims and we had no problems in taking the holy dip."

Given the massive numbers of people, there were those who got inevitably separated from their groups - a recall in another era of a favourite Hindi film trope of siblings getting separated in the Kumbh Mela. The times have changed, however.

The Uttar Pradesh government implemented several crowd-control initiatives, including 'Bhula-Bhatka' camps, police assistance centres and deployment of personnel on specially constructed watchtowers.

Within the first couple of hours itself, more than 250

individuals got 'lost' but were 'found' thanks to efforts by the administration, officials said.

Ajay Goyal, a pilgrim from Delhi, shared his experience of being separated for an hour. "Just before we got separated, we had joked about how this often happens at Kumbh Melas in old Bollywood films. Luckily, we were reunited within the same Mela itself," Goyal said.

Sharing the numbers on X, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said in a post on X, "On the first bathing festival today, 1.50 crore Sanatan believers earned the holy benefit of bathing in the uninterrupted and clean Triveni." It is a massive logistical exercise for the government.

Mahakumbh Nagar is the world's largest temporary city, accommodating 50 lakh to 1 crore devotees at any given time, Adityanath said.

The first of the 'shahi snans', royal baths, takes place Tuesday, Makar Sankranti, when the numbers taking a dip in the waters are expected to rise. The last of the 'snans' will be on Mahashivratri February 26.

The origins of the Kumbh Mela go back in the folds of time.

The Rigveda speaks of a divine event called the "Sagar Manthan" or churning of the cosmic ocean, which is considered the genesis of the Maha Kumbh Mela, according to the website kumbh.gov.in.

Legend has it that during this cosmic churning, a pot (Kumbh) containing the elixir of immortality (amrita) emerged. The celestial struggle for possession led to a battle that spanned 12 days, equivalent to 12 human years. Drops of the nectar fell at four locations, Prayagraj, Ujjain, Nashik and Haridwar, where the Kumbh Mela is celebrated.

# In Kashmir, PM Modi assures all promises will be timely fulfilled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sonamarg (J&K), Jan 13:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday asserted that he would keep promises he had made to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, a statement seen as an oblique reference to the demand for restoration of statehood voiced strongly by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

"Yeh Modi hai, wada karta hai toh nibhata hai. Har kaam ka ek samay hai, aur sahi samay pe sahi kaam bhi hone wala hai (This is Modi who keeps his promises. And right things are going to happen at the right time)," the prime minister said at a large public meeting where he shared the stage with Abdullah after inaugurating a strategic 6.4-km tunnel between Srinagar with Sonamarg.

Terming Kashmir as India's crown, Prime Minister Modi also said the dream of 'Viksit Bharat' will be achieved only when this crown is bedecked with jewels.

Speaking earlier at the function, Abdullah pressed for the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir as promised by the prime minister before the assembly elections in September last year and said, "My heart believes that you will fulfil this promise soon."

"You also promised (assembly) elections within four months and you stayed true to your words," he said.

Without making a direct reference to the issue of statehood, Modi assured the gathering that all promises would be kept and the right things would happen at the right time.



The prime minister said he wishes Jammu and Kashmir to be beautiful and prosperous. "There is an atmosphere of peace in Jammu and Kashmir and we have seen its effect on tourism. Kashmir is writing a new saga of development today," he said.

Jammu and Kashmir of the 21st century is scripting a new chapter of development, he said and remarked that the region is regaining its identity as Paradise on Earth, leaving behind the difficult days of the past.

Modi said the Kashmir Valley will soon be connected by train and there is enthusiasm among people about it.

He also paid tributes to the seven people who were killed in a terror attack near the tunnel here October 20 last year.

After inaugurating the project, the prime minister went inside the tunnel and interacted with project officials. He also met construction workers who worked meticulously amid harsh conditions to complete the tunnel.

He thanked the labourers who worked hard and also put their lives at stake for the development of Jammu and Kashmir and India.

# Thousands throng Sonamarg to witness launch of tunnel by PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sonamarg (J&K), Jan 13:** Braving sub-zero temperature, thousands of people Monday thronged this picturesque village in Jammu and Kashmir's Ganderbal district to witness the inauguration of 6.5-km Z-Morh tunnel by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

They started assembling shortly after dawn at the venue of Modi's public meeting to see the dream project of Sonamarg hill resort along Srinagar-Leh national highway becoming an all weather destination.

Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari and Jitendra Singh, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah were among prominent persons in attendance.

This was Modi's first visit to Jammu and Kashmir after the formation of Abdullah-led National Conference government in October last year.

Immediately after reaching here, Modi, clad in a hooded waterproof black jacket, cut



the ribbon to inaugurate the tunnel, which was welcomed with thunderous applause and high-pitch sloganeering by the gathering.

The people had come to the venue from villages including Sonamarg, Kullam, Gagangir, Gund and Kangan.

The work on the Z-Morh tunnel began in May 2015. It took almost a decade to complete the project as the Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS), the initial concessionaire for executing the project, stopped work in 2018 due to financial stress.

The project was retendered in 2019 and awarded to APCO

Infratech in January 2020, which had emerged as the lowest bidder.

The foundation stone for the Rs 2,716.90 crore project was laid in October 2012 by CP Joshi, then Minister for Surface Transport during the UPA II government, in the presence of his then cabinet colleague Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi.

The tunnel was initially expected to be completed by 2016-2017.

The visibly excited locals termed this new project as a path-breaker for the tourism industry, considered to be the backbone of Jammu and Kashmir's economy.

"We are happy that this tunnel has been inaugurated by our prime minister. Now there will be 12-month connectivity with Sonamarg which will benefit the tourism sector in a big way. Everybody will benefit from this tunnel," Haji Wazir Mohammad, a resident of Kangan, told PTI.



A police barricade is placed to manage the crowd even as devotees jostle to reach the Sangam, on the first day of Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Monday

# Soldiers at Siachen glacier now have high-speed net

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Jan 13:** Soldiers posted at Siachen glacier, the highest battlefield in the world, can now enjoy high-speed internet services, the Army said Monday.

"Connectivity at the highest battlefield of the world. Fire and Fury Corps, in collaboration with Jio Telecom, successfully installed the first-ever 5G mobile tower on the Siachen glacier," the Army's Fire & Fury Corps said in a post on X.

This indomitable feat is dedicated to our brave soldiers who are deployed in challenging conditions. Fire and Fury Signallers and Siachen warriors overcame harsh terrain and extreme temperatures below -40 degrees Celsius to install the 5G BTS at North Glacier, it said.

Reliance Jio said it has successfully deployed plug-and-play pre-configured equipment at a



forward post, leveraging its indigenous full-stack 5G technology.

This achievement was made possible in coordination with Army Signallers from planning to multiple training sessions, system pre-configuration, and comprehensive testing, the company's spokesperson said.

The company said the Indian Army was pivotal in managing logistics, including airlifting Jio's equipment to Siachen Glacier. This collaboration ensured connectivity at 16,000 feet in the Karakoram range, an area characterised by extreme conditions, it added.

# Hashtag 'Ekta Ka Maha Kumbh' tops social media trends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mahakumbh Nagar (UP), Jan 13:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Monday hailed the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj as "Maha Kumbh of Unity", after which the message resonated widely on social media with hashtag 'Ekta\_Ka\_Maha\_Kumbh' trending on the opening day of the Mela.

Users started sharing posts with the hashtag 'Ekta\_Ka\_Maha\_Kumbh' in Hindi on social media platforms X and Instagram actively right since morning on Paush Purnima Snan Parv to celebrate the event's spiritual and cultural significance. By afternoon, the hashtag topped trending charts, showcasing widespread public participation and the collective spirit of unity symbolised by this historic gathering.

Thousands of users actively shared photos, videos and information related to the event,



sparking widespread engagement.

Several hashtags on Maha Kumbh were used in the posts but #Ekta\_Ka\_Maha\_Kumbh stood out as the most prominent one.

By 3.30pm, nearly 70,000 users had used the hashtag, sharing their experiences of the massive crowd during the Sangam Snan and the deep spiritual significance of the

Namami Gange, Gorakhpur MP Ravi Kishan, UP Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Shahi and minister Sandeep Singh.

The overwhelming social media response aligned with the message of unity emphasised by Prime Minister Modi and Chief Minister Adityanath, who described the Maha Kumbh as a "Maha Kumbh of Unity".

Adityanath had recently reaffirmed in a press conference that those who question the Sanatan faith should witness the Maha Kumbh, emphasising that it transcends distinctions of caste, creed and sect, bringing all together in the spirit of Sanatan harmony.

Alongside #Ekta\_Ka\_Maha\_Kumbh, several other hashtags trended throughout the day, capturing the spiritual fervour of the Maha Kumbh. Hashtags such as #MahaKumbh2025, #PaushPurnima, #PavitrSangam, #PrathamAmrit and #Sangam saw widespread engagement as social media users

expressed their reverence for the sacred event. Many also extended congratulations and best wishes to Chief Minister Adityanath for his efforts in ensuring the grandeur and spiritual magnificence of this historic Maha Kumbh.

## Selfie craze with cutouts of Modi, Adityanath in Kumbh

The Sangam bank in Prayagraj Monday became a hotspot with crowds flocking to take selfies with the cutouts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on the first bathing festival of the Maha Kumbh. The 45-day Maha Kumbh Mela will culminate February 26 with 40 crore devotees expected to take a dip in the Sangam. A sizeable number of women and youths gathered in large numbers at Nandi Dwar on Paush Purnima Snan to click photos and selfies, displaying their craze for Modi and Adityanath.



Just imagine my pain. Only a month back or so, we found on a particular seat in the Rajya Sabha, the Council of States, a wad of notes, ₹500 in denomination. What has really pained me is that no one has come to claim it

'NAG MK 2' TESTED SUCCESSFULLY

India has successfully carried out field evaluation trials of indigenously-developed third-generation anti-tank guided missile Nag Mk-2. The defence ministry said the trials were conducted recently at a firing range in Rajasthan's Pokhran in the presence of senior Army officers



of the day quote

It is the birth anniversary of D B Patil. In June 2022, the MVA government cabinet decided to name the Navi Mumbai International Airport as Shri DB Patil International Airport and sent the recommendation to the Union government



The state government is considering implementing a ban on liquor in religious cities by improving the policy and is serious about the suggestions given by saints in this regard



The selection committee structure of UGC Regulations 2025 is actually the format of UGC Regulations 2010. In this, a selection committee has been formed for the appointment of teachers and other academic staff and to maintain high standards



ARMY CHIEF ON EASTERN LADAKH

'Situation along LAC sensitive but stable'



Army Chief Gen Dwidedi said the violence level is being orchestrated by the epicentre of terrorism that is Pakistan

Coordination) on India-China border affairs. 'We will be moving forward based on the guidance emerging from the meetings,' he said. Calling India's military deployment along the LAC as balanced and robust, he said the Army is well poised to deal with any situation.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Army Chief Gen Dwidedi said the violence level is being orchestrated by the epicentre of terrorism that is Pakistan

New Delhi, Jan 13: Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwidedi Monday said there is still a degree of standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh and both sides need to sit down and firm up a broader understanding on how to calm down the situation.

The Army chief, addressing a press conference ahead of the Army Day January 15, also said that there was no such thing called buffer zones as a temporary moratorium was put on patrolling in certain areas to avoid chances of violence. Delving into changes witnessing the region since the face-off began in April 2020, Gen Dwidedi said both sides doctored the terrain, carried out constructions, made deployment of troops and resorted to stocking of military hardware.

India summons acting high commissioner of Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 13: India Monday summoned Bangladesh's acting High Commissioner Nural Islam and conveyed to him that New Delhi has followed all laid down protocols in the construction of fencing along the border between the two neighbours.

operative approach to combatting cross-border crimes. 'The Bangladesh acting high commissioner to India, Md Nural Islam was summoned by MEA to the South Block today at 2 pm,' an official readout said. 'It was conveyed that with regard to security measures at the border, including on fencing, India observed all protocols and agreements between the two governments and between the Border Security Force and Border Guard Bangladesh,' the MEA said in the readout.

Cal HC: Coal scam accused granted bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata: The Calcutta High Court granted bail to Vikas Mishra, an accused in an alleged coal scam being investigated by the CBI, in connection with a case of harassment of a minor, Monday. He was on judicial remand since his arrest by the Kolkata Police November 24 in connection with the case under the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act filed by the mother of the minor.

India's action came a day after Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma was called in by the neighbouring country's foreign ministry to express its 'deep concern' over the 'activities' of the Border Security Force. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said it was conveyed to Islam that India observed all protocols and agreements between the two governments on the security measures at the border and it expects that all earlier understandings will be implemented by Bangladesh along with a co-

From humble start to cutting-edge tech, IMD leads weather race at 150

Born out of calamities -- a devastating cyclone in 1864 and monsoon failures in 1866 and 1871 -- the IMD, turning 150 January 15, has transformed from a humble setup into a cutting-edge hub of weather science

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 13: From a few rain gauges in 1875 to rivalling the world's best weather agencies, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has weathered its way to becoming a global leader in forecasting. Born out of calamities -- a devastating cyclone in 1864 and monsoon failures in 1866 and 1871 -- the IMD, turning 150 January 15, has transformed from a humble setup into a cutting-edge hub of weather science.

country (undivided India) using data from 77 rain gauges. The IMD has come a long way since its modest start,' IMD Director General Mrutyunjaya Mohapatra told PTI. According to its 2023 report, the IMD operates 39 Doppler Weather Radars, INSAT 3D/3DR satellites providing 15-minute cloud updates, and a robust network of 806 Automatic Weather Stations, 200 Agro-AWS, 5,896 rain monitoring stations, 83 lightning sensors and 63 Pilot Balloon Stations. The IMD's key advancements include rapid severe weather assessments (2015), 6-minute cyclone scans (2018) and upgraded satellite systems.



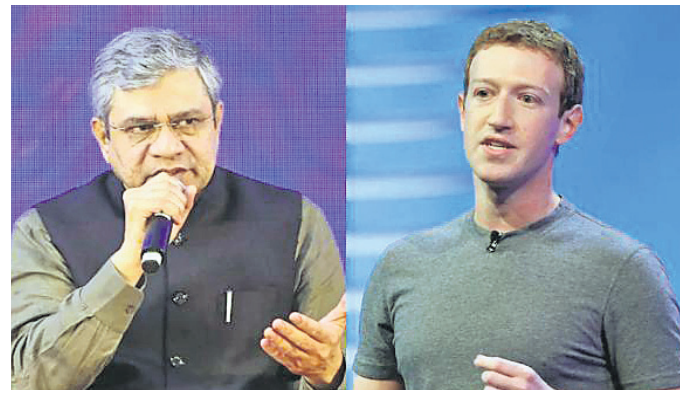
Its advanced numerical weather prediction models now deliver seamless forecasts from a few hours to an entire season, backed by high-resolution global models and seasonal forecast systems introduced between 2016 and 2021. Mohapatra said improvements in observations, communication, modelling and infrastructure have significantly enhanced weather and climate services.

As weather patterns grow more unpredictable globally due to the climate crisis, the IMD is taking a giant leap with 'Mission Mausam' to improve weather understanding and forecasting through expanded observation networks, better modelling and advanced tools like AI and machine learning

The mission includes creating a laboratory to artificially develop clouds, increasing the number of radars by over 150 per cent and adding new satellites, supercomputers and other innovations. The 24-hour forecast accuracy stands at 80 per cent for heavy rainfall, 86 per cent for thunderstorms and 88 per cent for heat and cold waves.

including 'Mausam', which provides weather forecasts for every location in the country. The IMD achieved all this despite India's complex weather patterns compared to many developed countries. 'Our weather challenges are more complex. Still, on a global level, the IMD is ranked among the top three weather agencies, the other two being the National Weather Service of the US and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts,' he said. The IMD not only serves India but also provides cyclone forecasts and warnings to 13 North Indian Ocean countries and weather services to SAARC nations.

Vaishnav fact-checks Zuckerberg on LS results



Zuckerberg, chairman and CEO of Meta Platforms, triggered a row by claiming in a podcast interview that the Indian government lost the election in 2024 due to its weak covid-19 response

information and broadcasting minister said, tagging Meta on X and other social media platforms. 'From free food for 800 million, 2.2 billion free vaccines, and aid to nations worldwide during covid, to leading India as the fastest-growing major economy, PM Modi's decisive 3rd-term victory is a testament to good governance and public trust,' he said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 13: Union minister Ashwini Vaishnav hit back at Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg Monday for making a 'factually incorrect' statement that the incumbent government in India lost the election in 2024 due to its handling of the covid-19 pandemic. Zuckerberg, chairman and CEO of Meta Platforms, triggered a row by claiming in a podcast interview that the Indian government lost the election in 2024 due to its weak covid-19 response.

Vaishnav said the world's largest democracy, India conducted the 2024 general election involving more than 640 million (64 crore) voters. 'People of India reaffirmed their trust in the NDA led by PM Narendra Modi Ji's leadership,' he added. Vaishnav said Zuckerberg's remarks failed to recognise these efforts and the strong mandate secured by the Indian government, and risked undermining the credibility of Meta's platforms.

Vaishnav opted for Meta's Facebook platform to call out Zuckerberg for spreading 'misinformation'. 'It is disappointing to see misinformation from Mr Zuckerberg himself. Let's uphold facts and credibility,' the Union

Mr Zuckerberg's claim that most incumbent governments, including India in the 2024 elections, lost post-covid is factually incorrect,' the minister said. Appearing on the Joe Rogan podcast, Zuckerberg said 2024 was the big election year around the world and in a lot of countries like India, the incumbents lost the polls.

Patna HC Chief Justice Chandran appointed as Supreme Court judge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 13: Patna High Court Chief Justice K Vinod Chandran was Monday elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court Collegium recommended Justice Chandran's name January 7, and his appointment was announced Monday by Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal in a post on X. Justice Chandran was appointed as a judge of the Kerala High Court November 8, 2011. He was elevated as the chief justice Patna High Court March 29, 2023. Once he takes oath as a judge of the top court, the working strength of the Supreme Court would rise to 33. Its sanctioned strength is 34, including the chief justice of India. 'He (Chandran) has served as a judge of the high court for more than 11 years and as a chief justice of a big high court for more than a year. During his long tenure as a judge and chief justice of the high court, Justice Chandran has acquired significant experience in diverse fields of law,' the collegium resolution said while recommending his name.

Bengal orders CID probe into 'expired' IV fluid issue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 13: The West Bengal government Monday ordered a CID probe into the death of a woman and three others falling critically ill after childbirth in a state-run hospital allegedly following administration of 'expired' intravenous fluid, Chief Secretary Manoj Pant said.

A 13-member committee, formed by the state health department, will investigate the matter parallelly, he said adding that strict action would be taken against those found responsible for the incident. The decisions were taken at a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, with senior officials of the health department. The CM also holds the health portfolio. 'We have asked the CID to investigate the matter. They will look into all aspects and find out whether there were procedural lapses and whether SOPs (standard operating procedures) were properly followed or not,' Pant said. The 13-member administrative committee which is technically qualified to look into the medical side will parallelly probe the matter, the chief secretary said. 'We have asked the committee to file the final report within three days and hopefully the CID will also be able to submit their findings in quick time,' he added. Pant said the CM held a review meeting with officials of the state health department and gave a clear direction that such negligence in administrative and procedural lapses will not be tolerated.



Nylon Manja worth ₹18 lakhs being destroyed during a 'Say To No Nylon Manja Abhiyan' run by Nagpur Police on the eve of Makar Sankranti festival, in Nagpur

SI dies by suicide in Tamil Nadu's Erode

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Erode (Tamil Nadu): A 38-year-old sub-inspector from Erode died by suicide Monday at his residence, police said. Sasikumar, who served as an SI at Erode Town Police Station, left for his house in Arachalur after completing his duty Sunday. Around 7 am Monday he contacted his higher officials over the phone. However, by 11 am, when the doors of his house remained closed, neighbours grew suspicious. They went to his residence and discovered that Sasikumar had hung himself, police said. The neighbours broke into the house, and took him to Erode Government District Headquarters Hospital around noon, where doctors declared him brought dead, police added.



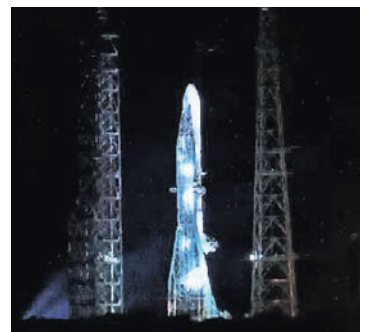


# international



The 51st state, that's not going to happen. But people are talking about that, as opposed to talking about what impact 25 per cent tariffs (has) on steel and aluminium coming into the United States  
JUSTIN TRUDEAU | OUTGOING PM, CANADA

**DEBUT LAUNCH ABORTED**  
Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin called off the launch of its New Glenn rocket after "a few anomalies" during the mission countdown Monday, postponing by at least a day an inaugural attempt to reach orbit and compete with SpaceX in the satellite launch market



## of the day quote

As Turkey, we are ready to do our part to ease the difficult path ahead for the Syrian people  
HAKAN FIDAN | FOREIGN MINISTER, TURKEY

The real question is: Does the rest of the world today believe that the United States is the undisputed heavy-weight champion of the world when it comes to our reservoir of national strength, our economy, our innovation base, our capacity to attract investment, our capacity to attract talent?  
JAKE SULLIVAN | NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER, WHITE HOUSE

Artificial intelligence will drive incredible change in our country. From teachers personalising lessons, to supporting small businesses with their record-keeping, to speeding up planning applications, it has the potential to transform the lives of working people  
KEIR STARMER | PRIME MINISTER, UK

# DRAGON'S NEW AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT SHIP

**China launches new warship with drone warfare capability**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, Jan 13:** The Chinese navy has launched an amphibious assault ship which will double up as a drone carrier, integrating the battleship with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), a Chinese naval official said. China's newly launched Type 076 amphibious assault ship will play a key role in boosting uncrewed combat capabilities, a navy commander has said in

the first official acknowledgement of the warship's widely speculated role as a drone carrier. In an interview aired by state broadcaster CCTV Sunday, People's Liberation Army (PLA) naval commander Chi Jianjun said efforts to integrate uncrewed or UAV systems into military training were already underway across the fleet, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported Monday. Chi is commander of the PLA's large destroyer, the domestically built Type 055 stealth guided-missile destroyer Nanchang.



The warship marked its fifth anniversary in service Sunday. In comments underscoring the growing role of drones and attack robots on the battlefield, Chi said "It's not just us de-

stroyers. Aircraft carriers, the newly launched Type 076, the earlier Type 075 [amphibious assault ship], and other vessels are and will all be involved. Uncrewed operations are an undeniable trend in modern warfare." China currently has two aircraft carriers in operation - the Liaoning, a refit of the Soviet-era ship commissioned in 2012 and Shandong, an indigenously built 2nd aircraft carrier commissioned in 2019. China's third aircraft carrier Fujian, which is larger than the two carriers with a displacement of 80,000, is currently undergoing trials.

## China working with gangs, shell firms to gain intel: Taiwan

**Taipei, Jan 13:** Taiwan's intelligence bureau says China's main spy agency is working with criminal gangs, shell companies and other dubious partners to gain intelligence on Taiwan's defences, resulting in a major rise in those arrested for alleged espionage on the island. Current and retired Taiwanese military personnel are a special concern, accounting for around half of the 64 alleged spies put on trial last year, it said. That number is up from 16 in 2021 and 10 in 2022. The arrests are in line with China's stepped-up campaign of military intimidation, economic coercion and "gray area" tactics such as utilizing the internet to promote unification and providing all-expense-paid trips to China to low-level government officials. According to a report released over the weekend by Taiwan's National Security Bureau, Chinese agents have sought to use the Taiwanese underworld to channel funds to those with information to sell. Gangs, many with origins dating to before the 1949 split between the two sides, are sought out, along with loan sharks, shell companies that can be used to launder funds, religious sects that sometimes engage in illegal activity, and non-profit groups, the report said. Some payments are made in cryptocurrency, while old-fashioned methods are also used such as sexual seduction to trap unsuspecting targets and pressure them to reveal secrets. That was the case of a one-star general, Lo Hsien-che, who was caught in such a scheme while stationed in Thailand, the bureau said. Among those arrested last year were 23 people working together in a spy ring, one of whom was sentenced to 20 years in prison, it said.

## RAGING INFERNO

# Firefighters brace for fierce winds

**LA races to contain wildfires before severe winds return**

REUTERS

**Los Angeles, Jan 13:** Firefighters raced to contain the frontiers of two Los Angeles wildfires that burned for the sixth straight day Sunday, taking advantage of a brief respite in hazardous conditions before high winds were expected to fan the flames anew. At least 24 people have died in what California Governor Gavin Newsom said could be the most devastating natural disaster in US history, one that has destroyed thousands of homes and forced 100,000 people to evacuate. Flames have reduced whole neighborhoods to smoldering ruins, leveling the homes of the rich and famous and ordinary folk alike, and leaving an apocalyptic landscape. Officials said at least 12,300 structures have been damaged or destroyed. "LA County had another night of unimaginable terror and heartbreak," Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath said. Aerial firefighters, some of them scooping water out of the Pacific Ocean, dropped water and retardant while land crews with hand tools and hoses held the line of the Palisades Fire as it encroached on the upscale Brentwood section and other populated areas of Los Angeles. That fire on the western side of town has consumed 23,713 acres (96 sq km) or 37 square miles and stood at 13% contained, a figure representing the percentage of the fire's perimeter that firefighters have



- Wildfires devastate Los Angeles, 24 dead, 100,000 evacuated
- Red flag conditions of high winds returning
- All of LA County warned anyone could be ordered to evacuate
- Seven states, Canada and Mexico send firefighters to help

under control. The Eaton Fire in the foothills east of Los Angeles scorched another 14,117 acres (57 sq km) or 22 square miles - itself nearly the size of Manhattan - and firefighters increased the containment to 27%, up from 15% a day earlier. North of the city, the Hurst Fire was 89% contained, and three other fires that had ravaged other parts of the county were now 100% contained, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) reported, though areas within the containment lines may still be burning. SEVERE WINDS RETURN Firefighters got a temporary break from the weather this weekend as Santa Ana winds, which reached hurricane force earlier in the week, finally eased. The dry winds originat-

## Gaza truce on anvil

Trump inauguration seen in region as de facto deadline

REUTERS

**Doha, Jan 13:** Mediators gave Israel and Hamas a final draft of a deal Monday to end the war in Gaza, an official briefed on the negotiations said, after a midnight "breakthrough" in talks attended by envoys of both Joe Biden and Donald Trump. The official said the text for a ceasefire and release of hostages was presented by Qatar to both sides at talks in Doha, which included the chiefs of Israel's Mossad and Shin Bet spy agencies and Qatar's prime minister. The official said Steve Witkoff, who will become US envoy when Trump returns to the US presidency next week, attended the talks. A US source said the outgoing Biden administration's envoy Brett McGurk was also there. "The next 24 hours will be pivotal to reaching the deal," the official said, characterising the draft as the outcome of a breakthrough reached in the early hours of Monday. Israel's Kan radio, citing an Israeli official, reported Monday that Israeli and Hamas delegations in Qatar had both received a draft, and that the



Israeli delegation had briefed Israel's leaders. Israel, Hamas and the foreign ministry of Qatar did not respond to requests for confirmation or comment. Officials on both sides, while stopping short of confirming that a final draft had been reached, described progress at the talks. A senior Israeli official said a deal could be sealed within a few days if Hamas replies to a proposal. A Palestinian official close to the talks said information from Doha was "very promising", adding: "Gaps were being narrowed and there is a big push toward an agreement if all goes well to the end." The United States, Qatar and Egypt have worked for more than a year on talks to end the war in Gaza, so far fruitlessly. Trump's January 20 inauguration is now widely seen in the region as a de facto deadline.

## SHORT TAKES

### Congo fighting rages

**Goma:** Several towns that fell to armed groups in eastern Congo's North Kivu and South Kivu provinces have been recaptured by government forces, a Congolese army spokesman said, even as the rebels have made advances in other areas amid intensified fighting in the conflict-battered region. Eastern Congo has been in conflict for decades with more than 100 armed groups, most of which are vying for territory in the vast and mineral-rich region near the border with Rwanda. The conflict has created one of the world's largest humanitarian crises with more than 7 million people displaced, including 100,000 who have fled their homes this year. The Congolese army said some of the recovered towns have been occupied by rebels for months, including Ngungu, a key town in the Masisi territory that is near the North Kivu provincial capital, Goma. Some Masisi villages, however, remain under the control of rebels, including its center known as the Masisi Center.

### Khan, Bushra in limbo

**Islamabad:** A Pakistani court Monday postponed for the third time the announcement of the verdict in the 190 million pounds Al-Qadir Trust corruption case against former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi. The Anti-Corruption Court in Islamabad has now set January 17 as the date for announcing the verdict. ATC Judge Nasir Javed Rana completed the hearing in the case December 18 but reserved the judgment until December 23. Later, he fixed January 6 as the date for announcing the verdict, Geo News reported. Judge Rana was on leave January 6 so the verdict was postponed until January 13.

### 40 farmers shot dead

**Dakar:** At least 40 farmers were killed in an attack by Muslim militants in northeast Nigeria's Borno state, a government official said Monday. The attack Sunday was suspected to have been carried out by extremists from the Boko Haram group and its breakaway faction that is loyal to the Islamic State group in Borno's Dumba community, said Borno state Governor Babagana Umara Zulum. He warned civilians to stay within designated "safe zones". Boko Haram, Nigeria's homegrown jihadist, took up arms in 2009 to fight Western education and impose their radical version of Islamic law. The conflict, now Africa's longest struggle with militancy, has spilled into Nigeria's northern neighbours.

## Turkey launches 'Year of the Family' targeting LGBTQ+

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Istanbul, Jan 13:** President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has marked the launch of Turkey's "Year of the Family" Monday with an attack on the LGBTQ+ community and the announcement of measures to boost birth rates. Citing the "historical truth that a strong family paves the way for a strong state," Erdogan unveiled a series of financial measures to support young families. The president returned to themes he has espoused before about LGBTQ+ people, including the portrayal of the LGBTQ+ movement as part of a foreign conspiracy aimed at undermining Turkey. "It is our common responsibility to protect our children and youth from harmful trends and perverse ideologies. Neoliberal cultural trends are crossing borders and penetrating all corners of the world," he told an audience in Ankara. "They also lead to LGBT and other



movements gaining ground." "The target of gender neutralisation policies, in which LGBT is used as a battering ram, is the family. Criticism of LGBT is immediately silenced, just like the legitimate criticisms of Zionism. Anyone who defends nature and the family is subject to heavy oppression." Despite its low profile in Turkey, the LGBTQ+ community has emerged as one of the main targets of the government and its supporters in recent years.

Pride parades have been banned since 2015, with those seeking to participate facing tear gas and police barricades. In recent years, meanwhile, anti-LGBTQ+ rallies have received state support. Turning to the "alarming" decline in the population growth rate, Erdogan said Turkey was "losing blood" and recalled his 2007 demand that families have at least three children. The president also pointed to people getting married later in

The target of gender neutralisation policies, in which LGBT is used as a battering ram, is the family. Criticism of LGBT is immediately silenced, just like the legitimate criticisms of Zionism. Anyone who defends nature and the family is subject to heavy oppression  
RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN | PRESIDENT, TURKEY

life and rising divorce rates as causes for concern. Turkey's annual population growth rate dropped from 2.53% in 2015 to 0.23% last year. "If we do not take the necessary measures, the problem will reach irreparable levels. In such an environment, population loss is inevitable," he added. To combat the threat to the family, Erdogan revealed policies such as interest-free loans for newlyweds; improved monetary allowances for the parents of new-born children; financial, counselling and housing support to encourage new families; and free or low-cost childcare.

## Croatia President wins another term after defeating ruling party candidate in runoff

*Milanovic is the most popular politician in Croatia, and is sometimes compared to US President-elect Donald Trump for his combative style of communication with political opponents*



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Zagreb, Jan 13:** Croatia's opposition-backed President Zoran Milanovic, a critic of the European Union and NATO, overwhelmingly won re-election for another five-year term Sunday, defeating a candidate from the ruling conservative party in a runoff vote, officials results showed. Milanovic won more than 74 per cent of the vote compared to his challenger Dragan Primorac, who received nearly 26 per cent, according to the results released by Croatia's state

election authorities after more than 99 per cent of the ballots were counted. The result presents a major boost for Milanovic, who is a critic of Western military support for Ukraine in its war against Russia. Milanovic is also a fierce opponent of Croatia's conservative Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic and his government. In a speech after the results were released, Milanovic said his victory was a sign of approval and trust from the voters but also presented a message "about the state of affairs in the country for those who need to hear it".



EL CLASICO

# Barca lift Super Cup

# Inaugural Kho Kho World Cup begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 13: The inaugural edition of Kho Kho World Cup opened here Monday with a spectacular ceremony with the Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar lighting the torch to officially signal the start of the showpiece.

Thousands of fans packed the Indira Gandhi Stadium with Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha among the dignitaries present on the occasion.

A colourful cultural performance preceded the official opening of the tournament.

A sand art projection - paying ode to Mother Earth - began the show, after which a ceremonial parade of the Indian flag filled the audience with pride.



The Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) then unveiled the World Cup trophy for both men's and women's tournament with the lifting of the cube, inviting loud cheers from the spectators.

After a stunning dance performance celebrating India, and highlighting the vibrant and colourful culture of the country, the athletes of the participating nations took a parade around the stadium.

Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports Raksha Khadse, Lieutenant Governor of Delhi Vinai Kumar Saxena, Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha, Rajya Sabha Member Rajeev Shukla and International Kho Kho Federation (IKKF) and Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) President Sudhanshu Mittal were the other dignitaries present.

Welcoming the players from 23 countries in the men's and women's competitions, Dhankhar said, "This has been a spectacular start to the tournament. It feels like the entire world is celebrating Kho Kho."

"I have an old relation with Kho Kho. The sport is an art, it requires agility, speed, cleverness. I wish all the participating nations the very best for the tournament," the vice-president said in his address.

Sports Minister Mandaviya said he had written to the Olympic Council of Asia to include Kho Kho in the Asian Games in the future.

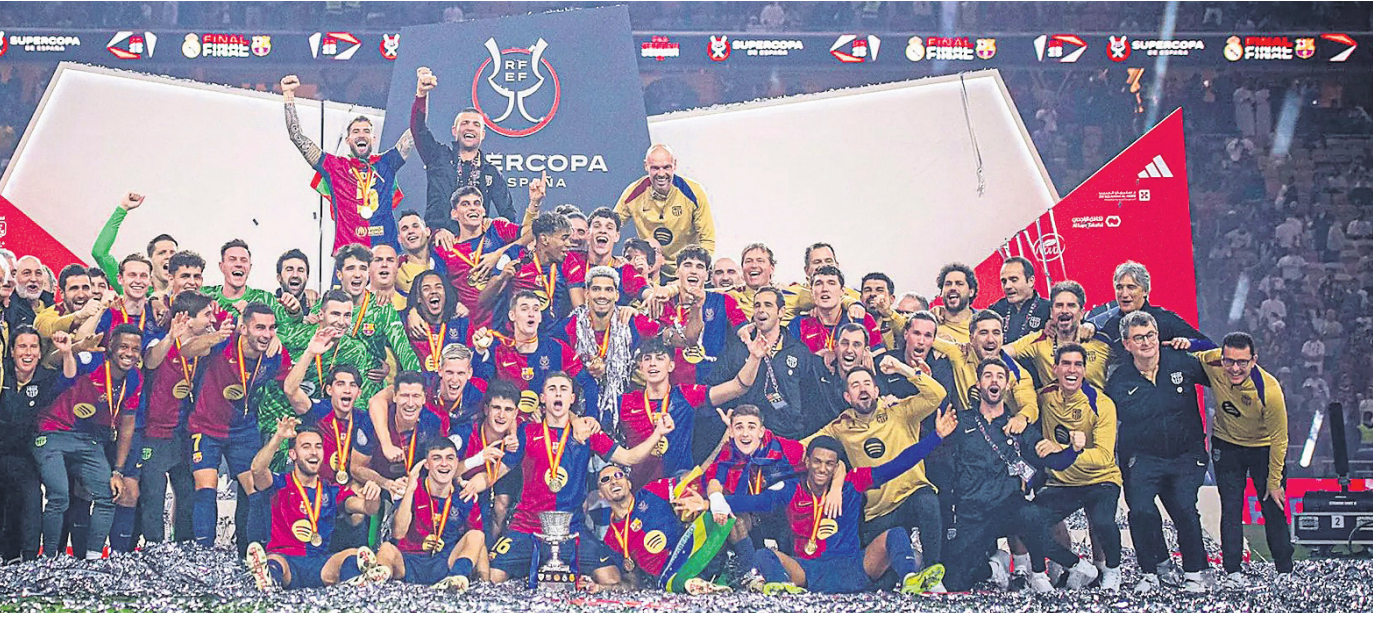
"I am proud to have India hosting this wonderful tournament. Kho Kho, which originated from India, is now being played across 50 countries. I hope to see Kho Kho being played at the Asian Games and the Olympics soon. I congratulate all the players from the 23 nations and extend my best wishes to everyone involved."

## INDIA DRAW FIRST BLOOD

India got off to a brilliant start in the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup as they registered a comfortable 42-37 victory over Nepal at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here Monday. Led by captain Pratik Waikar, India's all-round performance rounded off a magnificent day of Kho Kho action, providing the team with the perfect platform. India's bright start defined the match as they wrapped up Nepal's first three defenders just 60 seconds into Turn 1. Spearheaded by brilliant flying jumps from Pratik Waikar and Ranji Kashyap, India raced to a massive 14-point lead with three minutes remaining in Turn 1, having dismissed two batches of Nepal defenders.

Today's momentous occasion will go down in our golden history of sports. I am confident that in future, our own indigenous sports will reach the international level

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | VP



### Barcelona rout Real Madrid again to win Spanish Super Cup final 5-2

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Jan 13: Real Madrid came out looking for some payback in the latest "clasico" against Barcelona but ended up being embarrassed again.

Madrid lost 5-2 to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Sunday. That followed a 4-0 loss at home to Barcelona in the Spanish league in October.

Kylian Mbappé put Madrid ahead early in his second clasico, but Barcelona then ran away with goals by Lamine Yamal, Robert Lewandowski, Raphinha — who scored twice

The Christmas break helped us reflect on what we had done wrong. Now we can look forward to the run of games that we have until the end of the season

ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI | STRIKER, BARCELONA

It was a bad night. It's a disappointment, we won't hide it, but it's soccer... you have to try to learn from the losses. We have to look forward to what's ahead

CARLO ANCELOTTI | COACH, MADRID

"The Christmas break helped us reflect on what we had done wrong," Lewandowski said. "Now we can look forward to the run of games that we have until the end of the season."

Madrid lost for the first time after a run of five consecutive victories.

"It was a bad night," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "It's a disappointment, we won't hide it, but it's soccer... you have to try to learn from the losses. We have to look forward to what's ahead."

Mbappé had been contained

when the rivals met in October but scored a superb goal five minutes into the match at King Abdul-Lah Sports City stadium after picking up the ball just inside Madrid's half, running at the defense and then finding the net with a clever finish. But Yamal evened the match with a nice run in the 22nd and Lewandowski, who scored twice in the earlier clasico, put the Catalans ahead in the 36th.

Raphinha added goals in the 39th and 48th minutes, while Balde scored

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The result not only secured Barcelona their 15th Spanish Super Cup title but also reinforced their dominance in this fixture

## India Open: Hosts field largest-ever contingent

Spotlight on Satwik-Chirag as jumbo Indian contingent eyes end to two-year title drought

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 13: The contingent is the biggest ever but focus would be on a handful of tried-and-tested names, especially the men's doubles team of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, when Indian shuttlers go up against a world-class field in the India Open Super 750 tournament beginning here Tuesday.

Despite the name, Indian success at the tournament hasn't been particularly regular with none from the host nation winning any title in the past two editions.



The 21-strong group that will take the court this week would be desperate to change that statistic and make some amends after an ordinary Olympic campaign six months ago.

The expectations would be especially high from Satwik and Chirag, who claimed the doubles title in 2022, the same year in which the currently erratic Lakshya Sen notched the men's singles top honour.

The tournament will feature 18 of the world's top-20 men's singles players and 14 of the

### With marquee players like Olympic champions Viktor Axelsen (men) and An Se Young (women), and world No 1 Shi Yuqi leading the competition, it would be no stroll in the park for the Indians in fray

top-20 women's singles shuttlers.

Chirag and Satwik, who are former world number ones, have made a good start to the season by reaching the semifinals of the Malaysia Super 1000 last week.

Despite the Paris Games

disappointment, they have emerged as India's most reliable performers over the last two years by regularly making the deep end of the draws.

They would be expected to do the same in the \$950,000 event to be held at the KD Jadhav Indoor Stadium here.

Satwik and Chirag, semifinalists at the 2024 China Masters, will face Malaysia's Wei Chong Man and Kai Wun Tee in their opening round.

While the Indians have shown impressive form, they will be seeking improvement in quick rallies and service variations in a bid to better their runners-up position in the tournament last year.

However, the Indian pair will face stiff competition from top names such as China's Olympic silver-medallists Liang Wei and Wang Chang.

## Kerala Blasters down OFC



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 13: Odisha FC suffered a 3-2 reverse against Kerala Blasters FC at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Kochi Monday to extend their winless run to four games.

Jerry Mawia (4') and Dorielton (80') were the scorers for Odisha, while Kwame Peprah (60'), Jesus Jimenez (73'), and Noah Sadaoui (90+5') found the net for the home side. Odisha FC finished the game with 10 men, as former captain Carlos Delgado was sent off with a second yellow card.

The game started with a bang for Odisha FC, as they stunned the Kochi crowd by scoring in just the fourth minute. A long clearance from Thoiba Singh found Dorielton at the edge of the box. He headed the ball in to Jerry Mawia's path, and the winger calmly poked it into the net, silencing the home crowd.

Following the early goal, the

game became a midfield battle, with both teams struggling to create meaningful chances. Kerala Blasters managed to get into the opposition box occasionally but lacked sharpness in the final third.

The hosts came out with renewed energy after the break, piling on the pressure in search of an equaliser. Amey Ranawade made a crucial clearance in the 48th minute to deny Noah Sadaoui a clear chance. However, Kerala's persistence paid off in the 60th minute, as Kwame Peprah finally broke through, slotting home from inside the box to level the score.

The defeat leaves Odisha FC in 7th place with 21 points. They will remain on the road for their third straight away game, with the encounter against Bengaluru FC up next January 22 at the Kanteerava Stadium in Bangalore, with kickoff scheduled for 7:30 PM.

## Sr Nat'l Men's Kabaddi C'ship at Cuttack from Feb 20

Cuttack: For the first time, Odisha Kabaddi Association has announced to host the 71st National Senior Men's Kabaddi Championship Tournament from February 20-23 at the JN Indoor Stadium in Cuttack. In a press conference convened by Odisha Kabaddi Association at the Kabaddi complex of the Barabati Stadium, the date, venue and timing of the tournament was announced by Ajaya Kumar Behera, General Secretary of Odisha Kabaddi Association. About 400 players from 30 states and 50 more from five departmental teams are to participate in this tournament, informed Sanjay Behera, the secretary of the organising association. Many star players will join the event along with some promising Pro-Kabaddi players. A soul stirring theme song has exclusively been prepared in Hindi language to spice up the event and to maximise publicity. Ullash Chandra Behura, chief coordinator of this tournament briefed the press that mascot of the event and ambassador of the tournament will be declared very soon.



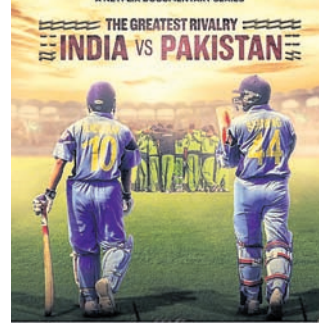
## Docu series on India-Pak rivalry soon

### 'The Greatest Rivalry' will narrate many untold stories of the first India-Pakistan ODI match as well as feature interviews of veterans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 13: 'The Greatest Rivalry - India vs Pakistan', a documentary series on the cricketing rivalry between India and Pakistan, is set to premiere on Netflix February 7, the streaming platform announced Monday.

According to a press release, the series aims to explore "the



drama, passion and high-stakes intensity of this rivalry on the home soil of both nations." It is directed by Chandradev Bhagat and Stewart Sugg.

'The Greatest Rivalry' will narrate many untold stories of the first India-Pakistan ODI match as well as feature interviews of former cricketers from

## Actor Ajith bags third spot at 24H Dubai race

AGENCIES

Dubai, Jan 13: Actor Ajith Kumar secured the 3rd spot at the 24H Dubai Race Sunday, despite facing a car crash during the practice session.

Initially, Ajith considered stepping back, but his indomitable spirit brought him back to the competition. With this, he not only made his team, Ajith Kumar Racing, proud but also, surprised his fans.

Taking to X (formerly known as Twitter), Ajith Kumar's manager revealed that the actor bagged the 3rd spot in the race. His tweet read, "Double whammy for Ajith kumar 3rd place in the 991 category and Spirit of the race in the gt4 category. What a remarkable comeback after an accident due to a break failure. #ajithkumar #AjithKumarRacing #24hdubai #AKRacing #DubaiRaceWeek-end #racing."

During the practice session, Ajith Kumar crashed his car into a barrier but was luckily left unhurt. Following the accident, the actor initially decided not to participate in the competition.

