

**BHUBANESWAR | THURSDAY | JANUARY 16, 2025** 

### Actor Bhumi Pednekar

reveals she got bullied in school as she didn't look like other popular girls LEISURE | P2

#### VOLUME 14, ISSUE 286 I www. orissapost.com

President Joe Biden prepares to hand over power to Prez-elect Donald Trump and exit politics after a decadeslong career

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Trade deficit narrows to \$21.94 billion after last month's shocking surge to a lifetime high

BUSINESS | P11

ndia complete a whitewash of Ireland with a massive 304-run win in women's ODI after amassing their highest-ever total of 435

### SPORTS | P12

### 12 PAGE | ₹5.00

'INADVERTENT ERROR'

er in the 2024 elections due to

The apology came within

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey,

who heads the Parliament's

Communications and Infor-

Meta India's Vice President

Shivnath Thukral took to X Wednesday to tender an apol-

ogy on behalf of the company.

days of Union Minister Ash

"inadvertent error".

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

### ED gets MHA nod to prosecute Kejriwal

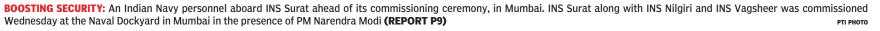
NEW DELHI: Ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, the Union Home Ministry has granted sanction to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to prosecute former Delhi chief minister and AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal in the excise policy linked money laundering case, officials said. The federal agency has filed a chargesheet against the 56-yearold politician before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court here last year after arresting him in March. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has recently granted the required sanction to the ED for prosecuting Kejriwal under the anti-money laundering law in the Delhi excise policy case, officials said. Kejriwal has been made made an accused in his personal capacity as well as in the capacity of being the national convenor of his political party AAP. The former chief minister was called the kingpin and key conspirator of the Delhi excise scam by the ED.



### LINGARAJ SERVITORS' **DISPUTE RESOLVED**

Bhubaneswar: Rituals at Lingaraj Temple, which remained suspended for the last three days following a scuffle between two groups of servitors over Makar Sankranti tradition, is set to resume after the dispute was resolved Wednesday evening. The 'Brahmin Nijog' and 'Badu Nijog' had disagreements over various ritualistic duties resulting in the standoff since Monday evening.Due to the disruption of rituals in the temple, the deity was not offered 'bhoga', and Makar Sankranti ceremonies were also not observed in the 11th-century shrine. Expressing concern over the issue, law minister Prithviraj Har-

ichandan held a meeting with representatives of different servitor groups of the temple earlier in the day and directed to hold a meeting of Lingaraj Temple Trust Board on an emergency basis to discuss the issue. **P**3



## Similipal big cats under threat

### POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Jan 15: Protection of Royal Bengal Tigers (RBTs) at Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Mayurbhanj district has emerged as a big challenge for the Forest department personnel as there is no let-up in poaching of national animal despite presence of AI cameras, watchtowers, strict surveillance measures, and multi-layered security arrangements in

the national park. Hunters have been targeting not only regular tigers but al-

Wednesday, exposing chinks in the current security measures.

While the government has been implementing extensive measures to ensure tiger safety, animal rights activists have expressed deep concern over the precarious state of the stripped animal. According to 2023 Tiger Census, Similipal is home to 27 adult RBTs and 12 cubs, including 16 melanistic ones.

A Forest department employee, requesting anonymity, revealed that three RBTs have been poached in the past one year. The poachers had re-

### **MELANISTIC TIGER HIDE SEIZED; 4 HELD**

Forest officials have arrested four people from Similipal after seizure of the skin and nails of a juvenile melanistic Royal Bengal Tiger from their possession, a senior official said Wednesday. The arrest and seizure were made Sunday during the crackdown by the special enforcement wing of Similipal South Wildlife Division, at Tentula and Balighat villages within limits of the Udala Police Station under Baripada Forest Division, STR Field Director, Prakash Chand Gogineni, said. The

case is under investigation and other people linked to the incident are absconding, Gogineni said the state-level Joint Task Force (JTF) is supporting the Similipa team in a thorough investigation into the matter. He said the four accused held in the case were produced before the court January 13 and sent to jail. The accused are residents of Tentala village under the jurisdiction of the Udala Police Station. he said. The four were arrested while attempting to negotiate the sale of the tiger skin. Sources said that the seizure of the tiger skin was followed by the arrest of some people in Balasore district recently and tiger claws were recovered from them. The interrogation of the people arrested in Balasore reportedly led to the seizure of the tiger skin, sources said.

ger hide and arrested suspects, including a doctor, who were produced in the court for prosecution.

Bhanu Mitra Acharya, an independent director of Odisha Forest Development Corporation (OFDC) and former honorary wildlife warden, expressed concern as the Forest department's security plans, fraught with modernisation challenges, were rendered ineffective.

The seizure of three tiger hides in the last six months "As the world's largest democracy, India conducted the has raised question marks on the efficiency of the depart-2024 elections with over 640 ment. Acharya stressed the need for stricter patrolling by forest staff, suggesting that patrolling on foot in forest paths could help apprehend poachers and prevent illegal poaching activities.

"Dear Honourable Minister @AshwiniVaishnaw, Mark's observation that many incumbent parties were not re-elect ed in 2024 elections holds true for several countries, BUT not India. We would like to apologise for this inadvertent error India remains an incredibly important country for @Meta and we look forward to being at the heart of its innovative future," he wrote.

Vaishnaw, earlier this week, had called out the remarks made by Zuckerberg on the Joe Rogan podcast.

"Mr Zuckerberg's claim that most incumbent governments, including India, in 2024 elections, lost post-COVID is factually incorrect,' Vaishnaw had said in a post on X January 13.

so the melanistic ones which are known for their distinctive black coat and exclusively found in Similipal wildlife sanctuary. Concerns about tiger safety resurfaced after the seizure of a black tiger hide

portedly skinned one tiger and smuggled its hide. Forest personnel recovered the mutilated tiger's head, claws, and teeth and arrested the accused persons, who were later produced in the court. However, the de-

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

partment allegedly tried to hush up the incident by filing a frivolous case. The incident occurred in Jenabil forest range but was

reportedly registered under Dukura range to cover it up. In another recent case, the Forest department seized a timillion voters. People of India reaffirmed their trust in NDA led by PM @narendramodi Ji's leadership," said Vaishnaw, who is Minister for Information and Broadcasting as well as IT.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Emergency... the declared one

### Israel, Hamas finally agree for ceasefire

Office of Israeli PM, however, said ceasefire deal was still not reached, adding that final details were being sorted out

#### ASSOCIATED PRESS

Doha, Jan 15: Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire deal, mediators announced Wednesday, pausing a devastating 15-month war in the Gaza Strip and raising the possibility of winding down the deadliest and most destructive fighting between the bitter enemies

The deal, coming after weeks of painstaking negotiations in the Qatari capital. promises the release of dozens of hostages held by Hamas in phases, the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in Israel and would allow hundreds of thousands of people displaced in Gaza to return to what remains of their homes. It also would flood badly needed humanitarian aid into a devastated territory.

Three officials from the US and one from Hamas confirmed that a deal had been reached, while a senior Israeli official said details are still being ironed out.

All three US officials requested anonymity to discuss the contours of the deal before the official announcement by mediators in Doha.

President Joe Biden was preparing to address the breakthrough agreement later Thursday, officials said.

Any agreement still needs to be approved by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanvahu's Cabinet, but is expected to go into effect in the coming days.

The deal is expected to deliver an initial six-week halt to fighting that is to be accompanied by the opening of negotiations on ending the war altogether.

Over six weeks, 33 of the nearly 100 hostages are to be reunited with their loved ones after months in captivity with no contact with the outside world, though it's unclear if all are alive.

It remained unclear exactly when and how many displaced Palestinians would be able to return to what remains of their homes and whether the agreement would lead to a complete end to the war and the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza — key Hamas

demands for releasing the re-

New Delhi, Jan 15: In a significant move, the US Wednesday removed restrictions on three

Indian nuclear entities, over a week after NSA Jake Sullivan announced that Washington was finalising steps to remove hurdles for civil nuclear partnership between Indian and American firms.

The three entities are Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Indira Gandhi Atomic Research Centre (IGCAR) and the Indian Rare Earths (IRE). according to the US Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS).

In an address at the IIT-Delhi last week, Sullivan said the US will remove regulations that have prevented cooperation between Indian nuclear entities and American companies.

The removal of the three key Indian entities is being seen as an attempt by the outgoing Biden administration to facilitate the implementation of the landmark India-US civil nuclear pact that was sealed 16 years back. The move comes five days ahead of Donald Trump's inauguration

as the 47th President of the US. India and the US unveiled an ambitious plan to cooperate in civil nuclear energy in July 2005 following then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's meeting with then American President George W Bush.

### US drops curbs on NEP implementation in schools **3 Indian N-entities**

#### POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 15: Following the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in all state-run universities and affiliated colleges, the state government Wednesday announced the policy's rollout in schools across the state. aligning with the National Curriculum Framework while also incorporating local context.

"After careful consideration,

#### ing the educational system in the state, the government is pleased to order that the National Education Policy 2020. as issued by the Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of India, will be implemented in the state of Odisha," read the notification issued by the School and Mass Education department.

in the interest of strengthen-

The notification further stated that the National Curriculum Framework, with local contextualisation, would be adopted as the state's curriculum framework. This means that the curricu-

lum will follow national guidelines but will also take into account the specific needs and culture of Odisha, ensuring a more relevant and engaging education for students.

Notably, the state government had, in November last year, announced the implementation of the NEP in all state-run universities and affiliated colleges from the current academic year.

### Indian startups make strides in space

PIXXEL, DIGANTARA LAUNCH CUTTING-EDGE SATELLITES TO MONITOR EARTH, SPACE OBJECTS

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore/New Delhi, Jan 15: Ahead of the National Startup Day Thursday, two Indian space start-ups -- Pixxel and Digantara -- Wednesday announced the launch of their satellites onboard a SpaceX rocket to closely monitor the earth and objects orbiting around it. marking a new era for the private firms in the space sector.

Pixxel became the first private company in India to have its own constellation of satellites using the cutting-edge hyper-spectral frequency that allows observation of the earth in



over 150 bands, a technology that is useful in sectors as diverse as agriculture and defence.

Digantara Aerospace announced the launch of the world's first commercial satellite - Space Camera for Object Tracking (SCOT) - for surveillance of objects as small as 5cm orbiting the earth to ensure safer space operations.

Surveillance of outer space or Situational Space Aware-

ness (SSA) is important to ensure the safety of spacecraft as NATIONAL STARTUP DAY

orbits around the earth become

crowded with artificial satel-

Pixxel's three Fireflies, cur-

rently the world's highest-res-

olution commercial-grade hy-

perspectral satellites, are six times sharper than the 30-metre

standard and are capable of cap-

turing fine details previously in-

visible to conventional systems.

tre hyperspectral is available.

That is what makes it unique,

not just in India, but globally,"

"For the first time a 5-me-

lites as well as space debris.

Pixxel co-founder and CEO Awais Ahmed told PTI.

Pixxel plans to launch three more Firefly satellites over the next two months and follow it up with 18 more in future.

Digantara CEO Anirudh Sharma said SCOT aimed to enhance space safety, optimise traffic management and bolster national security initiatives.

From the sun-synchronous orbit, SCOT will track objects in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) with greater efficiency than existing sensors, which are constrained by weather conditions, geo graphic limitations and restricted fields of view.



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### **M. SHYAMALAN FACING** S81MN COPYRIGHT TRIAL

Filmmaker M. Night Shyamalan is facing a trial over allegations that he copied from an independent film to make the streaming show Servant. Francesca Gregorini, an Italy born director, is suing Shyamalan, alleging that the show stole key elements from her 2013 movie, The Truth About Emanuel.

### HILARY DUFF OFFERS SHELTER **TO MANDY MOORE'S FAMILY**

Mandy Moore and her family are finding solace in the kindness of friends after losing their home to the ongoing wildfires ravaging parts of Los Angeles. The family of the actress and singer sought refuge with Hilary Duff and her husband Matthew Koma, following the destruction caused by the LA wildfires.



**Bhumi's** 

fortitude

Mumbai: Bhumi Pednekar's journey into the

world of films is inspirational. From a young

NE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com accuracy • reliability • trust

### You continue to be a kind

and cooperative person. You give generously and it pays back manifold, and today is one of those days. You will treat colleagues and subordinates like an extended family, and successfully mix business with pleasure. A rare ability, says Ganesha.

### TAURUS

Today, most of your time is likely to be taken up by fam-ily affairs domestic. You would be getting together with your family members and discuss related issues and solutions. The time so spent will be fruitful and satisfyng. New employment opportunities are expected to come your way. Avenues of additional income could be in store.

GEMINI Today, you will be emotional and practical at the same time. Academically, you will be at the top of your game. People around

you will be swept away by your charming and intelligent ways. By evening, you will divert your mind towards beautifying your home, feels Ganesha

### CANCER

It is highly probable that today you will recognise the importance of time in your profession. You will realise how long was the time that you wasted cribbing about how short is the deadline for the work allotted to you. Now that the deadline is approaching, you will learn that crying foul has only wasted your time and you have no choice but to do your job.

### LEO

phrase seems to have become your motto for the day as the stars dictate every possibility of you staying extremely busy with work. This might kill your appetite in the afternoon, warns Ganesha. But rest assured, the cravings will return in the evening and push you towards the idea of an elaborate dinner

### VIRGO

You will be a lot more selfless and giving today than most people have known you to be, feels Ganesha. Later in the day, you will reap the profits of the work you may have done with a partner or a friend. Evening may be a cocktail of business and pleasure as you attend or host a social gathering with friends, family and co-workers.

### LIBRA

t's smooth sailing for you today. Your eloquence shall take precedence, and your accomplishments as

Mumbai: The wait is finally over! Nora Fatehi Derulo for the much-anticipated song, Mum-Making the exciting announcement on bai: It poster of Snake on her official Instaseems like caption that read, "Snake 16.01.25." makers have also unveiled the veteran actress Manisha er of the track. The captivating Koirala is living the teaser suggest that Snake her life to the fullest.

just be a song, but a global phenomenon in the making.

Manisha mainstream

shares her life mantra to han-

dle and dropped of exciting photos from ductive days

Aside from entertaining

fans with her mag

netic on-screen

presence,

the Heera

mandi

also

keeps

social

media

game.

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cently took

her Instagram

She

on top

of her

actress

In one of the pictures, she can be seen soak ing in the winter sun in stylish attire. Meanwhile, another still has Manisha working on her laptop while enjoying a beverage. The last still shows her facing the camera with a small backpack, suggesting she might be heading off for another getaway soon. Shelling out her life mantra, Manisha wrote in the caption, "Setting a goal each day..

snaps from her trail in Nepal. Additionally, the actress also paid a visit to the Ghandruk Museum. For the unversed, Manisha was diagnosed with ovarian cancer back in 2012. The actress has focused on leading a healthy

life ever

since.

IANS

a couple one of her pro

Prior to this, the Bombay actress took to her official IG and posted

### Nora enters US music scene

Reacting to the post, thrilled fans penned comments such as "The duo world isn't ready for!!", "It will be the bomb of the season.", and "Woww waiting", among others.

If the previews are any hint, and mysterious world. While shimmery makeup and accompanies her in a Snake will mark will bring to-

Snake is expected to be set in a magical Nora poses in a white dress, with braided hairdo, Jason Derulo rugged denim jacket. Nora's entry into the American music scene. This association gether Derulo's signature pop style with Nora's Bollywood flair. IANS

has joined forces with American singer Jason

Snake. social media, Nora shared the first look gram handle, along with a Meanwhile, the gripping teasvisuals of will not

### age, she decided she wasn't going to follow the conventional path. "When I was young er, I got bullied in school because I didn't look the way the popular girls in school looked," she said at a recent event. "That's when I had decided that I may not be the conventional 'pretty' that people have set the standards for, but I will break those boundaries.<sup>3</sup>

This sense of determination has stayed with her throughout her life. Bhumi didn't have a clear way into the film industry, being a complete outsider She began behind the scenes, working in Yash Raj Films for six years "I didn't know how to get into the world of films," she admitted.

"It was destiny that I got my first job in a casting department. That wasn't part of my plan. It was my destiny," Bhumi recalled. Once she had her foot in the door, she set a clear goal "I decided that I will conduct every audition so well that di rectors will start asking me to become an actor, and I'll say 'No, no, sir, not me.' I was hop ing that they would convince me so much that I would eventually say yes. And thats exactly what happened," she shared Bhumi's career is a result of determination, both as a professional and as someone who's constantly redefining what success and beauty look like AGENCIES

MANANA'S ANNUAL THEATRE FESTIVAL: DAY III



Members of Dhenkanal-based drama troupe Alternative Rhythm Theatre (ART) performed Odia play *Debadasi* at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar. The play was written and directed by acclaimed theatre and Jatra personalityDinesh Dash. PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

A busy mind has no time for a hungry stomach. This

a person or achievements. But there is nothing wrong in that. Let your eloquence win everyone's hearts, including colleagues. You shall be able to sort out and complete pending projects by the end of the day.

### **SCORPIO**

The power of your personality will be under the scanner today, feels Ganesha. At

work, you will be occupied with looking for solutions to pending problems. Your creative outlook and innovation will help you find a way out of difficult situations. It is the most favourable day for getting the support of your colleagues or superiors, says Ganesha.

### SAGITTARIUS

Chances are high that you will be isolated and left to fend for yourself. Your resourcefulness and enterprising nature may be tested by an unpleasant situation. Seeking Ganesha's blessings can make all the difference.

### CAPRICORN

Nothing as melodramatic as a Bollywood saga, but you will pour your heart out in front of your family members, letting out your fears, concerns, regrets and every other feeling that has been building up inside you over the years, says Ganesha. The second half of the day will find you high

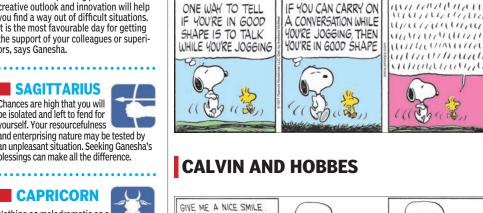
on energy, and you will go that extra mile to interact with your peers.

### **AQUARIUS**

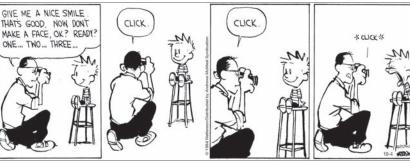
Today, you may finally appreciate the beauty of that valuable piece of abstract art in your living room! You have fine taste, but sometimes forget to see things from the heart. Your sensitivity is at an all-time high, says Ganesha, and consequently, you may even get touchy today.

### PISCES

You are likely to achieve a goal you have been slaving over for the past some time. However, keep your celebrations muted, for merely winning a battle does not win the war, says Ganesha.



PEANUTS



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35

I'M SORRY I

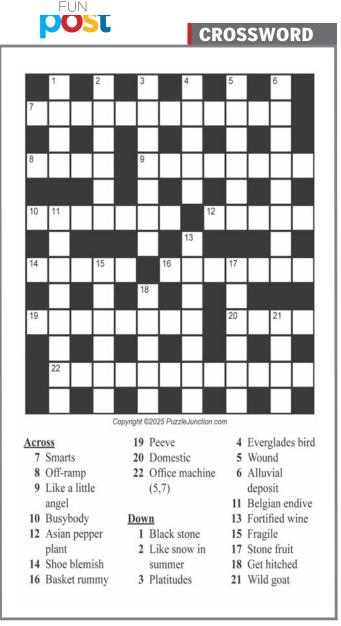
MENTIONED IT

(De)

### BREVITY

ONE ... TWO ... THREE

I'VE BEEN WORKING OTALIAN AT ITALIAN Ristorante RESTAURANTS FOR YEARS, BUT I STILL WORRY THAT SOUNDS LIKE A BAD CASE OF IMPASTA I'M NO GOOD AT COOKING NOODLES SYNDROME!



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

### 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.

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	7							
	1		8					7
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### SOLUTIONS

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6	1	5	9	8	4	3	7	2
3								



### owntown

### FOR A CAUSE

A Congress delegation meets CMC Commissioner Anam Charan Patra regarding alleged delay in execution of several projects in the Silver City, Wednesday



### White tiger cub, doe perish in City zoo



POST NEWS NETWORK

Barang, Jan 15: Tiger population at Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) here reduced to 27 as a white tiger cub died during treatment Wednesday. This apart, a doe (female deer) housed in the deer enclosure also died on the same day.

Sources at NZP said the tiger cub, born just two and a half months ago, had been unwell for quite some time. The cub was showing signs of weakness and refusing to feed on its mother's milk. It would often lie in a corner, displaying lethargic behaviour. The exact cause of the death can be ascertained once the post-mortem report comes, said the sources. Upon noticing its deteriorating condition, the zoo authorities moved the cub to the Animal Care Unit, where it received treatment. However, it died there.

The deceased cub's mother, Roopa, a white tigress, gave birth to four cubs November 2, 2024—three white and one with normal coloration. With this death, the tiger population at Nandankanan has reduced to 27, comprising 14 males, 10 females, and three cubs.

In another incident, a doe (female deer) housed in the deer enclosure also died. The animal suddenly fell ill while roaming and was immediately attended to by veterinary staffers. However, their efforts to save the doe proved futile, and it died later in the day.

The post-mortem reports of both animals are awaited to determine the exact cause of the deaths. The back-to-back deaths have raised concern among the authorities, prompting an assessment of the situation to prevent further loss of wildlife at the zoo.



EXPOSURE TRIP: Dharitri and Orissa POST Editor Tathagata Satpathy and Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy with Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), Dhenkanal students on the publications' office premises in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

# social security pension



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar. Jan 15: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday launched an enhanced social security pension scheme for individuals

More than 4 lakh elderly and differently-abled people, who were earlier receiving

Pension Scheme, will receive the enhanced pension.

Highlighting the achievements of his government, Majhi said, "Our government has been in power for only seven months, and during this time.

## **CM launches enhanced** Lingaraj row ends; rituals to resume

A judicial commission, headed by a retired High Court judge, will be formed to prepare a draft Record of Rights for conduct of various rituals by the different servitor groups in two months, says Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan

#### PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 15: Rituals at Lingaraj Temple which remained suspended for the last three days following a scuffle between two groups of servitors over Makar Sankranti tradition is set to resume after the dispute was resolved Wednesday evening.

The 'Brahmin Nijog' and 'Badu Nijog' had disagreements over various ritualistic duties resulting in the standoff since Monday evening.

Due to the disruption of rit uals in the temple, the deity was not offered 'Bhoga', and Makar Sankranti ceremonies were also not observed in the 11th century shrine.

Expressing concern over the issue, Law Minister Prithviraj

vitor, who fell ill at Srimandir,

was pronounced dead at a hos-

According to sources, Jagan-

nath Sunathali was perform-

ing rituals at the 12th century

shrine in the afternoon when

he complained of chest pain

rushed to the Sadar hospital.

where doctors declared him

'brought dead'. Cardiac arrest

is stated to be the cause of the

Soon, he was given CPR and

pital here Wednesday.

and fell unconscious.

servitor's death.

Harichandan held a meeting with representatives of different servitor groups of the temple earlier in the day and directed to hold a meeting of Lingaraj Temple Trust Board on an emergency basis to discuss the issue.

Accordingly, a meeting of the board was held under the chairmanship of Khurda district Collector Chanchal Rana. where the servitors agreed to resume the rituals.

Speaking to reporters, the Collector said, "A detailed discussion on the unfortunate incident (halting of rituals) was held with the heads of different servitor groups. It was decided in the meeting that the rituals of the temple will be resumed immediately with the cooperation of all stakeholders.



The Additional District Magistrate (ADM) has been asked to conduct a detailed inquiry into the incident and submit the report in 24 hours, he said.

"Those who are involved in the incident and tried to aggravate it would be taken to task. We will issue show-cause notices to those found guilty in the inquiry report and suspend them," the Collector informed. Rana said the suspension was minimum punishment.

"If needed, the government will revoke the landed property of the temple allocated to the servitors involved in the dispute. he added.

The Collector further said the temple administration will monitor the conduct of rituals of Lord Lingaraj on a daily ba sis

Earlier in the day, after hold ing the meeting, the Law Min ister said there are some anomalies in the Record of Rights of the temple. Therefore, a judicial commission headed by a retired High Court judge will be formed to prepare a draft Record of Rights for conduct of various rituals by the different servitor groups in two months

The Endowment Commission will implement the Record of Rights at the temple so that there will be no disturbance among servitor groups in future, he added.

"If there is any issue, the servitors should bring it to the notice of the Trust Board. If anyone halts the rituals of Lord Lingaraj, we will take strong action," warned the Minister.

aged 80 years and above, and those with disability of 80 per cent or above.

According to sources at the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), the beneficiaries, who were receiving ₹1,200 a month, will now get ₹3,500. The scheme will benefit 4,17,496 people across the state, the sources added.

Maihi launched the initiative at a function held at Dharanidhar University Ground in Keonjhar and distributed the enhanced social security pension to a few beneficiaries on the occasion.

Highlighting the significance of the initiative, the Chief Minister said the hiked pension is a step towards ensuring dignity and financial **₹1,200, will get ₹3,500 a month** 

security for our elderly and differently-abled population. "We have launched the scheme in Keonjhar today, and it will soon be extended to all other districts," Majhi said.

Emphasising the importance of respecting senior citizens, differently-abled individuals and the helpless, the Chief Minister said, "A society that respects and admires its senior citizens and vulnerable members is an ideal society.'

Majhi said all beneficiaries, including those under National Social Assistance Programme and Madhu Babu

we have taken several signif icant steps for the welfare of the people.' Two days ago, an agreement was signed to implement Avushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogva Yojana in the state which will provide

better healthcare facilities to the poor and needy. The Chief Minister also announced plans to establish a mega steel plant in Keonjhar, with the agreement expected to be signed during the 'Utkarsh

Odisha - Make in Odisha Conclave 2025' in Bhubaneswar at the end of this month. He added that the state

government is committed to setting up industries not only in Keonjhar but across all districts of Odisha.

### SERVITOR DIES Man gets 3-year RI for sexually abusing minor POST NEWS NETWORK Puri, Jan 15: A Suarbadu ser-

#### POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 15: A POCSO court here Wednesday awarded a three-year rigorous imprisonment (RI) to a man after holding him guilty of sexually abusing a minor girl under Khandagiri police limits in the City in 2019. "The court also slapped a penalty of ₹5.000 on the convict. Padmanav Jena. Failure to pay the penalty would entail an additional three-month of jail term," Special Public Prosecutor Rajib

#### Sasmal said.

Sasmal said the victim and Padmanav were neighbours. And Padmanav frequently visited her house.

"On March 8, 2019, the girl's father and brother were away. Finding her alone, Padmanav sexually abused the minor. The girl's elder sister, who was taking a shower, suddenly came out of the washroom and managed to overpower Padmanav," Sasmal said, adding that soon, Padmanav was handed over to police.

NABA DAS MURDER **Clarify stand on CBI probe: Dipali** 

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 15: BJD leader and former MLA Dipa li Das Wednesday urged the state government to clarify its position on a CBI probe into the murder of her father Naba Kishore Das allegedly by a po liceman January 29, 2023.

"In the last Assembly session, two BJP legislators raised the issue and a section of the media and social media are questioning why I am not demanding a CBI probe. As a daughter, I am hurt by such allegations. My question to the Mohan Majhi government is will it conduct a CBI probe Fingers are being pointed at our family. Will the government stand with us?" she asked.

"I appeal to the CM to meet our family, discuss the matter and then take further action, Dipali told a group of television reporters.

Asked whether the family demands a CBI probe into the murder case, Dipali said, "Does the government need a letter from us for this?

Several calls to contact her over phone by PTI remained unanswered. Dipali, who was elected as an MLA from Jharsuguda in a bypoll following the killing of her father, said her family is facing mental harassment due to such allega tions. She lost the seat to BJF candidate Tankadhar Tripathy in the 2024 Assembly polls.

The government is yet to re act on Dipali's remarks.

### HC commutes 9 convicts' capital punishment to life imprisonment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 15: The Orissa High Court Wednesday commuted the death sentence of nine persons convicted for killing three members of a family on suspicion of practising witchcraft in Rayagada district in 2016.

A division bench of justices Sangam Kumar Sahoo and Radha Krishna Pattanaik also ordered the state government to pay ₹30 lakh as assistance to the victims' kin under Odisha Victim Compensation Scheme 2018 within four weeks. The convicts were identified as Degunu Sabara, Dasuntu Sabara, Ajanta Sabara, Podantu Sabara, Dalasa Sabara, Malaku Sabara, Bubuna Sabara, Lakia Sabara and Iru Sabara, while the victims Asina Sabara, his wife Amabaya, and their daughter Asamani.



According to the case details, the convicts forcibly dragged the trio out of their house in Kitum village under Putasingh police limits in Rayagada district and took them to a nearby cowshed where they brutally assaulted the three September 9, 2016 on suspicion of practising witchcraft. As a result of the assault the three died. They then burnt the bodies to obliterate evidence.

The Rayagada District and Sessions Court had pronounced death sentence to the nine. However, the convicts moved the HC challenging the lower court order.

### Two injured in Woman stages dharna before lover's house leopard attack AGENCIES

Phulbani, Jan 15: Two persons were injured in separate leopard attacks in Mahipur forest area of Nayagarh district, an official said Wednesday

Pabitra Kumar Parida, forester of Gumi section, said Pramod Sahu from Karchuli village was attacked by a leopard while returning home Tuesday afternoon. Similarly, Saju Nayak from Sudrungi village, was also attacked by a leopard outside his home around 8pm on the same day, Parida said.

Both were admitted to the DHH in Nayagarh and are reported to be stable, sources said. "We are investigating both the cases. According to preliminary inquiry, the injuries were caused by a leopard," Parida said.

### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA Jajpur, Jan 15: A 22-vear-old woman staged a dharna in front of her lover's locked residence

in Jajpur district Wednesday, alleging that she was sexually exploited by the youth, who reneged on his promise to marry her The woman also lodged a

complaint with the police accusing her 25-year-old lover of taking cash and jewellery worth several lakhs of rupees from her.

A police officer said that they initiated an investigation into the matter and started a manhunt for the accused man and his family.

The drama unfolded Tuesday night after the woman and her lover returned to their village under Panikoili police station from New Delhi where they were staying together since last month.

The duo had eloped and went to the national capital after the man's family objected to their marriage proposal.

them to come back to the village so that their wedding could be arranged. After the two returned Tuesday night and womthe an got down from the car, the vehicle sped away with her lover on board.

The woman first went to her lover's residence which was locked from outside. She then walked to her own house where her parents did not allow her to enter. With no option left, she staged a dharna in front of her lover's house seeking justice for herself.

"He exploited me sexually, promising that he would

marry me. He has also taken away ₹4 lakh in cash and gold ornaments worth over ₹3 lakh from But me. he ditched me," she alleged. The po

lice vinced woman to lodge a written complaint. "Based on the complaint, we have registered a

con-

the

case and started an investigation. The accused and his family members have fled the village. We are looking for them," said a police official.

Police said the man's family had recently asked The drama unfolded Tuesday

night after the woman and her lover returned to their village under Panikoili police station from New **Delhi where they were** staying together since last month



THURSDAY | JANUARY 16, 2025 | BHUBANESWAR

### owntown



## **First state-level insurance** committee meeting held

Forum takes key steps to strengthen insurance ecosystem in Odisha



#### POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 15: The first meeting of the state-level insurance committee (SLIC) was held here Wednesday, chaired by Development Commissioner cum Additional Chief Secretary, Anu Garg.

During the meeting, Garg emphasised that SLIC should operate as a tripartite mechanism involving the Insurance **Regulatory and Development** Authority of India (IRDAI), the state government, and insurance companies. She called for setting a gold standard in the insurance sector, akin to

### **SLIC's role will** include evaluating

the state's insurance coverage and suggesting measures to increase

penetration. with the goal of achieving "Insurance for All" by 2036

the SLBC in banking. SLIC's role will include evaluating the state's insurance coverage

and suggesting measures to increase penetration, with the goal of achieving "Insurance for All" by 2036

A key topic discussed was the poor claim settlement under the PM Fasal Bima Yojana. The committee expressed concern over this and directed the insurance companies to prioritise claim settlements. Garg also urged insurers to make insurance more accessible to the public by offering affordable products, bridging the trust gap between insurers and policyholders, and using technology-driven platforms, including AI, to speed up and maximize claim settlements. Additionally, a strong grievance redressal mechanism was recommended to enhance the state's insurance ecosystem.

The committee appointed Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India as the nodal lead insurer for SLIC from the four lead insurers appointed by IRDAI, including Bharti Axa Life, Shriram General Insurance, and Zurich Kotak General Insurance.

It was also decided to form relevant sub-committees to address issues in various insurance sectors such as Life, Crop, Motor, and Health insurance.



Students perform a play on Buxi Jagabandhu at the 51st annual day celebration of BJEM School in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

### H&FW dept reviews HMPV preparedness

#### POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar. Jan 15: Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department, under the chairmanship of department's commissioner-cum-secretary Aswathy S organised a review meeting on HMPV here Wednesday.

Previously, the state government had advised not to panic or worry about the HMPV virus. Both Central and state governments and the World Health Organisation are keeping a close eye on it. No effect of



National Centre for Disease Control (IDSP NCDC), AIIMS Bhubaneswar, Regional Med-The state government is fulical Research Centre (RMRC) ly prepared for any eventuality. and ILS are keeping a close assured Aswathy S. All major institutions like Integrated Diswatch he added.

Infections can be easily pre-

vented through widespread public awareness and precautions. Therefore, the depart ment is requesting the public to pay special attention to personal and environmental cleanliness at all times. The secretary appealed to the public saying, 'Being aware is safe'

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

Health Services director Bi jaya Kumar Mohapatra, Pub lic Health director Nilakantha Mishra, Medical Education and Training director Santosh Kumar Mishra were present in the

### review meeting. **Dy CM Parida meets NCW chairperson**

### CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Shekh Sadik, S/o Late Sekh Munna, resident of Ward No.9, Chhatrapur, P.O./P.S.-Soro, Dist.-Balasore, Pin-756045 Odisha, declare by this affidavit No.201 dated 15.01.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as SHEKH SADIK for all future purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit before the Notary Public, Bhubaneswar on 15.01.2025, affidavit No. 195. I, Umakanta Mohapatra, S/o Ugrasen Swain, Village- Kuanrpur, p.o.-Kantapada, p.s.-Olatpur, Dist.- Cuttack, Odisha do hereby solemnly affirm that my Matric (10th) documents and passport card name mentioned as Umakanta Mahapatra but all another documents name is mentioned as Umakanta Mohapatra. So I shall be known as Umakanta Mohapatra for all purposes.

### **Aaina's Dhwani Film** Festival from Oct 14

### POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 15: The 10th edition of the Dhwani Film Festival will be held October 14 and 15, informed the festival chairperson Jitendra Kumar Biswal at a press meet here Wednesday.

Biswal, at the press conference highlighted the growing attention on the lives of differently- abled people in today's world. He emphasised how advancements in technology and evolving societal rules are breaking barriers, enhancing accessibility, and empowering differently-abled individuals.

The festival, organised by Aaina will showcase films made by or about differently-abled persons, focusing on their courage and triumphs. The 10th edition of the festival will highlight the empowerment and active involvement of differently-abled persons in various fields. nicipal services. "We aim to shift the narrative by celebrating their strength, resilience, and achievements. Through these films, we want to inspire audiences and showcase the full potential of differently-abled individuals." Biswal said.

### BMC launches WhatsApp chatbot for citizen services



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 15: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Wednesday launched a WhatsApp chatbot application to enhance accessi-

erty tax payments, trade licenses. birth and death certificates, and grievance redressal

Speaking at the MoU signing ceremony, BMC Mayor Sulochana Das highlighted the importance of smart solutions in fostering community partic ipation. "BMC is committed to providing better facilities for citizens through innovative technology," she said. As part of its digital push. BMC, in partnership with IndusInd Bank and EmerTech RnD Solutions Private Limited, also developed a Market and Vending

#### Zone Rental Collection App.

state, the secretary said.

ease Surveillance Programme

The application is designed to streamline the rental collection process, ensuring efficiency and transparency in managing municipal markets and vending zones

### **General Council Meeting**

At its 27th General Council meeting held Wednesday, the BMC announced the formation of seven Enforcement squads These teams will focus on managing street vending, removing encroachments, enforcing trade licenses, and implementing Odisha Development Authorities (ODA) Act directives

Mayor Sulochana Das urged corporators to identify land in their respective wards to resettle vendors displaced during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

### POST NEWS NETWORK

leadership.

Bhubaneswar, Jan 15: Dep uty Chief Minister Pravati Parida called upon National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Vijaya Kishore Rahatkar in New Delhi Wednesday

Parida congratulated Rahatkar for the new responsibility and said, "Having known Vijaya Rahatkar for a long time, she has deep knowledge about the challenges faced by women."

Deputy CM Parida expressed confidence in the success of the NCW in the field of women's empowerment, protection of rights and encouraging strong

### BPIA seizes ₹4cr marijuana

BHUBANESWAR: In a significant bust, a joint operation by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and Customs at Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) led to the seizure of

justice for victims of gender-based violence.

Rahatkar took charge as

chairperson of the NCW Oc

tober 22, 2024. She is the ninth

chairperson of the NCW and

succeeds Rekha Sharma.

Rahatkar emphasised her commitment to advancing

women's rights and ensuring

N	<b>IARKE</b>	T WAT	CH	A
II	NDEX	VARIATI	DN	
RSES	SENSEX	76724.08	4	224.45
Bou	NIFTY	23213.20	4	37.15
ENCY	DOLLAR	86.51	¥	0.19
CURR	EURO	89.16	4	0.16
SES	GOLD	₹ <b>78,437</b>	4	₹281
BOUR	SILVER	₹ <b>91,893</b>	4	₹1.337

bility and transparency in mu-

The initiative, introduced in collaboration with IndusInd Bank and PeLocal Fintech Private Limited, was formalised with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The chatbot will allow residents to access services such as prop-

The BMC also decided to relocate shopkeepers who have set up illegal roadside stalls to designated vending zones or newly planned neighbourhood markets.

"These steps aim to balance urban order and livelihood needs while ensuring proper use of public spaces," said Das.

of waste annually, a number ex-

pected to rise with accelerating

Clean Air Network (ICAN) re-

port, Bhubaneswar produces

500 tons of solid waste daily, in-

cluding 30 tons of plastic waste.

According to a recent India

urbanisation

3.9 kg of marijuana, valued at ap proximately ₹4 crore. A Kerala mar was arrested in connection with the case. The passenger, who had arrived on a flight from Bangkok to Bhubaneswar on January 14, had concealed the marijuana inside snack and biscuit packets to evade airport security. Acting on intelligence inputs, officials searched his luggage and found the drugs hidden in four snack packets and eight vacuum-sealed polythene bags.

The report highlights that the

City's waste composition con-

sists of 61.81 per cent biode-

### Managing MSW to address growing environmental issues

POST NEWS NETWORK

Experts emphasised the need

for effective waste management

to safeguard public health, en-

sure environmental sustain-

ability, and enhance quality of

life during a session titled Solid

Waste Management: A Matter

of Serious Concern, organised

by the Orissa Environmental

The programme was organ-

ised under the chairmanship

of OES president Sundara

Narayana Patro and working

president Jaya Krushna Pan-

igrahi. Panelists including

Ministry of Environment, For-

est and Climate Change (MoEF-

Society here Wednesday.

### LOST

I, Banalata Sahoo, W/o- Surendra Kumar Sahoo, R/o-At/ Po-Balaramprasad, Ps- Khandapada, Dist-Nayagarh, declare by an affidavit Sl.No.35, Dtd-10/01/2025 sworn before the Executive Magistrate Gania. I have lost the original Regd. Sale Deed No. 909/2000, dt-18/10/2000. Inspite of my best effort it couldn't be traced out. If anyone finds it please contact 9937716949.

CC) former advisor Veerendra Pratap Upadhyay, SPCB former Bhubaneswar, Jan 15: Muhead of Bhubaneswar regional nicipal Solid Waste (MSW) office Hadibandhu Panigrahi management has become a and former chief environmenpressing concern amid rapid tal scientist Surjya Sankar urbanisation, industrialisa-Mishra joined the session. tion, and population growth.

Experts discussed in details about the existing rules, various provisions, proposed amendments and finally made certain suggestions that will be submitted to the Ministry of Environment for inclusion in the final amendment.

A significant portion of municipal solid waste (MSW) remains uncollected or inadequately managed, resulting in environmental issues like overflowing landfills, water contamination, and air and soil pollution, experts noted.

In India, the waste management process encompasses collection, segregation, trans-



portation, processing, and disposal.

However, it faces substantial challenges due to limited infrastructure, low public awareness, and improper disposal practices. The country generates over 62 million tons gradables, 27.15 per cent inert materials, 7.8 per cent plastic and leather, and 1.25 per cent metal and glass. "The City's growing waste management crisis is exacerbated by challenges at major landfill sites and systemic in-

efficiencies," the report states. To address such issues, the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) introduced the 'Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules' in 2000, providing guidelines for managing urban waste. These rules were revised in 2016 under the 'Solid Waste Management Rules' to enhance efficiency and promote environmentally friendly practices.

The key provisions of the rules include waste segregation at the source, door-to-door co lection, waste processing and recycling, extended producer responsibility and sanitary landfills for safe disposal of re sidual waste. The 'Swachh Bharat Mis-

sion' launched in 2014 aims to improve cleanliness and waste management in urban and ru ral areas, which promotes cre ation of waste-to-energy plants

Despite these efforts, the success of MSW management in the country is hampered by factors such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of enforce ment of rules and insufficient public awareness.

Keeping these in view, the MoEFCC is now carrying out further improvements in the form of Rules 2025 and has in vited suggestions from all the stakeholders to make them more effective.

#### TACI SSIFIED CON BOOKING FOR AD ISEMEN OUR ER -51

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488 Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816 Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookieman-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion-Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.





## state



### NH-16 to get 2 overbridges

Construction set to begin in February



POST NEWS NETWORK

Gopalpur, Jan 15: The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) will construct two overbridges and six underpasses on National Highway-16 in Ganjam district in order to ease traffic and prevent accidents, according to sources.

The stretch of NH-16 from Andhra Pradesh border to Puintola Square in Ganiam district has become a death zone as frequent accidents have claimed numerous lives and devastated many families. For years, locals have been demanding construction of an

overbridge to address the safety

concerns, and now, the govern-

ment has finally taken up the

The NHAI has announced

that construction of over-

bridges and underpasses will

commence soon at key acci-

dent-prone intersections along

this stretch. Major overbridges

will be constructed at Jagan-

matter

nathpur Square and Lanjipalli Bypass. Additionally, underpasses will be built at various critical locations, including the IRE Square in Chhatrapur, Haladiapadar, Kanisi Haat, Randa, Golonthara Chati, and Surala Junction.

The groundwork for the project gained momentum last November when tenders were invited by the NHAI. The tender process was completed in December, and a joint consultancy firm from Maharashtra and Odisha has been entrusted with the construction work. The project, scheduled to begin in February, is expected to be completed within 18 months.

Once completed, these key infrastructure projects are anticipated to significantly reduce accidents and improve traffic flow, thereby ensuring safety of commuters along the highway.



EUPHORIC MOOD: Artistes and officials participate in a group dance during a procession as Dhanu Yatra kicks off in Sambalpur Wednesday

## **Govt seeks report on DMF scam**

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar/Hatadihi, Jan 15: The state Planning and Convergence department has sought a report pertaining to alleged irregularities in the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) funds in Keonjhar district.

The allegations include advance salary payments to Project Management Unit (PMU) staff hired by E&Y LLP, absence of required documentation, attendance registers, absentee statements and unauthorised increase in staff strength. Allegations were levelled on these issues August 23, 2024

The matter came to the fore in reply to a query obtained under Right to Information (RTI) Act in DMF letter (No. 2250/9) dated October 2024.

Following the allegations, the state Planning and Con-Keonjhar DMF had engaged vergence department issued a Gurgaon-based firm E&Y LLP



letter dated January 15, 2025, in 2017 under a three-year to Keonjhar Collector and DMF agreement to operate as the chairperson, directing them to PMU. submit a detailed report.

In a meeting held June 13, According to the complaint. 2019, the DMF executive committee deemed the PMU's performance satisfactory, and directed for an increase in staff strength and their salaries. However, this action reportedly exceeded the committee's authority under Rule 6 of the Odisha DMF Rules (ODMF), 2015

Subsequently, the same firm renewed its agreement April 7, 2022 and has continued operations till date. The firm also reportedly received an advance payment of ₹1,70,55,720 which is 10 per cent of the agreement's value as salaries for employees August 16, 2022.

The state Planning and Convergence department has directed immediate submission of a fact-based report to clarify these allegations.

The CEO of DMF filed a report September 20, 2024 (via memo No. 2129/25) regarding allegations and related matters. According to contractual terms and conditions, an inspection

report was submitted, and an advance payment of ₹1.70 crore was made to the organisation concerned

The investigation report highlights significant points. particularly that the inspection report did not mention an agreement for the advance pay ment to the organisation.

The agreement specifies that 10 per cent of the monthly remuneration will be allocated for an action plan and inspection report, while 90 per cent will be allocated for the monthly progress report, totaling 100 per cent of the remuneration to the organisation.

Funds worth ₹1.70 crore were disbursed to the organisation as advance for employee remuneration from April 7, 2022, to April 6, 2025. It is also mentioned that the monthly remuneration would be adjusted against the advance

Raighar, Jan 15: Six masked miscreants allegedly attacked a businessman with sticks and looted ₹15 lakh from him in broad daylight at Raighar in Nabarangpur district Wednesday.

According to reports, Raighar-based businessman Abdul Ansari, along with his two employees, Guddu Dhoba and Yunus Lathia, was on his way to the weekly market at Chhatabeda under Parua panchayat around 10:30am, when the assailants intercepted them. The gang also attacked the trio with sticks before fleeing with a bag containing the cash.

The victims are being treated

Bizman robbed of ₹15L at Raighar hospital. Sub-inspector Manoj Behera is investigating the incident, while Umarkote SDPO Meenakshi

> Thakur is overseeing the inquiry Notably, masked miscre ants continue to wreak havoo in Nabarangpur as another daylight robbery had taken place in Darubandha Sahi of Nabarangpur town January 13. A gang tied up the wife of businessman Saroj Mohanty, threatened her with a knife and made away with ₹20 lakh in cash and 100 grams of gold ornaments.

> Two back-to-back armed rob beries in 48 hours have created panic among locals and raised questions about police efforts to combat the rising street crimes

MAHANADI COALFIELDS LIMITED (A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited) Jagruti Vihar, Burla - 768020, Dist. - Sambalpur, Odisha PABX) : 0663-2542461 to 469 Website : www.mal NOTICE All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for

procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd www.coalindia.in, respective subsidiary Company, (MCL, www.mahanadicoal.in), CIL e-Procurement portal https://coalindiatenders.nic.in and Central Public Procurement Portal https://eprocure.gov.in. In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal https://gem.gov.in R-5238



## 2 couples in police net for duping job seekers

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Jan 15: Two couples have been arrested for allegedly cheating at least 11 job seekers of over ₹11.70 lakh in

#### ₹2 lakh from one Bulu Jena of Hinjili area to sell a land located at Berhampur to him about a year ago. Bulu, who has a grocery shop in Salia Sahi in

Bhubaneswar, has come in con-

# Illegal fishing threat to turtles in Gahirmatha

kill the forest personnel on board.

Police registered a case and arrested the trawler owner,

Ganjam district on the pretext of getting them jobs in a company at Bhubaneswar, police said Wednesday



The arrested couples identified as Ganesh Nayak, 42, his wife Tapaswini Singh, 40, of Nilagiri area in Balasore district and Bipin Patra, 35, and his wife Bijuli Patra, 32, of Patharabandha village near Bhubaneswar. They were staying in rented houses in Ganjam district's Hinjili area, said the police.

According to police, Ganesh. who is the mastermind of the cheating case, also has several criminal antecedents in Bhubaneswar.

"We are also verifying the record of criminal activities of Ganesh and other accused persons in other police stations," said inspector-in-charge (IIC), Hinjili police station, Srinibash Sethi.

Police said Ganesh had taken

tact with Ganesh and his friend Bipin, while they were staying in Salia Sahi in the Capital city.

Families of Ganesh and Bipin shifted to Hinjili about eight months ago and staved at Kaniiama in rented houses. During their stay at Hinjili, they also allegedly cheated at least 11 job seekers to provide jobs in a company in Bhubaneswar. The couples had taken huge sum of money ranging from ₹45,000 to over ₹3.50 lakh from each of the victims on different dates, he said.

As the victims did not get a job, they demanded return of their money from the couples several times. However, the accused couples urged them to wait for some more days. The victims, however, caught them Sunday, when they were planning to flee from Hinjili. They handed over them to the police and lodged an FIR against them. The police took them into custody Monday.

"We have registered a cheating case against the couples and started an investigation. Preliminary investigation has revealed the couples had duped ₹11.70 lakh from 11 persons," said Sethi.



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar, Jan 15: Unlawful fishing activity has taken a heavy toll on the endangered Olive Ridley turtles as forest officials recovered the carcass of turtle weighing 40kg from a trawler seized during a face-off with fishermen illegally fishing in the prohibited zone of Gahirmatha marine sanctuary during the fishing ban, Sunday. The seizure of the turtle is indicative of the serious threat posed to the marine species. The incident has sparked concern among the nature lovers and wildlife enthusiasts. Two GPS sets, three VHF sets, 11 trawl-

ing nets and 20 quintal fish were also seized from the trawler. Gahirmatha is the world's largest and most important nesting beach for the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles

The fishermen and the trawler owners are not only fishing in Gahirmatha despite ban but have unleashed a reign of terror in the seawaters.

Lack of proper action has only emboldened them as they catch fish as well as turtles with impunity.

Reports said forest officials seized a trawler named Chandi Tarini-3 during the encounter with the illegal fishermen in Gahirmatha Sunday. During verification, forest officials seized the dead turtle from the seized trawler.

Later, the forest department filed an FIR at Talachua Marine police station on charges of trying to sink the patrol vessel of the department and Abinash Kumar Navak, from Sasanpeta village under Mahakalapara block of Kendrapara district and produced him in the court. The driver of the trawler was arrested earlier.

According to the complaint lodged by forester Suresh Chandra Prusty, he along with 13 other forest personnel was patrolling in the sea when they seized a trawler with fishermen illegally fishing in the sea. Losing no time, the trawler driver Madhabananda Mallick alerted the owner Abinash over a VHF set.

Directed by Abinash, fishermen on board another Chandi Tarini trawler and four other trawlers attacked the patrol vessel and tried to sink it in the sea. They even threatened the forest personnel of dire consequences and snatched away eight fishermen on board the seized trawler.

The forest personnel had a close shave as they fired in the air to disperse the miscreants. Meanwhile, alerted over the Sunday's incident, forest officials led by ACF Manas Kumar Das have intensified patrolling in the sea.

#### No: 88 Date: 08/01/2025

No. E-679:- This is to notify all concerned that the tender for engagement of agency for providing House Keeping Services & Security Services on outsource basis at Govt. Hospital in the District Nayagarh under "NIRMAL", Published in the tender call notice No. 17 Dt. 22.02.2024 & No. 18 Dt. 22.02.2022 respectively is here by cancelled. The participating bidders are requested to collect their EMD and sealed copy of the price bid on any working day from the office of the undersigned.

Sd./

CDM & PHO -cum-District Mission Director, Nayagarh OIPR-10050/11/0003/2425



### IGH docs perform complex surgery on 18-yr old

#### RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

Rourkela, Jan 15: Doctors at Ispat General Hospital (IGH) here successfully performed a critical plastic surgery on an 18-year-old male patient from Banki Karamtoli hamlet of Indrapur village under Raiboga tehsil in Sundargarh district. according to IGH sources. The patient, a beneficiary

of Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY), was admitted to IGH December 26, 2024, following a road ac-

cident, the sources added. The patient arrived at the hospital with a minor head injury, a laceration on the left side of his face, and a downward-outward displacement of his left eveball. Diagnostic tests revealed a complex fracture involving the left



lary complex and the orbital floor.

A meticulous surgical plan was worked out to address the injuries. The

procedure included fixing the fractures with mini plates and screws and suturing the facial lacerations. Although the patient's vision could not be assessed preoperatively, the surgical team successfully restored his eyesight. Post-surgery, the patient was able to count fingers at a distance of six feet, and full evelid movement was restored.

The challenging surgery was led by GS Sahoo, a plastic surgery specialist, with significant contributions from Ruby Singh, senior consultant in plastic surgery, and Smita Kujur, senior consultant in anaesthesia. Nursing staff, under the supervision of sister Seema, provided seamless postoperative care. The patient was discharged after recovery.

<b>OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER</b>	
<b>RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BARGARH</b>	

Email: rd\_bgh@yahoo.co.in, Gmail: rwd.bgh@gmail.com No.O-1236 e-Procurement Notice No.ONLINE-BGH-15 OF 2024-25

1 Name of the Work 2 EMD		Road works during 2024-25 in the district of Bargarh @1% of the estimated cost put to tender						
3 Other details		As per DTCN						
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification	Availability online fo		Last date and time of seeking tender	Date and Time of opening of			
Officer	No.	From	То	clarification	tender			
1	2	3	4	5	6			
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Bargarh	ONLINE- BGH-15 OF 2024-25	16.01.2025 at 11.00 A.M.	22.01.2025 upto 5.00 P.M.	22.01.2025 upto 4.00 P.M.	24.01.2025 at 11.00 A.M.			
Further details can be s			0		ion, Bargarh			













## power post

### FOCUS EMPLOYMENT

There is no greater pride and glory than to be a perfect instrument of the Master.

**SRI AUROBINDO** 

### **Digital Predicaments**

Athematician Cathy O'Neil once said that an algorithm is nothing more than someone's opinion embedded in code. When we speak of "the algorithms" that power Facebook, X, TikTok, YouTube, or Google Search, we are really talking about choices made by their owners about what information we, as users, should see. In these cases, "algorithm" is just a fancy name for an editorial line. Each outlet has a process of sourcing, filtering, and ranking information that is structurally identical to the editorial work carried out in media – except that it is largely automated.

This automated editorial process, far more than its analog counterpart, is concentrated in the hands of billionaires and monopolies. Moreover, it has contributed to a well-documented list of social ills, including large-scale disinformation, political polarization and extremism, negative mental-health impacts, and the defunding of journalism. Worse, social-media moguls are now doubling down, seizing the opportunity of a regulation-free operating environment under Donald Trump to roll back content-moderation programmes.

But regulation alone is not enough, as Europe has discovered. If our traditional media landscape featured only a couple of outlets that each flouted the public interest, we would not think twice about using every available tool to foster media pluralism. There is no reason to accept in social media and search what we would

not tolerate in legacy media.

Fortunately, alternatives are emerging. Bluesky, a younger social-media platform that recently surpassed 26 million users, was built for pluralism: anyone can create a feed based on any algorithm they choose, and anyone can subscribe to it. For users, this opens many different windows onto the world, and people can also choose their sources of content moderation to fit their preferences. Bluesky does not use your data to profile you for advertisers, and if you decide you no longer like the platform, you can move your data and followers to another provider without any disruption.

Bluesky's potential does not stop there. The product is based on an open protocol, which means anyone can build on top of the underlying technology to create their own feeds or even entirely new social applications. While Bluesky created a Twitter-like microblogging app on this protocol, the same infrastructure can be used to run alternatives to Instagram or TikTok, or to create totally novel services – all without users having to create new accounts.

In this emerging digital world, known as "the Atmosphere" (so named for the underlying AT Protocol), people have begun creating social apps for everything from recipe sharing and book reviews to long-form blogging. And owing to the diversity of feeds and tools that enable communities or third parties to collaborate

on content moderation, it will be much harder for harassment and disinformation campaigns to gain traction.

One can compare an open protocol to public roads and related infrastructure. They follow certain parameters but permit a great variety of creative uses. The road network can convey freight or tourists, and be used by cars, buses, or trucks. We might decide collectively to give more of it to public transportation, and it generally requires only minimal adjustments to accommodate electric cars, bikes, and even vehicles that had not been invented when most of it was built, such as electric scooters.

An open protocol that is operated as public infrastructure has comparable properties: our feeds are free to encompass any number of topics, reflecting any number of opinions. We can tap into social-media channels specialised for knitting, bird watching, or book piles, or for more general news consumption. We can decide how our posts may or may not be used to train AI models, and we can ensure that the protocol is collectively governed, rather than being at the mercy of some billionaire's dictatorial whims. Nobody wants to drive on a road where the fast lane is reserved for Cybertrucks and the far right. "Open social media," as it is known, provides the opportunity to realise the internet's original promise: user agency, not billionaire control. It is also a key component of national security. Many countries are now grappling with the reality that their critical digital infrastructure - social, search, commerce, advertising, browsers, operating systems, and more - is subordinated to foreign, increasingly hostile, companies. But even open protocols can become subject to corporate capture and manipulation. Bluesky itself will certainly have to contend with the usual forms of pressure from venture capitalists. As its CTO, Paul Frazee, points out, every profit-driven social-media company "is a future adversary" of its own users, since it will come under pressure to prioritize profits over users' welfare. "That's why we did this whole thing, so other apps could replace us if/when it happens. Infrastructure may be privately provided, but it can be properly governed only by its stakeholders – openly and democratically. For this reason, we must all set our minds on building institutions that can govern a new, truly social digital infrastructure. That is why I have joined other technology and governance experts to launch the Atlas Project, a foundation whose mission is to establish open, independent social-media governance, and to foster a rich ecosystem of new applications on top of the shared "AT Protocol." Our goal is to become a countervailing force that can durably support social media operated in the public interest. Our launch is accompanied by the release of an open letter signed by high-profile Bluesky users such as the actor Mark Ruffalo and renowned figures in technology and academia such as Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales and Shoshana Zuboff. There is nothing esoteric about our digital predicaments. Despite the technology industry's claims, social media is media, and it should be held to the same standards we expect from traditional outlets. Digital infrastructure is infrastructure, and it should be governed in the public interest

# **GIG WORKERS' WOES**

ot an employee. No employer. No fixed working hours. Unlimited income. Work flexibility. Freedom to work or not on any given day. These are the apparent and enviable characteristics of a gig worker. A utopian situation indeed! But there is more to it than meets the eye. Undoubtedly, the gig economy has grown splendidly fast and is growing faster. It is already contributing a big sum to the GDP, to the exchequer, and more so to gig platforms. But all this, to call a spade a spade, is at the cost of exploiting gig workers.

which stresses gig work to be

outside the traditional employ-

Some 7.7 million workers

(2.6% of non-agricultural work-

ers or 1.5% of the workforce) are

engaged in gig work in India by

2020-21 as per NITI Aayog's es-

timate although the accuracy

of data is not guaranteed. The

actual number could be more

than double this number as per

other estimates. The number is

likely to reach 23.5 million (6.7%

non-agricultural and 7% of total)

by 2029-30. The Boston Consult-

ing Group puts the number of

gig workers number in India at

15 million in 2021 and estimates

it to increase to 90 million. It is

likely to add 1.25% to GDP in the

Undoubtedly the gig econ-

omy, the offspring of new

technology, and new modes of

production and distribution, is

booming and changing econom-

ic and social relations in tan-

dem. The resultant outcomes

are not difficult to discern giv-

en the trends, experiences, and

accumulated evidence of the gig

economy, particularly of the

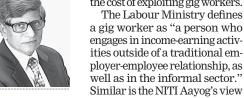
digital platforms induced urban

concentrated (deeply prevalent

in about 300 cities) gig work.

next eight to ten years.

er-employee arrangement.



PSM Rao

TO PUT IT STRAIGHT, MAKE THE GIG ECONOMY A PART OF THE ORGANISED SECTOR TO SAVE OUR YOUTH AND TO TAKE THE BEST OUT OF OUR SO-CALLED DEMOGRAPHIC

DIVIDEND



While technology is the facilitator and medium for the gig economy, its true begetter is the neo-liberal economic policy and the fertile ground it created

While technology is the facilitator and medium for the gig economy, its true begetter is the neo-liberal economic policy and the fertile ground it created. Some key policy effects unmistakably drive home the point. Firstly, the growth of Indian economy has been jobless. The employment elasticity has been declining. For instance, between 2000-2012 employment grew by 1.6% against the increase in GVA of 6.2%. While the GVA further increased to 6.7% between 2012 and 2019 the employment grew at 0.01%, as per ILO-IHD's India Employment Report 2024. Secondly, employment

growth was of poor quality; 90% informally employed. Due to the nature of employment growth since 2019, informal employment in total has been increasing.

Thirdly, the production process has been capital-intensive and labour-saving naturally with the increasing profit maximization motive of business owners with the newfound support of economic policies. Fourthly, as the ILO report notes, "digitalization and introduction of new technologies are changing the structure of industrial employment. There has been a rapid introduction of digitally mediated gig and platform work, which are algorithmically controlled by platforms and have brought

about new features in control

of the labour process. Increasingly, platform and gig work have been expanding, but it is, to a large extent, the extension of informal work, with hardly any social security provisions."

So, a gig worker's life is neither free from bondage nor secure as is made out to be. The socalled flexibility and choice not to work on any day means choosing to starve. What a driver gets every day, taking a ride-hailing service for example, after the expenses including the cut by the platform is the subsistence amount for the family. That means no freedom not to work. Since the job is algorithmically controlled and monitored, the incentives, disincentives and penalties are promptly applied. They get insufficient in-

comes, and work 12 hours a day or more. They have no provident fund facility, no health insurance like ESI and no other social security benefit employers provide in the organised sector. There is no employer at all who can be made responsible for providing these things.

Although legislations are brought here and there (for example Karnataka and Rajasthan enactments and Social Security Code 2020) the gig work is deliberately kept outside the employer-employee relationship. Digital platforms that provide employment continue to be recognised as aggregators while workers are treated as contractors.

This is not an unintended outcome of technology and changed production relations alone but the fruition of liberal economic policy to say it at the cost of repetition. The government gradually withdraws from its role in economic activity firmly believing the theoretical underpinning of market forces doctrine: "Business is the business of the business; the government has no business to be in business".

Since the organised sector is not able to provide any employment, youth are forced to take up gig work though remuneration from it is low and the working conditions miserable. The only solace this sector provides is employment.While the employment elasticity in general is declining that of the gig economy has been increasing significantly. The employment elasticity to GDP growth for gig workers was found to be above one throughout the period 2011-12 to 2019-20 and was always above the overall employment elasticity which means better opportunities in gig work.

It is clear that gig work. It is clear that gig platform owners, the aggregators, are doing business using unemployed youth and without providing them the adequate or fixed wages, allowances, leaves and other benefits and old age security as the regular employees provide in the organised sector because they do not treat gig workers their employees nor any statute mandates them so.

The solution is regulation of the gig industry by recognising gig platforms as employers and gig workers as their employees. The existing labour laws should cover gig workers. To put it straight, make the gig economy a part of the organised sector to save our youth and to take the best out of our so-called demographic dividend.

The writer is development economist and commentator on economic and social affairs.

### SPECTRUM BIG TECH

## Techno colonialism & surveillance state

I has the potential to transform economies and democratize innovation across sectors. From agriculture to education to healthcare, AI is breaking down traditional barriers, enabling individuals and communities to participate in the creation of solutions that were once beyond reach. However, this potential can only be realized if AI is developed and integrated in ways that prioritize equity, inclusivity, and ethics. The questions revolve around the critical intersection of techno colonialism and the surveillance state, and how both contribute to the perpetuation of inequality, exploitation, and control in the digital age. One of the central concerns around AI's impact on economic systems is its potential to either reduce or exacerbate inequality. Daron Acemoglu, Nobel laureate, argues that AI's influence will depend heavily on the nature of technologies and how they are integrated into the economy. If it replaces lowwage jobs, the economic divide could widen. However, if AI is used to complement human labour, and empower workers

to with new skills and capabilities, it can promote inclusive growth. According to Toby Miller, techno colonialism manifests to when technological infraLvon and Shoshana Zuboff highlight how surveillance mechanisms have increasingly become integrated into the fabric of modern states, with technologies like facial recog nition, social media surveillance, and predictive policing becoming commonplace tools of governance. These technologies enable states to monitor. track, and control populations in unprecedented ways. The intersections between techno colonialism and the surveillance state are particularly evident in how data flows from Global South to Global North, where it is used to fuel surveillance systems and data-driven governance models. This transnational flow of data reinforces existing power structures and amplifies inequalities. For instance, Shoshana Zuboff discusses how companies collect vast amounts of personal data, which is then used for targeted surveillance, thus contributing to both global forms of techno colonialism and state-driven surveillance practices.

challenges posed by techno colonialism and the surveillance state, there are steps we can take to protect human welfare in the digital age. A critical first step in addressing the risks of techno



Robin Berjon

DESPITE THE TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY'S CLAIMS, SOCIAL MEDIA IS MEDIA, AND IT SHOULD BE HELD TO THE SAME STANDARDS WE EXPECT FROM TRADITIONAL OUTLETS

The writer, former Vice-President of Data Governance at The New York Times, is a technologist and governance expert. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

### WISDOM CORNER

- As a matter of self-preservation, a man needs good friends or ardent enemies, for the former instruct him and the latter take him to task.
- Time and space always change, but there is something which is eternal and changeless. For example, the world and time, past or future, nothing exists for us in sleep. But we exist. Let us try to find out that which is changeless and which always exists.
- To have faith is to trust yourself to the water. When you swim you don't grab hold of the water, because if you do you will sink and drown. Instead you relax, and float.



Satya Narayan Misra

THE INTERSECTION OF TECHNO COLONIALISM AND THE SURVEILLANCE STATE CREATES A PERFECT DYSTOPIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY structure and data collection are used by global corporations or powerful states to control, dominate, and extract resources from less powerful or economically marginalised regions, as they used to do during colonial times by using primary resources from the colonies. Scholars such as Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias argue that the extraction of data from the Global South operates similarly to earlier forms of resource extraction during colonial era. They introduce the concept of "data colonialism," where global tech giants, such as Google, Facebook, and Amazon, systematically collect and commodify personal and collective data from people around the world. The surveillance state is a

The surveillance state is a concept used to describe systems in which governments or large institutions engage in extensive monitoring of their populations, typically justified under the guise of national security, public safety, or economic efficiency. Scholars like David

The intersection of techno colonialism and the surveillance state creates a perfect dystopia in the 21st century. Given the *Emeria* 

colonialism is to educate individuals about the implications of their digital activities. Governments must enact and enforce comprehensive data protection laws that prioritize privacy and informed consent. These laws should also ensure that people have control over their data and prevent its exploitation by corporations or governments for political or economic gain.

In the Indian context, Justice Sri Krishna suggested a robust data protection legal architecture, based predominantly on the practice followed by EU. However, the Data Protection Act 2024 follows the US practice, which puts a premium on corporate interest and overwhelming state surveillance, rather than the right to privacy. We need a digital future that is more just, equitable, and aligned with the values of human dignity, privacy, and social justice.

The writer is Professor Emeritus, KIIT University

## etters

### 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



B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Seeking solace

Sir, This refers to "1.65 crore take dip as Maha Kumbh begins," Orissa POST, Jan 14. The Maha Kumbh Mela, the world's largest religious congregation, began drawing millions of devotees to the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati. A once-in-a-lifetime event, it is showcasing tenacity, modernity, culture and human will to endure-all at the same time. The Maha Kumbh is a deeply spiritual event, rooted in ancient Hindu traditions. The ritual of taking a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam is believed to cleanse one of sins and pave the way for salvation (moksha). This grand gathering is a testament to India's enduring spiritual heritage and celebrates the unity and diversity of its cultural fabric. Like any mega event Maha Kumbh is also not free from fear of mishaps especially stampedes. To avoid that, the state government has deployed AI-enabled cameras, underwater drones for 24/7 monitoring. A first-of-its-kind initiative featuring digital monitoring systems to streamline crowd management and enhance safety has also been put in place. With meticulous planning and unwavering commitment, Maha Kumbh 2025 stands as a shining example of India's ability to honour its spiritual roots while embracing technological advancements. As the Maha Kumbh unfolds, it offers a transformative experience to millions who seek spiritual solace and cultural enrichment. N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

### Precise forecasting

Sir, Extreme weather events are frequently occurring in almost all parts of India. Many factors go into forecasting weather accurate ly. Precise weather forecasting helps reduce the impact of natural calamities. With this end in view India has launched Mission Mausam to make India a "climate smart and weather ready" nation. Mission Mausam marks India's great step towards transforming weather forecasting and management. Climate change has enormous impact on weather patterns and it makes weather forecasting extremely difficult The mission aims at improving short and medi um range forecasts and boosting preparedness for extreme weather events. Enhanced weather forecast is to be extended to all levels including panchavat. Let us hope that India's new mission will help tackle climate change and minimise the impact of weather events. Venu GS, KOLLAM



















**CLIMATE PRESSURES MOUNT** 

## Saffron growers experiment with indoor farming in J&K

traditional farming, citing the

"rich colour, fragrance and aroma" of his produce through the

years, some agrarian experts

have been experimenting with indoor cultivation of the crop as

global warming fears increase.

About 90% of India's saffron

is produced in Kashmir, of

which a majority is grown in

Pampore, but the small town

is under threat of rapid urbani-

sation, according to the Indian

Council of Scientific & Industri-

Experts say rising tempera-

tures and erratic rainfall pose

a risk to saffron production,

which has dropped from 8 met-

ric tons in the financial year

2010-11 to 2.6 metric tons in 2023-

24, the federal government told

parliament in February, adding

that efforts were being made to

One such programme is a

project to help grow the plant

al Research (CSIR).

boost production.

About 90% of India's saffron is produced in Kashmir, of which a majority is grown in Pampore, but the small town is under threat of rapid urbanisation, according to the Indian **Council of Scientific & Industrial Research** 



Pampore, Jan 15: Tucked in a valley beneath the snow-capped Himalayas of the Kashmir region is the town of Pampore, famed for its farms that grow the world's most expensive spice - the red-hued saffron.

This is where most of saffron is farmed in India, the world's second-largest producer behind Iran of the spice, which costs up to 325,000 rupees (\$3,800) a kg (2.2 pounds) because it is so labour-intensive to harvest.

Come October, the crocus plants begin to bloom, covering the fields with bright purple flowers from which strands of fragrant red saffron are picked by hand, to be used in foods such as paella, and in fragrances and cloth dyes

"I am proud to cultivate this crop," said Nisar Ahmad Malik, as he gathered flowers from his ancestral field

### **Dense fog shrouds** Delhi; flights, trains delayed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 15: Dense fog engulfed parts of the national capital Wednesday, marking the season's first intense fog spell lasting three hours, which disrupted the schedules of over 100 flights and 26 trains due to low visibility. The fog significantly reduced visibility during the morning hours, improved slightly in between and then once again shrouded the city as evening approached. "Delhi experienced very dense fog on the morning of January 15, with visibility dropping to zero at Safdarjung and IGI Airport from 8:30 am, persisting until 11:30 am," the IMD stated. "This was the season's first instance of dense fog, and CAT-III operations extended beyond 9:30 am, with RVR at IGI Airport runways ranging between 75-300 meters during the peak fog period," it added.

xperts say rising nperatures and erratic rainfall pose a risk to saffron production, which has ropped from 8 metric tons n the financial year 2010-11 o 2.6 metric tons in 2023-24 the federal government told parliament in February, adding hat efforts were being made to boost production

> ne such programme is a project to help grow the plant indoors in a controlled environment in tubes containing moisture and vital nutrients

indoors in a controlled environment in tubes containing moisture and vital nutrients, which Dr Bashir Ilahi at state run Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences said has shown good results.

"Growing saffron in a controlled environment demonstrates temperature resistance and significantly reduces the risk of crop failure," said Ilahi, standing in his laboratory between stacks of crates containing tubes of the purple flower.

Ilahi and other local experts have been helping farmers with demonstrations on how to grow the crocus plant indoors. "It is an amazing innovation,"

said Abdul Majeed, president of Kashmir's Saffron Growers Association, some of whose members, including Majeed, have been cultivating the crop

indoors for a few years. Manzoor Ahmad Mir, a saffron grower, urged more state support.

"The government should promote indoor saffron cultivation on a much larger scale as climate change is affecting the entire world, and Kashmir is no exception," Mir said.

CS directed the municipal commissioners of SMC and IMC to formulate scientific plans for both cities for treating the solid and liquid waste generated daily by the households

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Jan 15: Authorities in Jammu and Kashmir Wednesday directed municipalities to prepare comprehensive waste management plans and asked them to draw up projections on future waste generation, officials said.

On average, 450 grams per person per day of waste is generated in big cities and 300 grams is generated in smaller towns in the Union Territory, they said.



DELHI

hairing a meeting of the housing and urban development department (H&UDD), Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo asked for comprehensive and component-wise waste management plans for both the municipal corporations -- Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) and Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) -- and other municipalities. The meeting was convened to take stock of measures being taken up to build capacity of different urban local bodies (ULBs) in the

Tourists take pictures near icicles formed due to a water pipe leak at Tangmarg, in Baramulla district, Jammu and Kashmir

processing of solid and liquid waste on scientific lines, an official spokesperson said.

Dulloo directed the municipal commissioners of SMC and JMC to formulate scientific plans for both cities for treating the solid and liquid waste generated daily by the households. He instructed them to prepare a projection based on future population and the expected waste from them, the J&K government spokesperson said.

Dulloo also advised them to

the treatment of legacy waste in order to clear the sites of this untreated garbage. He asked them to identify

feasible locations for the establishment of Material Recovery Facilities (MRF) for solid waste compost units or bio-CNC plants for liquid waste and dumping sites for inert waste.

"This task requires all se riousness and dedication on the part of the department to fully rid our cities and towns of untreated waste and gar bage," the chief secretary said asking the officers to use their writ to act against the viola tors as per laws in force. Com missioner Secretary, H&UDD Mandeep Kaur, said facilities for both solid and liquid waste treatment are being created all over J-K in addition to inviting tenders for treatment of legacy waste on scientific lines.

### **BEAMING** WITH PRIDE

These men and women, who fled persecution in Pakistan, are beaming with excitement at the prospect of participating in the **India democratic** process -- a right they have long yearned for

### Pakistani Hindu refugees ready to cast their first vote in Delhi

New Delhi, Jan 15: The Kalkaji Assembly segment in south Delhi. despite its affluence.

POLLS

Basic civic

amenities remain a

with issues such

as overflowing

garbage, poor

sanitation, poorly

maintained parks,

and blocked drains

persisting

The sewers in

particular lack

adequate capacity

for water flow,

causing frequent

overflows onto the

roads



Kalkaji constituency PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

make simultaneous plans for Traffic woes, poor civic amenities plague Atishi's

By 12:30 pm, visibility had slightly improved to 250 meters at Safdarjung andd 400 meters at IGI Airport (Palam), with moderate fog prevailing at that time.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange alert for Delhi, with dense to very dense fog reported in several areas. An orange alert is issued for bad weather that can disrupt rail and road services.

The minimum temperature dropped to 6 degrees Celsius, 1.4 degrees below normal, while the maximum temperature was recorded at 18.1 degrees Celsius, 1.8 degrees below normal.

The weather department advised caution, saying, "Drivers should use fog lights and exercise extreme care while on the road. Travellers should stay in touch with airlines, railways, and state transport authorities for updates on schedules.'

For Thursday, the weather department has predicted cloudy skies with light rain and dense fog conditions. The minimum temperature is expected to settle around 10 degrees Celsius, while the maximum is likely to hover around 17 degrees Celsius.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 15: In the crowded. narrow lanes lined with makeshift homes near lation. My parents Delhi's resettlement colony -- Majnu-ka-tilla, a sense of pride and "indebtedness" as per our pervades as a group of Paki-Pradhan's stani Hindu refugees prepare instruction. to cast their votes for the first Despite the time in the country they now challenges, call home. we believe

These men and women, who we fled persecution in Pakistan, manage are beaming with excitement and move forward." at the prospect of participating in the India democratic process -- a right they have long yearned for. refugees are not

Having endured years of hardships and discrimination in Pakistan, they now feel a profound sense of relief and belonging in India.

For them, this election is not just about voting -- it is a symbolic assertion of their identity as Indian citizens. Many of these families settled in Delhi since 2013 are now witnessing their dreams of a dignified life and political participation coming true.

Satram (22), who runs a small shop selling mobile covers outside the settlement, expressing his excitement said, "I have been living here since 2013 and will vote in the elections. It feels good to finally be a part of the voting popu-



While and I will vote some residents are gearing up to vote, a new batch of refugees has recently arrived, facing uncertainty and hardships as they await citizenship gles of these

confined to the past. Their lives in Delhi are a delicate balance between hope and survival. Issues such as sanitation, electricity costs, education and housing dominate their concerns.

can

The strug-

Mohini (18), who dropped out of school due to financial difficulties, shared her aspirations.

"I always wanted to become a police officer but that dream seems impossible now. All I expect from the government is some skill based opportunities so that I can earn a living with dignity," she said.

For women like Baldevi (35), voting signifies not just empowerment but also a chance to address their community's challenges. We have been living here for over a decade and want the government to build permanent homes for us. This area is familiar. We have built our lives

here. Moving elsewhere would mean starting from

scratch," she said. While some residents are gearing up to vote, a new batch of refugees has recently arrived, facing uncertainty and hardships as they await citizenship.

Many like Shiviram (36), who arrived just a month ago, are hopeful about their future in India.

"I want to stay here and work as a tailor. I have applied for a visa extension and I hope to get an Aadhaar card soon. That will open many opportunities for me," he said. For many of these refugees, their votes will reflect collective decisions, often guided by

 For many of these refugees, their votes will reflect collective decisions, often guided by their community leader

 As the elections approach. these new citizens are not only celebrating their right to vote but also voicing their expectations from the government

 They want better housing, access to quality education, affordable utilities and job opportunities

their community leader.

As the elections approach, these new citizens are not only celebrating their right to vote but also voicing their expectations from the government. They want better housing, access to quality education, affordable utilities and job opportunities.

The election marks a significant chapter for these refugees. As they prepare to cast their first votes, they do so with gratitude, hope and a firm resolve to contribute to the nation they now call home.

earns for congestion-free roads, proper sanitation facilities and upkeep of civic infrastructure ahead of the February 5 polls.

Represented by outgoing chief minister Atishi, who has been renominated by the AAP, the seat is set to witness a high-stakes showdown with BJP heavyweight and former MP Ramesh Bidhuri and Congress' Alka Lamba also in the fray.

The voters in the area although appreciative of the health challenge in Kalkaji, and education initiatives of the Delhi government, emphasised that more attention needs to be paid to fixing civic issues.

The Kalkaji constituency has a total of 1,94,515 voters, including 1,06,893 male voters, 87,617 female voters, and 5 transgender voters Areas including

Maharani Bagh, Ishwar Nagar, New

Friends Colony, Bharat Nagar, Sarai Jullena, Sukhdev Vihar, Sriniwaspuri, East of Kailash, Garhi East of Kailash, Shyam Nagar, Kalkaji, Giri Nagar, and Govindpuri are part of the Kalkaji constituency.

At the heart of Kalkaji lies the Kalkaji Mandir, a centuries-old temple dedicated to Goddess Kali. The area is also home to landmarks like the Lotus Temple and the ISKCON Temple in East of Kailash.

The constituency is marked by two contrasting sides: one that is clean and developed, and the other burdened by traffic, pollution, narrow lanes, congested roads, potholes, and inadequate sewerage systems. A lane with an open garbage

dump next to a park near the Nehru Enclave Metro Station is a major eyesore for the residents and visitors.

Meena Sharma, a resident of Govindpuri near Kalkaji, told PTI, "We have to drive on roads filled with potholes, and

streets with dumped garbage bags and sewage water. It's a mess, and sanitation work hasn't been carried out in a long time."

Basic civic amenities remain a challenge in Kalkaji, with issues such as overflowing garbage poor sanitation, poorly maintained parks, and blocked drains persisting. The sewers in particular lack adequate capacity for water flow, causing frequent overflows

onto the roads. "There are two sides to this

constituency -- one that appears clean and well-maintained, and the other that struggles with neglected infrastructure," said Harbansal Lal, a 47-year-old resident of Kalkaji who owns a shop in the A-block Kalkaji market.

"The drainage systems have long-standing issues as water fails to pass through properly, often spilling onto the roads. These problems have remained

unchanged for years," he added. Sanjay Rawat, a retired government employee and a resident of Sant Nagar opposite the ISKCON temple, said traffic snarls remain a major concern for the area.



### national



### SC PROTECTS KHEDKAR **FROM ARREST TILL FEB 14**

The Supreme Court Wednesday protected from arrest till February 14 former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, accused of cheating and wrongly availing OBC and disability quota benefits in the civil services examination. A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma issued notice to the Delhi government and the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Khedkar's plea seeking anticipatory bail



of the day

Manipur is passing through a difficult time for the last 20 months, people are not moving

out through the highways due to the prevailing crisis N BIREN SINGH | MANIPUR CM

The LoP who was sworn in by taking oath on the Constitution, is now saying, We are now

fighting the BJP, the RSS and the Indian State itself NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

We must support whicheve party is strong and in a position to give a fight to BJP. In Delhi, AAP

and Congress are facing each other... My advice is AAP is strong so we should all support it. After all, our common goal is the defeat of BJP, whether it is Congress, Samajwadi Party or AAP

AKHILESH YADAV SP CHIEF

### SHORT TAKES

### **Trackman mowed** down in Maldah

New Delhi: A track maintainer was mowed down in the Maldah division when he moved to save himself from an oncoming train without realising another train was hurtling down the adjacent track as well, officials said Wednesday. Division officials said trackman Bari-ul Rahman had been employed with the railways since 2012 and he was not authorised for track inspection work. However, he was sent in place of the authorised worker who was on leave. However, Maldah Divisional Railway Manager Manish Kumar Gupta later said Rahman was authorised for track inspection.

### 2 killed as car falls into gorge

Pauri: Two people were killed and another was injured Wednesday when

uote 77 111 farmers begin fast in solidarity with Dallewal

Chandigarh, Jan 15: Ramping up the pressure on the government, a group of 111 farmers began a fast-unto-death Wednesday in solidarity with their leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, and vowed they won't relent until their demands are met.

Farmer leaders said the new 'jatha', who are all in black attire, sat on the Haryana side of the border -- Dallewal has been sitting on the hunger strike since November 26 last year at the Khanauri border point on the Punjab side -- and arrangement are being made for tents and blankets as the temperature dips in the region.

The jurisdiction of Harvana's Jind district begins after Khanauri. The Haryana Police has enhanced security on its side of the border and imposed Section 163 of Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, banning gathering of five or more people. The protesting farmers have expressed concern over Dallewal's "deteriorating" health, saving the 70-year-old risks "multiple organ failure' because of the prolonged fasting. The group of 111 farmers who joined the fast Wednesday was led by farmer leader Surjit Singh Hardojhande who

targeted the Centre for not accepting farmers' demands. "For the past 51 days, Dallewal has been on the fast. The Centre is not accepting our demands and his health is deteriorating," he said. "If our family head (Dallewal) is going to die then we thought we should also lay down our lives." "Our jatha is going (for an indefinite fast) to press the Centre to initiate talks and accept our demands,"



said Hardojhande. The fast will continue till the government accepts our

serted.

After

HARYANA demands, he as-POLICE HAS ENHANCED SECURITY ON ITS SIDE OF the THE BORDER AND IMPOSED 111 protesters SECTION 163 OF BHARTIYA NAGARIK began their

SURAKSHA SANHITA, BANNING GATHERING OF FIVE OR MORE PEOPLE THE PROTESTING FARMERS HAVE "We EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER DALLEWAL'S "DETERIORATING" told HEALTH, SAYING THE 70-YEAR

police we will AILURE" BECAUSE OF THE sit in a peaceful ROLONGED FASTING manner." Jind Deputy Superintendent of Police Amit Bhatia said police have asked the farmers not to do anything which vitiates law and order

and disturbs peace. "Section 163 is already in force and farmers have been informed about it. We are keeping utmost restraint and our effort is to deal with it in a peaceful manner. We have told them the terms and conditions for a peaceful demonstration," he said. The DSP said the stretch of the land where the farmers began their fast on Wednesday falls under Haryana. "Our jurisdiction is 590 meters from the naka (police barricading)," said the DSP. Farmers, under the banner of the

SKM (Non-Political) and Kisan Maz door Morcha, have been camping at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points OLD RISKS "MULTIPLE ORGAN between Punjab and Haryana since February 13

> last year, after security forces did not allow them to march to Delhi to press for their various demands including a legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for their crops.

Farmer leader Abhimanyu Kohar, who has been associated with Dallewal for a long time, lashed out at the Union government Wednesday for not "paying a heed" to farmers' demands. "Today, Dallewal's fast-unto-death entered day 51. The Centre is neither ready to listen to anything nor it is initiating talks nor fulfilling our demands."

### Woman murdered by father, cousin while cops stand outside house

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gwalior (MP), Jan 15: A 20-year-old woman was allegedly shot dead in Gwalior city by her father and her cousin for refusing to marry the man chosen by them even as police officials were present right outside the house, a senior official said Wednesday.

accused allegedly The pumped four bullets into the body of Tanu Gurjar, the victim, police said. The incident took place in Gola ka Mandir area Tuesday night, said City Superintendent of Police Na gendra Singh Sikarwar. "The victim was to get married January 18, but she was not ready to marry the man chosen by her family," he said. There were heated arguments between the woman and her parents Tues day night. Local police came to know about the tense situation, and two constables including a woman cop reached the spot to intervene, the official said.

As there was wedding atmosphere in the house, the police personnel chose to stay outside and keep an eye on the situation, he said. While the relatives tried to pacify the woman and her parents, her father Mahesh Singh Gurjar (45) flew into rage. He and his nephew Rahul then allegedly shot Tanu with a country-made firearm and a pistol, the official said. She suffered four bullet injuries.

While Rahul fled from the spot, Mahesh Singh remained there, brandishing the weapon. The police took him in custody while the woman was taken to hospital where she was declared dead by the doc tors. Rahul too was arrested Wednesday, the official said. adding that further investigation is underway.

### Rahul's 'fighting Indian state' remark triggers row

Speaking at the inauguration of the new Congress headquarters here, Gandhi also hit out at RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, saying his remark that India got

"true independence" after the Ram temple consecration amounts to treason and is an insult to every Indian

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 15: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's remarks that "we are now fighting the BJP, the RSS and the Indian state itself" triggered a row Wednesday with the BJP claiming that the Congress' "ugly truth" has been exposed by its own leader and that his statement was straight out of George Soros' playbook".

Addressing party leaders after the inauguration of the Congress' new headquarters at 9A, Kotla Road here, Gandhi said, "Do not think that we are fighting a fair fight. There is no fairness in this. If you believe that we are fighting a political organisation called the BJP, that we are fighting a political organisation called the RSS, you have not understood what is going on.'

"The BJP and the RSS have captured every single institution of our country. We are now fighting the BJP, the RSS and the Indian state itself," he said. BJP president J P Nadda claimed that the Congress 'ugly truth" has been exposed by its own leader.

Nadda alleged on X that it is not a secret that Gandhi and his ecosystem have close links with urban Naxals and the deep state who want to "defame, demean and discredit" India. He said Gandhi's repeated actions have also strengthened this belief. Everything he has done or said has been in the direction of breaking India and dividing



our society, Nadda said. "Hidden no more, Congress" ugly truth now stands exposed by their own leader," Nadda

said. "I 'compliment' Mr Rahul Gandhi for saying clearly what the nation knows that he is fighting the Indian state!" he said. The BJP president charged that the Congress has a history of encouraging forces that want to weaken India.

"Their greed for power meant compromising the nation's in tegrity and betraying the trust of the people," Nadda said, adding, people of India are wise and they have decided they will always reject Gandhi and his rotten ideology. Tagging a video clip of Gandhi's remarks Union minister and senior BJP leader Nirmala Sitharaman said, "The LoP, who was sworn in by taking oath on the Consti tution, is now saying, 'We are now fighting the BJP, the RSS and the Indian State itself.' So @INCIndia and @RahulGand hi, what for are you carrying a copy of the Constitution in vour hand?'

### PMLA court grants bail to Jyoti Priya Mallick PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 15: A PMLA court here Wednesday granted bail to former West Bengal minister Jyoti Priya Mallick in connection with an alleged ration distribution scam being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on a personal

### **ELECTION RULES ROW** SC seeks Centre, poll panel reply on Jairam Ramesh's plea PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 15: The Supreme Court Wednesday sought responses from the Centre and the poll panel on Congress

plea in the week commencing March 17

Singhvi said amendments to the 1961 Conduct of Election Rules were made "very cleverly" and barred any access



fast. farmer leader Kata Singh Kotra said, have the Haryana

their car fell into a deep gorge here, police said. The victims were returning to Delhi after attending a puja in a village here, they said. The car plunged into a 100-metre deep gorge near Chimchonia forest on Bhaun Khaludanda road, office of the Senior Superintendent of Police informed. Two of the passengers, Ramesh Lal (70) and Pradeep (37), died on the spot. Kishore Kumar (35) was injured in the accident and was sent to Dhumakot PHC where he is undergoing treatment, SSP said.

Fire breaks out in train

Ludhiana: The brake of one of the coaches of the Delhi-bound Shane-Punjab Express train caught fire near Khanna late Tuesday evening, causing panic among passengers. Officials said the incident took place after the Amritsar-Delhi train left the Ludhiana railway station. After covering a distance of about 25 km, the brake of one of the coaches caught fire. After seeing smoke, some of the frantic passengers raised an alarm.

### **Court denies bail** to Naresh Balyan

New Delhi: A Delhi court Wednesday denied bail to AAP MLA Naresh Balvan in a case under the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA). "Application dismissed," held special judge Kaveri Baweja. The judge January 9 reserved the order on the application after hearing arguments from the accused and the prosecution.

general secretary Jai ram Ramesh's plea against the recent amendments, including no public access to CCTV, to the 1961 election rules.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna

and Justice Sanjay Kumar took note of the submissions of senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for Ramesh, and issued notices on the plea. The bench said it would hear the to CCTV footage claiming it would reveal the identity of the voter. He said voting choices were nevrevealed and er the CCTV footage couldn't reveal votes. The senior lawyer urged the bench to ask

the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the Centre to file their responses before the next date of hearing else they would come and say "reply is needed to be filed" on that day. "They will file the responses, the CJI said.

Army personnel aerially display the national flag and military colours during the Gaurav Gaatha event, at Khadki in Pune, Maharashtra PTI PHOTO

### **MYSTERIOUS DEATHS IN J&K**

### Certain neurotoxins found in samples of dead persons FROM DECEMBER 7, 2024, A TOTAL OF 14 DEATHS OUT OF 38 AFFECTED INDIVIDUALS WERE REPORTED IN THREE SEPARATE INCIDENTS IN BADHAL VILLAGE. THE EXACT CAUSES REMAIN UNKNOWN

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Jan 15: Amid growing concern over the mysterious death of 14 people in a remote village in Jammu and Kashmir over the past one month, the administration has directed officials to analyse reports from institutions to identify the cause of the deaths.

Initial reports indicate the presence of certain neurotoxins in the samples of the deceased, which are being further investigated to determine the reasons behind these fatalities, officials said. Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo chaired a high-level meeting with officials from divisional and district administrations and health experts from several na-



the measures taken so far to identify the cause of the mysterious deaths in Badhal village, Rajouri district.

The Chief Secretary emphasised the need for the Health and Police departments to work in close coordination and thoroughly analyse the reports received from various reputed

institutions to ascertain the real cause of these deaths, an official spokesperson said.

He directed the police department to utilise all available resources, including scientific methods, to advance the investigation to its logical conclusion. Similarly, the health department was instructed to study these reports to identify reasonable leads contributing to the deaths.

The reports furnished by different institutions are now available, and more are expected soon. These should suffice to conclude the investigations and pinpoint the possible reasons behind the deaths in this particular village," Dulloo said. During the meeting, Dulloo heard from experts who had analysed numerous samples collected from the affected individuals and the area. He also sought their suggestions regarding the future course of action.

Experts informed the meeting that extensive microbiological studies ruled out viral, bacterial, or microbial infections as causes of the deaths. Instead, the deaths appeared to be localised and possibly linked epidemiologically, the spokesperson said. It was also disclosed that certain neurotoxins were identified in the samples of the deceased, which are being further investigated, the spokesperson added.

From December 7, 2024, a total of 14 deaths out of 38 affected individuals were reported in three separate incidents in Badhal village. The exact causes remain unknown, officials said.

The government has implemented several measures, including deploying Rapid Response Teams, analysing samples from humans and animals, and testing water sources. Assistance from reputed health institutions across the country has also been sought to determine the actual cause of these deaths.

bond of ₹50 lakh.

Mallick, who held the Food and Supplies portfolio from 2011 to 2021, was arrested October 27, 2023 by the ED from his residence in Salt Lake here in connection with its investi gation into the alleged scam Special judge Prasanta Mukho padhyay of the PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) court granted bail to Mallick on a personal bond of ₹ 50 lakh.

The former minister was also directed to furnish a bail bond of ₹50,000 with two sureties of ₹25,000 each. Mallick's lawyers prayed for his bail on the ground that he was under a long period of detention and that the trial is not likely to commence soon.

The ED opposed the bail prayer claiming that he was one of the key accused in the case. Mallick held the Forest portfolio in the West Bengal cabinet when he was arrested

The PMLA court had granted bail to Bakibur Rahaman and former Bongaon Municipality chairman Shankar Adva. co-accused in the case in Au gust 2024. The ED has alleged that Mallick had links with Rahaman, who was arrested in October 2023 and Adva who was arrested in January 2024 The ED had December 12, 2023 filed a charge sheet before the court against Mallick and Rahaman in the alleged ration distribution scam case. The charge sheet was filed 46 days after Mallick's arrest







tional institutions to review











national



**DELHI POLLS** 

**Kejriwal said the** 

party has no vision,

no chief ministerial

face and no narrative

he said.

The emergence of non-

state actors in many countries and their resorting to terrorism is also a matter of concern RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

### **APEX COURT INSISTS ON COLOUR-CODED STICKERS**

The Supreme Court Wednesday deliberated over making hologrambased colour-coded stickers for vehicles mandatory across the country and stressed on the effective implementation of the pollution under control (PUC) certificate norms





The spirit of service is a symbol of secularism. The main foundation of our spiritual culture is the spirit of

service. India is not just a piece of land surrounded by geographical boundaries. It is a living land, living culture. Knowledge is spirituality and if we want to understand India, we have to imbibe spirituality NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

By abrogating Article 370 in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a clear message to the

world that for Indians, there is nothing bigger than the self-respect of India and

AMIT SHAH UNION HOME MINISTER

So, opposing the Indian State itself has become the new agenda of Ra hul Gandhi and the Congress party!

PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CM





Manish Sisodia is struggling in Jangpura; massive public anger against Arvind Kejriwal is evident.

Delhi Elections results will trigger AAP dramatic downfall. Rahul Gandhi should target impressive 15%+ vote share now.

@Politicx2029

### SHORT TAKES

### **ED** arrests former **Ch'garh minister**

Raipur: The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday arrested Congress MLA in Chhattisgarh and former



New Delhi, Jan 15: AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal Wednesday filed his nomination from New Delhi constituency for the upcoming Assembly elections and urged people to vote based on work and not "abuses"

Attacking the BJP, Kejriwal said the party has no vision, no chief ministerial face and no narrative. "They are not telling what work they will do in the next five years. People of Delhi 'padvatra' from the AAP office cannot be bought with a pair of to the New Delhi district magisshoes, people are seeing what the trate's office, where he filed his BJP is doing," he said. On reports nomination. about a threat to his life from a

Hundreds of AAP workers, pro-Khalistani outfit, the AAP carrying party flags, walked leader said God was with him. with the former chief minister. After filing his nomination, Kesake na koye (Those protected jriwal exuded confidence that by God cannot be killed by anythe AAP would return to power one). God is with me. One lives in Delhi. as long as their lifeline. The day "AAP will form the governone's lifeline ends, God calls

ment with full majority," he told reporters. "I want to request the people of Delhi to vote based on work and not abuses,"

know who will provide better governance. "People know who can provide leadership. So, people will

decide," she said. Kejriwal has held the New Delhi seat since 2013. He is pitted against BJP's Parvesh Verma and Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit this time. Voting for the 70-member Delhi Assembly is scheduled to be held on February 5. The counting of votes will be taken up on February 8. Meanwhile, the Union Home Ministry has granted sanction to the Enforcement Directorate to prosecute former Delhi chief minister and AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal in the excise policy linked money laundering case, officials said Wednesday.

The federal agency filed a chargesheet against the 56-yearold politician before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court here last year after arresting him in March. Kejriwal, who is currently out on bail in this case, is contesting the Delhi Assembly polls from the New Delhi seat.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has recently granted the required sanction to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for prosecuting Kejriwal under the anti-money laundering law in the Delhi excise policy case, officials said. The ministry is the competent authority to okay such a request moved by the agency through the Delhi LG, they said.

The officials said similar sanctions have also been obtained for other accused public servants, including former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, in this case.

### Railway Board gives recognition to AIRF, NFIR for five years

they will not maintain any po-

litical fund. "Board has decided

to accord recognition to the two

Federations namely All India

Railwaymen's Federation and

National Federation of Indian

Railwaymen at Railway Board

level for a period of five years,'

a board's letter dated January

13 said. specifying certain con-

ditions for them to abide by.

"Jako rakhe saiyan maar

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 15: The Railway Board has given recognition to two federations of rail employees, the All India Railwaymen's Federation (AIRF) and the National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR), for five years after their victory in the recently held secret ballot elections.

While recognizing the two On November 17, 2024, the Railway Board had constifederations, the board said that they have to follow the tuted a Secret Ballot Election

testing federations to get recognition. Based on those norms, secret ballot elections were held for three days from December 4 to 6, 2024 and the constituents of the two federations -- AIRF and NFIR -- received more than 15 per cent votes, one of the mandatory conditions to get Railway Board's recognition.

The board said that the two federations have to follow the provisions of Indian Railway Establishment Manual and



Devotees during the ongoing 'Maha Kumbh Mela' festival in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

### Panel submits report on activities of terror groups

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 15: A high-powered enquiry committee has submitted its report on activities of some organised criminal groups and terrorist organisations, which undermined the security interests of both India and the US.

The probe was ordered after the US alleged that there was an attempt to kill Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun by Indian agents. In a statement, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said after a long enquiry, the committee has recommended legal action against an individual, whose earlier criminal links and antecedents also came to notice during the enquiry.

The home ministry statement, however, did not name any individual against whom action has been initiated.

The MHA said on receipt of information provided by US authorities regarding activities of some organised crim inal groups, terrorist organisations, drug peddlers, etc., who undermined the security interests of both India and the US. a high-powered enquiry committee was set up by the government of India in November 2023.

The committee conducted its own investigations, and al-

### Sonia inaugurates Cong's new Kotla **Road headquarters**

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 15: The Congress' new headquarters located at 9A, Kotla Road here was inaugurated Wednesday, as the grand old party turned a page in its history after operating from its iconic 24, Akbar Road premises for the last 47 years.

Congress parliamentary party chief Sonia Gandhi in augurated the plush five-storey building in the presence of party president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, and general secretaries Privanka Gandhi Vadra, Jairam Ramesh and K C Venugopal, among other senior leaders. Indira Gandhi Bha wan, constructed by L&T and designed by Hafeez Contractor, narrates the tale of the party's 139-year-old history with its walls adorning pictures from the freedom struggle to the party's governance achievements.



The five principles of the Congress -- democracy, na tionalism, secularism, inclu sive growth and justice -- are inscribed on one of the walls of the building. As one enters the building, the wall in front adorns the pictures of the party's first president W C Benerjee and current chief Kharge. While BR Ambedkar's picture with an inspirational quote adorns a wall, several other rare pictures showcasing India's struggle for independence and the Congress leaders' contribution are also put up across the five storeys. From Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to Subhas Chandra Bose and from Rabin dranath Tagore to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, their contributions are highlighted. The party's 139-year history is showcased throughout the building on the walls, in a unique blend of traditional and the modern.



The probe was ordered after the US alleged that there was an attempt to kill Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun by Indian agents

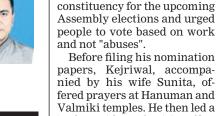
In a statement, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said after a long enquiry, the committee has recommended legal action against an individual, whose earlier criminal links and antecedents also came to notice during the enquiry

cooperation from US authorities and the two sides also exchanged visits. The committee further examined a number of officials from different agencies and also scrutinised relevant documents in this connection.

"After a long enquiry, the Committee has submitted its report to the Government and recommended legal action against an individual, whose earlier criminal links and antecedents also came to notice during the enquiry," the statement said. The committee has recommended that the legal

them," he told reporters after offering prayers at the Prachin Hanuman temple. Sunita Kejriwal said the people of Delhi

# its honour



state excise minister Kawasi Lakhma in an alleged liquor scam. He was produced before the special court for Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) here which granted the ED his custodial remand till January 21. The central agency had December 28 raided the properties of the former minister and his son Harish in Rainur, Sukma and Dhamtari districts as part of a money laundering investigation into the case. It subsequently questioned Lakhma (71) and his son in the case.

### BSF pushes back 13 **Bangladeshi infiltrators**

Kolkata: The BSF pushed back 13 Bangladeshi intruders and arrested three cattle smugglers, successfully thwarting multiple smuggling and infiltration attempts across North 24 Parganas, Nadia, Murshidabad and Malda districts along the India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal. In addition, BSF troops seized 1,236 bottles of banned Phensedyl and rescued 18 cattle during these operations.

Relief to Mayawati

New Delhi: In a relief to BSP supremo Mayawati, the Supreme Court on Wednesday disposed of a petition filed in 2009 seeking a probe into the alleged spending of more than ₹2,000 crore from the Uttar Pradesh government's budget on installing elephant statutes and personal glorification, when she was the chief minister of the state. The development came on a day Mayawati turned 69.

rovisions of Indian Railway Establishment Manual and Committee-III (SBEC-III) which proposed certain norms for con-

they will not maintain any political fund.

so pursued leads provided by the US side and it received full

action must be completed expeditiously.

### **3 NAVAL WARSHIPS COMMISSIONED** AGENCIES

Mumbai, Jan 15: Indian Navy warships INS Surat, INS Nilgiri and INS Vaghsheer were commissioned at the Naval Dockvard here in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday. The Navy described the commissioning of the three major combatants as a historic occasion.

PM Modi Wednesday said India is emerging as a major maritime power, and being recognised as a reliable and responsible partner globally.

INS Nilgiri, the lead ship of the Project 17A stealth frigate class, represents a significant advancement over the Shiva-



lik-class frigates. INS Surat, the fourth and final vessel of the Project 15B stealth destroyer class, is a follow-on to the Kolkata-class destroyers. INS Vaghsheer is the sixth

and final submarine under the Scorpene-class Project 75. It is a diesel-electric submarine designed for multiple roles, including anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine war-

fare, and intelligence gathering. All the three platforms have been designed and built entirely in India, reflecting the country's growing expertise in defence production.

**GRAP 4 curbs** invoked in Delhi New Delhi: The Centre's panel on Delhi-NCR's air quality Wednesday

invoked curbs under stage 4 of the Graded Response Action Plan amid a sharp dip in air quality due to unfavourable meteorological conditions, according to an official order. Calm winds, low temperatures and foggy conditions allowed accumulation of pollutants in the region, with the air guality index soaring from 275 Tuesday to 396 at 6 pm Wednesday. The India Meteorological Department and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology predicted that AOI may breach the 400 mark soon. Accordingly. the Commission for Air Quality Management directed authorities in Delhi-NCR to "straightway invoke" all actions under stages 3 and 4.

## Maha Kumbh: Airfares rise for Prayagraj flights

According to an analysis by travel portal ixigo, the one-way airfare between Bhopal and Prayagraj has surged the maximum at 498 per cent to ₹ 17,796 from ₹2,977 last year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 15: Bookings as well as airfares for flights to Prayagraj have jumped multifold as more people travel for the Maha Kumbh, with the air ticket prices rising up to 21 per cent for the Delhi-Prayagraj flights

According to an analysis by travel portal ixigo, the one-way airfare between Bhopal and Prayagraj has surged the maximum at 498 per cent to ₹17,796 from ₹2,977 last year.

These are one-way average fares on 30 days APD (advanced purchase date) basis for

the January 13 to February 26, 2025, compared to the year-ago period.

While the airfare from Delhi to Prayagraj has risen 21 per cent to ₹5,748, the jump is 13 per cent to ₹6,381 for the Mumbai-Prayagraj flight. The rise in the air ticket price is 89 per cent for the Bengaluru-Prayagraj service to ₹11,158 while the increase is 41 per cent to ₹10,364 for the Ahmedabad-Prayagraj flight, as per the analysis.

For the flights to Lucknow

and Varanasi, cities that are near Prayagraj where the Maha Kumbh is happening, airfares have gone up in the range of 3



to 21 per cent.

On a year-on-year basis, flight bookings to Prayagraj have jumped 162 per cent while the bookings to Lucknow and

Varanasi have increased 42 per cent and 127 per cent, respectively. The figures are for the January 13 to February 26 period, the analysis showed.

ixigo said that Prayagraj is now connected to over 20 destinations through direct and one-stop flights, compared to just one from Delhi during the last Maha Kumbh. The Maha Kumbh, which started on January 13, will conclude February 26.

"One-way airfares from major metros to Prayagraj and surrounding airports are averaging between ₹7,000-10,000 if booked 30 days in advance. However, on certain routes like Bhopal-Prayagraj, fares are reaching up to ₹17,000 one way due to peak demand and limited flight availabili-

ty," ixigo Group CEO Aloke Bajpai said.

Fares are also trending higher for travel before key 'snan' dates. For example, fares for January 27 from key metros like Mumbai are going as high as ₹27,000 one-way for non-stop flights. Bookings for trains to Prayagraj have also jumped for the January 13 to February 26 period. The present edition of the Kumbh is be ing held after 12 years, though seers claim the celestial permutations and combinations for the event are taking place after 144 years, making the oc casion even more auspicious.













international



We call upon Russia to immediately confirm Oscar Jenkins' status. But if there has been any harm caused to Oscar Jenkins, that is absolutely reprehensible. And the Australian government will take the strongest action possible ANTHONY ALBANESE | PM, AUSTRALIA

### **2 PRIVATE LUNAR LANDERS HEAD TOWARD THE MOON**

In a two-for-one moonshot, SpaceX launched a pair of lunar landers Wednesday for US and Japanese companies looking to jumpstart business on Earth's dusty sidekick. The two landers rocketed away in the middle of the night from NASA's Kennedy Space Centre, the latest in a stream of private spacecraft aiming for the moon



**B'desh HC commutes** 

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

two decades ago.

**ULFA leader's life term to** 14 years imprisonment

Dhaka. Jan 15: Bangladesh

High Court has reduced the life

sentence of ULFA leader Paresh

Baruah to 14 years imprison-

ment in connection with an

attempt to smuggle truckloads

of weapons to the hideouts of the separatist group in Assam

Last month, the court had

commuted Baruah's death

sentence to life imprisonment.

tion Front of Asom's military

commander who is believed

to be living in China, was sen

tenced to death after a trial in

absentia in 2014. His name also

figures in the 'most wanted' list

Baruah, the United Libera

**South Korea's Yoon finally arrested** of the day

We will approach the next US administration to convey that constructive commit ment of the United

States in this region is important also for the United States itself TAKESHI IWAYA | FOREIGN MINISTER, JAPAN

I will not go into details, I can only confirm the validity of fears that Russia was planning acts of air terror. not

only against Poland. but against airlines around the world DONALD TUSK | PRIME MINISTER, POLANC

Muscat is hopeful of concluding

the ambitious trade pact with India this year. which is expected to significantly expand the two-

way trade and investment ties between the two countries QAIS BIN MOHAMMAD AL-YOUSEF COMMERCE MINISTER, OMAN

### SHORT TAKES

### Prez Xi holds talks with Dissanayake

Beijing: President Xi Jinping Wednesday expressed Beijing's readiness to usher in a new era of development in China-Sri Lanka ties as he met Sri Lankan counterpart Anura Kumara Dissanayake here following which both countries signed several agreements to boost bilateral relations. Dissanayake, who arrived here Tuesday on a four-day visit a month after travelling to India on his first overseas trip since assuming office in September, was given a ceremonial welcome at the Great Hall of People following which both the Presidents held talks. President Xi reiterated China's commitment to continuing its cooperation with Sri Lanka in the future, the release said. Following this, the two sides signed several MoUs aimed at strengthening collaboration in areas such as economy, social development,

**South Korean** investigators question arrested **President Yoon in** insurrection probe

### REUTERS

Seoul, Jan 15: Impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol was arrested and questioned for hours by investigators Wednesday in relation to a criminal insurrection probe, ending a weeks-long standoff with authorities.

His arrest, the first ever for a sitting president in South Korea, is the latest head-spinning development in one of Asia's most vibrant democracies, even though the country has a history of prosecuting and imprisoning former leaders.

Since lawmakers voted to impeach and strip him of his duties after his short-lived Dec 3 declaration of martial law. Yoon has been holed up at his hillside residence, guarded by a small army of presidential security staff who blocked a previous arrest

attempt earlier this month. He turned himself in for questioning at the corruption investigation offices Wednesday after more than 3,000 police officers seeking to arrest him marched on his residence before dawn.

"I decided to respond to the CIO's investigation - despite it being an illegal investigation - to prevent unsavoury bloodshed,"



Yoon said in a statement, referring to the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) that is heading

the criminal inquiry. A prosecutor accompanied Yoon in his car from his home in the upscale district known as Seoul's Beverly Hills to the

austere CIO offices, where he slipped in through a back entrance, avoiding the media. As Yoon was being interrogat ed, an unidentified man in his

60s set himself on fire nearby, fire services said. The man was severely burned and was unconscious. Authorities have 48 hours to

question Yoon, after which they must seek a warrant to detain him for up to 20 days or release him. However, Yoon is refusing to

talk and has not agreed to have interviews with investigators recorded on video, a CIO official said. The CIO said it had

- YOON IS FIRST SITTING PRESIDENT
- TO BE ARRESTED INVESTIGATION RELATED TO HIS DEC
- 3 MARTIAL LAW DECRE JAPAN MONITORING EVENTS WITH 'SERIOUS INTEREST

US SAYS IT IS COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH SOUTH KOREA

no information on why Yoon was refusing to talk.

The presidential motorcade was seen leaving the CIO offices late Wednesday evening, with Yoon expected to be held at Seoul Detention Centre, where other high-profile figures including former President Park Geun-hye and Samsung Electronics Chairman Jay Y Lee have also spent time.

### SERIOUS INTEREST

Yoon's brief declaration of martial law shocked South Koreans and rattled Asia's fourth-largest economy, and it



I decided to respond to the CIO's investigation - despite it being an llegal investigation - to prevent unsavoury bloodshed YOON SUK YEOL I IMPEACHED PRESIDENT. SOUTH KOREA

wire cutters.

declaration.

Throngs of protesters, who

also gathered outside the CIO

offices, waved South Korean

and American flags and held

posters bearing "Stop the Steal"

slogans referring to Yoon's un-

substantiated claims of election

fraud - one of the reasons he

gave to justify his martial law

has ushered in an unprecedented period of political turmoil in one of the United States' key security partners in the region. Lawmakers voted to impeach Yoon Dec 14.

Separate to the criminal investigation, the Constitutional Court is deliberating whether to uphold Yoon's impeachment by parliament and permanently remove him from office or restore his presidential powers.

The US remains committed to working with Seoul and appreciates its efforts "to act in accordance with the Constitution", a spokesperson for the White House National Security Council said in statement.

The top government spokesperson in neighbouring Japan told a daily news briefing that

of India's National Investiga tion Agency (NIA). "The two-judge bench com-Tokyo was following developmuted the life imprisonment of ments in South Korea "with Baruah and four Bangladeshis. particular and serious interest" an official of the attorney gen

Wednesday's arrest attempt eral's bureau said Wednesday. had hundreds of thousands of The High Court Tuesday acquitted former Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) state minister for home affairs Lut fuzzaman Babar and five oth ers, who were sentenced to life towards the gates of the comimprisonment in the same case pound carrying ladders and

The court also commuted the prison sentences of five more convicts, including Baruah. The bench also declared abet ted (ended) the appeals of other three accused as they died.

Truckloads of weapons were seized in April 2004 that were being transported to ULFA hideouts in northeastern India through Chattogram, which was then spelled as 'Chittagong'.

### South Africa accused of 'horrific' crackdown

South African police announce sudden end of *mine rescue operation* 

### ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stilfontein, South Africa, Jan 15: South African police said Wednesday they have ended a rescue operation at an abandoned gold mine where scores of illegal miners were trapped and believe they rescued all the survivors and retrieved all the bodies of those who died.

The announcement was a surprise and came just a dav after



mine, where they languished for months during a standoff with authorities who demanded they surrender to police because they were mining illegally.

Hundreds are still believed to be trapped Wednesday and

### **Biden bids farewell from Oval Office** REUTERS

Washington, Jan 15: President Joe Biden will cap his half-century political career Wednesday with a final Oval Office speech, hoping to seal a legacy that has been overshadowed by Democrats' failure to stop Donald Trump from returning to the White House.

Biden ran for president in 2020 as a transition figure, but opted at the unprecedented age of 80 to run for reelection, convinced he was the only Democrat who could beat Trump.

Forced out of the race in July after a disastrous debate against Trump, Biden has been blamed by some Democrats for their November wipeout, after Vice President Kamala Harris' whirlwind campaign lost every battleground state. Biden and his allies oversaw the recovery from COVID, funded an infrastructure revival, sparked new semiconductor chips manufacturing, and tackled climate change as they tried to rebalance inequality and invest in the future. He leaves an outperforming US economy and optimistic businesses.



President makes Oval Office address Wednesday evening

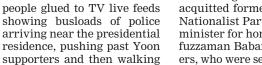
 Running for reelection ushered in Trump return, critics say

 Biden's decades in Senate, vice presidency, White House overshadowed for now by Trump's comeback

 Leaves strong economy, manufac turing pickup

Biden addressed what he de scribed as an ongoing threat to the country in a letter released early Wednesday by the White House.

"I ran for president be cause I believed that the soul of America was at stake. The very nature of who we are was at stake. And, that's still the case," he said, urging Amer icans to keep fighting for the country's focus on equality. life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. A White House official said that legacies are set over the long term. "In historical terms, it has been a millisecond since the election. This president has locked in the most significant legislative record since LBJ (President Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s), and the irrevers ible benefits of those laws will grow over decades," the official said.



### German economy shrinks for 2nd year

and industry, it said.

Berlin: Germany's economy shrank for the second straight year in 2024 as worried consumers held back on spending and Chinese competition ate into the country's traditional exports of cars and industrial machinery. The year's weak performance underlines Germany's status as Europe's worst performing major economy and shows the country as having no meaningful growth in the past four years as it has struggled to deal with major shifts in the global economy. Gross domestic product contracted by 0.2 per cent last year. following a 0.3 per cent decline in 2023, according to preliminary official figures released Wednesday, weeks before an election in which the economy is the top issue.

### B'desh SC acquits Khaleda Zia

Dhaka: Bangladesh Supreme Court acquitted former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in a corruption case Wednesday, overturning the High Court's earlier 10year prison sentence. The verdict was delivered by a bench led by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed after reviewing 79 year old Zia's appeal against the High Court's ruling Wednesday, the Dhaka Tribune reported. The Supreme Court acquitted Zia the party's Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman, and all other suspects in their appeal over the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case, the report added. The Appellate Division noted that the case was motivated by revenge.

the police minister said the rescue operation would likely last until at least next week. Police said that 78 bodies had been recovered from the gold mine since the rescue operation began Monday and more than 240 survivors had been rescued.

Police made the announcement at a news conference at the mine. They said rescuers would do a final sweep of the mine Thursday to ensure no more survivors or bodies were underground.

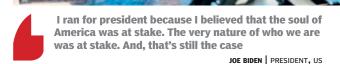
Rescuers and volunteers have pulled at least 78 dead miners and more than 160 survivors from an abandoned South African gold

the death toll is expected to rise in a disaster that has focused criticism on the South African government's decision to try to 'smoke them out" by cutting off food and other supplies for a time.

Civic groups claim authorities also removed the ropes and pulley systems that the miners used to enter at least one shaft and send down supplies.

The groups say the government's weekslong refusal to stage a rescue effectively left scores of miners to die of starvation or dehydration. A rescue is now underway - after a court order — but only a few miners can be pulled up at a time, and the operation could take 10 days.

But Biden was unable to heal divisions in the country the way he had hoped, or



stop democratic backsliding around the world. His crowning political achievement - defeating Trump in 2020 - proved temporary. Now the Republican president-elect has vowed to undo much of what the Democratic administration accomplished.

"All Joe Biden wanted was to be remembered for the great things he did for this country and, at least in the short run.

they've been eclipsed by his ill-conceived decision to run," said David Axelrod, a former adviser to President Barack Obama.

"He became a historic president when he defeated Trump. So obviously the fact that Trump is resurgent and returning to power, more powerful than he was when he left, is an unhappy coda to the story.'

### As LA burns, Hollywood's Oscar season turns into a pledge drive

The fires have struck at the very heart of a movie industry still trying to stabilize itself after years of pandemic, labour turmoil and technological upheaval

#### ASSOCIATED PRESS

Los Angeles, Jan 15: When the Palisades Fire broke out in Los Angeles last Tuesday, Hollywood's awards season was in full swing. The Golden Globes had transpired less than 48 hours earlier and a series of

splashy awards banquets followed in the days after. But the enormity of the destruction in Southern California has quickly snuffed out all festiveness in the movie industry's high season of celebration. At one point, the flames even encroached on the hillside above the Dolby Theatre, the

home of the Academy Awards. The fires have struck at the very heart of a movie industry still trying to stabilize itself af-

ter years of pandemic, labour turmoil and technological upheaval. Not for the first time this decade, the Oscars are facing the question of: Should the show go on? And if it does, what do they mean now?

"With ALL due respect during Hollywood's season of celebration, I hope any of the networks televising the upcoming awards will seriously consider NOT televising them and donating the revenue they would have gathered to victims of the fires and the firefighters,' "Hacks" star Jean Smart, a recent Globe winner, wrote on Instagram.

The Oscars remain as scheduled, but it's certain that they will be transformed due to the wildfires, and that most of the



red-carpet pomp that typically stretches between now and then will be curtailed if not altogether cancelled. With so many left without a home by the fires, there's scant appetite for the usual self-congratulatory parades of the season.

Focus has turned, instead, to what the Oscars might symbolize for a traumatised Los Angeles. The Oscars have never meant less, but, at the same time, they might be more important than ever as a beacon of perseverance for the reeling movie capital.

The film academy Monday for the second time delayed its nominations announcement. Nominations will now be announced virtually February 23. The academy also cancelled its annual nominees luncheon

The film academy Monday for the second time delayed its nominations announcement

Nominations will now be announced virtually February 23

The academy also cancelled its annual nominees luncheon and said it's planning to honour frontline workers and to support relief efforts

and said it's planning to honour frontline workers and to support relief efforts.

'We will get through this together and bring a sense of healing to our global film community," vowed Bill Kramer, academy chief executive, and Janet Yang, academy president.

The fires, one of the costliest natural disasters in US history, continue. The ongoing nature of the crisis, which has killed at least 25 people, has made remaking well-laid plans a moving target. The Critics Choice Awards have been postponed

Nominations to the Produc ers Guild Awards have been delayed twice with no new date set. The guild established a fund to support producers af fected by the fires Tuesday.

The 67th Grammy Awards scheduled to be held February 2 in downtown Los Angeles are going forward, albeit with significant changes. Harvey Mason jr, Recording Academy chief executive, and Board of Trustees chair Tammy Hurt said this year's Grammys "will carry a renewed sense of purpose: raising additional funds to support wildfire relief efforts and honouring the bravery and dedication of first responders who risk their lives to protect ours.'

Some telethon-like element also seems sure to accompa ny the Oscars. In recent days many throughout the industry have voiced suggestions for how the broadcast could be re considered.













# Business



We will achieve this target of 20 per cent ethanol blending in the next two months. Use of E20 (petrol with 20 per cent ethanol) will help in reducing pollution NITIN GADKARI UNION MINISTER

### SWIGGY'S SPORTS ARM

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs Wednesday approved the incorporation of Swiggy Sports Private Limited as a wholly owned subsidiary of the food and grocery delivery major. The company shared the update in a regulatory filing. The subsidiary will operate in sports activities, amusement and recreation activities



### of the day

The gov ernment (in the Budget) can consider levving higher tariffs on im-

ports to check the significant decline in rupee value witnessed in the past few months

DK SRIVASTAVA CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR, EY

**Despite** a slow start, the real estate sector received significant institutional invest-

ments in 2024, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. 2025 is expected to be challenging due to increasing geopolitical friction, a slowdown in the global economy, and elevated inflation levels SHRINIVAS RAO | CEO, VESTIAN

I believe it's important to mention the role of recycling since we may not

have sufficient lithium resources. Ensuring lithium remains within the country through recycling and reuse in batteries could be a significant breakthrough for our self-reliance in cell manufacturing

VIJAY MITTAL | JOINT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES

### 03 RESULTS

### BoM profit surges

New Delhi: State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) on Wednesday posted a 36 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 1,406 crore in the third quarter ended December 2024 with rising interest income. The Pune-based lender had posted a net profit of Rs 1,036 crore in the October-December period a year ago. Total income increased to Rs 7,112 crore during the quarter under review against Rs 5,851 crore in the same period previous year, BoM said in a regulatory filing. The bank earned an interest income of Rs 6,325 crore during the quarter compared to Rs 5,171 crore a year ago. The

New Delhi, Jan 15: India's trade deficit narrowed to \$21.94 billion in December after last month's shocking surge to a lifetime high on the back of miscalculations in gold imports, government data showed Wednesday.

Exports contracted for the second month in a row by about one per cent year-on-year to \$38.01 billion due to global uncertainties, while imports rose by about 5 per cent to \$59.95 billion.

Key export sectors, including petroleum, gems and jewellery, and chemicals, have registered negative growth during the month under review. Petroleum product ship-

ments have declined by 28.62 per cent to \$4.91 billion last month. During the first nine months of this fiscal also, these exports contracted by 20.84 per cent year-on-year to \$49 billion.

However, textiles, electronics, engineering, rice and marine products recorded healthy growth in December 2024.

Cumulatively, during April-December this fiscal, exports recorded a growth of 1.6 per cent to \$321.71 billion and imports by 5.15 per cent to \$532.48 billion

Trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports, during April-December widened to \$210.77 billion from \$189.74 billion during the same period previous fiscal.

Briefing the media on the latest data, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that India's exports are doing better than



**TRADE DEFICIT SHRINKS** 

### **During April-December this fiscal, exports recorded** a growth of 1.6 per cent to \$321.71 billion and imports by 5.15 per cent to \$532.48 billion

This shows the resiliency of our exports. In all the three quarters of this fiscal also, we have done better. We are doing much better in

non-petroleum exports SUNIL BARTHWAL | COMMERCE SECRETARY

other countries both in goods and services.

'This shows the resiliency of our exports. In all the three quarters of this fiscal also, we have done better. We are doing much better in non-petroleum exports," he told reporters here. The ministry has recently

held a meeting with commercial wings of Indian Missions in 20 countries to deliberate on issues impacting exports and wavs to resolve them.

These 20 countries account for about 60 per cent of India's exports. In December last year, Barthwal said sectors which have registered healthy growth in exports included electronics, engineering and pharmaceuticals.

When asked about the revision of gold and silver import data for November 2024, the secretary said a committee has been set up to create a robust mechanism for publishing consistent data.

The government revised gold import data for November 2024, bringing down numbers by \$5 billion to \$9.84 billion.

As per the revised data, exports in November 2024 were down by 5.06 per cent to \$32.03 billion, while imports rose by 16 per cent to \$63.86 billion. The trade deficit stood at \$31.83 billion. "The data revision keeps on happening...we are following global practices of data release," Barthwal said.

Gold imports during the month under review rose by 55.4 per cent to \$4.7 billion December 2023. On the other hand. silver imports jumped by 211 per cent to

\$421.91 million. Raw cotton raw **IPORTS SURGE 5%** waste, used in the textiles industry, saw a surge in imports from

\$29.47 million in December 2023 to \$142.89 million last month. As per estimates, services

DEFICIT

NARROWS TO \$22BN

% TO \$38.01BN

TO \$59.95BN

export in December 2024 increased to \$32.66 billion compared to \$31.63 billion a year ago. During April-December 2024-25, the exports rose by 11.61 per cent to \$280.94 billion from \$251.71 billion in the same period previous fiscal.

In December, India's shipment rose positively to the US, Saudi Arabia, France, Bangla desh and Sri Lanka.

During the month, the top five import sources were China Switzerland, Thailand, Germanv and the US

Commenting on the data, Federation of Indian Export **Organisations** (FIEO) Pres ident Ashwani Kumar said the decline can be attributed to volatility in commodity and metal prices, along with ongoing international trade disruptions and currency fluctuations.

Geopolitical tensions in the Gulf region further exacerbated logistical challenges, affecting export flows to key markets like Europe, Africa, and the CIS (commonwealth of independent states), he said.

Kumar said there is an urgent need for enhanced support in the upcoming Budget.

Markets log gains for 2<sup>nd</sup> straight day SENSEX CLIMBS OVER 200 POINTS



of elevated US bond yields

strengthening dollar, and in

creasing FIIs outflows. Global

markets are cautious ahead

of the US December CPI infla

tion data, which is anticipated

to be in the elevated range in

the short term, limiting the US

Fed's ability to cut rates. Also

a rise in oil prices and dollar

appreciation is likely to affect

domestic inflation in the near

future," Vinod Nair, Head of

Research, Geojit Financial

From the Sensex blue-chip

Ports were the other big gainers.

BSE benchmark rose 169.62

points or 0.22 per cent to settle

at 76,499.63. The Nifty climbed

90.10 points or 0.39 per cent to

In the previous session, the

Services, said.

23.176.05.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 15: Benchmark indices Sensex and ticked higher for the second straight session Wednesday, buoved by buying in bellwether stock Reliance Industries. Zomato and Kotak Bank amid a largely firm trend in global markets.

However, elevated crude oil prices in the international markets and buying by foreign investors weighed on market sentiment, traders said.

The 30-share BSE index climbed 224.45 points or 0.29 per pack, Zomato jumped over 4 per cent to close at 76.724.08. During cent. NTPC. Power Grid. Kotak Mahindra Bank, Maruti, Tech the day, it jumped 491.42 points or 0.64 per cent to 76,991.05. Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, As many as 2,150 stocks ad-Reliance Industries and Adani

vanced while 1.806 declined and 108 remained unchanged on the BSE. The NSE Nifty advanced 37.15 points or 0.16 per cent to 23,213.20

"The domestic market continues to be volatile on account

### India's fiscal conditions to constrain credit strength in 2025: Moody's

median of around 57 per cent," Moody's said.

"Despite gains in revenue in recent years, we also expect debt affordability to remain much weaker than rated peers." it added.

It said politics and social unrest pose significant economic and fiscal risks. In APAC, geopolitical risks will persist in 2025. flowing from tensions in the US-China relationship and around regional hotspots.

Moody's assesses a low likelihood of military conflict in the Taiwan Strait or Korean Peninsula, and tensions will remain elevated, particularly driven by US-China relations. 'These tensions are shaping trade and investment flows, which may be further diverted away from China as the US tightens investment in strategic sectors, further weakening China's economy and dampening regional growth. However, this shift could benefit India and Southeast Asian economies,' Moody's said. A range of geopolitical and domestic political risks persist, it said, adding after elections in key economies, governments may need to make choices whether to fulfill pledges or to focus on fiscal consolidation.

**RBI to conduct daily** VRR auctions amid

### REUTERS

## tight liquidity

New Delhi, Jan 15: India's central bank said Wednesday it will conduct variable rate repo (VRR) auctions on all working days until further notice amid tight

liquidity in the banking system. Liquidity in the country's banking system stood at a deficit of Rs 2.09 trillion as of January 14, data

from the Reserve Bank of India

### **Rupee on correction track**

THE AMERICAN CURRENCY INDEX ALSO DESCENDED FROM A RECORD PEAK, ADDING TO THE GAINING MOMENTUM IN THE LOCAL UNIT

### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 15: The rupee extended its recovery for the second straight session and settled with a gain of 13 paise at 86.40 against the US dollar Wednesday, tracking favourable cues from domestic equity markets and softening crude oil prices.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.50 and slipped to the intraday low of 86.55 against the





bank was able to reduce gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) to 1.80 per cent of the gross loans by the end of December 2024 from 2.04 per cent in the year-ago period.

### RIIL net profit drops

New Delhi: Reliance Industrial Infrastructure Ltd Wednesday reported a 24 per cent decline in its third-quarter net profit as lower utilisation of infrastructure assets led to a fall in revenue. Consolidated net profit in October-December - the third quarter of April 2024 to March 2025 (FY25) fiscal - fell to Rs 2.74 crore from Rs 3.62 crore a year back, the company said in a statement. Its revenue fell 9.4 per cent to Rs 18.60 crore from Rs 20.52 crore in October-December 2023. This was "on account of lower utilisation of infrastructure assets," the statement said.

### HDFC Life profit rises

New Delhi: HDFC Life Wednesday reported a 14 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 415 crore in the December quarter. The private sector insurer's profit stood at Rs 365 crore in the year-ago period, HDFC Life said in a regulatory filing. However, total income declined to Rs 16.914 crore in the latest quarter from Rs 26.694 crore in the yearago period. The company's solvency ratio also declined to 188 per cent from 190 per cent as on December 31, 2023 as against the regulatory requirement of 150 per cent. For the nine-month period ended December, the life insurer posted a profit of Rs 1.326 crore as against Rs 1.157 crore in the corresponding period a year ago.

in 2025, although tension in US-China relations could benefit the Indian economy, Moody's Ratings said Wednesday.

New Delhi, Jan 15: India's

fiscal conditions will continue

to constrain its credit strength

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

In its report on Asia Pacific Sovereigns, Moody's Ratings said growth and inflation are levelling out, with strong domestic demand bolstered by modest easing in global and regional financial conditions. But proposed trade restric-

tions by the US would weaken economic output across the region

"India's fiscal conditions will continue to constrain its credit strength in 2025. We expect only gradual fiscal consolidation, and debt to remain significantly higher than the Baa-rated peer

showed. VRR auctions enable the Reserve

Bank of India (RBI) to inject liquidity into the system.

The auction amounts will be decided by the regulator, based on assessment of the liquidity conditions, and will be announced via a press release on the RBI website.

First of these auctions will be conducted January 16 for an amount of Rs 500 billion, the regulator said.

The RBI has conducted six VRR auctions so far this month to help cash-strapped lenders.

greenback. It also touched a high of 86.28 before ending the session at 86.40 against the dollar, registering a gain of 13 paise from its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee rebounded from its lowest-ever level and settled with a gain

of 17 paise at 86.53 against the

dollar. Choudhary, Anuj Re search Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said the rupee gained for the second consecutive session on weak US dollar and soft US 10-year treasury yields. A pullback in the domestic equities and overnight decline in crude oil prices also favoured the rupee. However, FII outflows Jan 08 Jan 09 Jan 10 Jan 13 (Inverted Scale)

RUPEE EXTENDED RECOVERY FOR SECOND STRAIGHT SESSION AND SETTLED WITH GAIN OF 13 PAISE AT 86.40 AGAINST DOLLAR

#### ON TUESDAY, RUPEE REBOUNDED FROM LOWEST-EVER LEVEL AND SETTLED WITH A GAIN OF 17 **PAISE AT 86.53**

capped sharp gains.

Analysts attributed the weakening dollar to lower-than-expected producer price index, as per the latest data released in the US.

Going ahead, Choudhary said the US inflation is expected to remain elevated and it may lead

which is likely to put pressure on the rupee. "Traders may take cues from CPI data from US and speech-

to a recovery in the US dollar,

es from various Fed speakers today. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 86.25 to Rs 86.65," he added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.22 per cent lower at 108.87.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.35 per cent to \$80.20 per barrel in futures trade.

### Meta warns India about impact of antitrust ruling

REUTERS

New Delhi, Jan 15: Meta may have to "roll back or pause' some features in India due to an antitrust directive which banned its WhatsApp messaging service from sharing user data with Meta for advertising purposes, according to a court filing by the US company seen

by Reuters. Meta is seeking to quash the Competition Commission of India's (CCI) November directive which found the company abused its dominance and "coerced" WhatsApp users into accepting a 2021 privacy policy which allegedly expanded user data collection and sharing, giv-

ing it an unfair advantage over rivals. The CCI has imposed a fine of \$24.5 million and a five-year ban on the data sharing practice in India, the biggest market for Meta where it has more than 350 million Facebook users and

over 500 million people using WhatsApp.

Publicly, Meta has defended its policy change and said it disagrees with the CCI order, but its appeal filing has taken a critical position on the watchdog's functioning and details how unnerved the US firm is about the CCI's decision.

The company is concerned that the WhatsApp-to-Meta user data sharing ban on WhatsApp will curb its ability to offer users personalized ads on Facebook and Instagram, according to a Reuters review of its nearly 2,000 page filing with the Indian

appeals tribunal dated Jan. 3, which is not public. WhatsApp publicly says it shares with Meta a user's phone number, transaction data, how they interact with businesses and mobile device information.

Detailing the ruling's impact for the first time, Meta said in its filing the data sharing ban could mean that an Indian



fashion business won't be able to personalize ads on Facebook or Instagram based on their interaction with a WhatsApp user regarding a specific clothing line.

"Under its widest interpretation, implementing the remedy will likely require Meta to roll back or pause several features engaged in selling advertising inventory in India - Facebook India Online Services - reported revenue of \$351 million in 2023-24, the highest in at least five years.

The Indian appeals tribunal will hear Meta's plea Thursday. Though the case could go on for weeks or months, the tribunal can put the CCI directive on hold in the meantime **GLOBAL CHALLENGES** 

The Indian antitrust concerns add to Meta's global woes. In HANGES COULD LEAD TO 2021, WhatsApp was **ROLLBACK OF SOME** accused to have violat-FEATURES, META ed the EU bloc's law by failing to clarify changes to its policy in plain and intelligible language. It later agreed to explain the changes to EU

> users The Indian case started in 2021 amid criticism of WhatsApp's privacy policy changes. Meta told the CCI the

changes were only to provide information about how optional business messaging features work and did not expand its data collection and sharing ability

But the CCI disagreed.

Its ruling in November said WhatsApp's policy pushed users to accept or risk losing access to the service and had no opt-out feature. The watchdog has ordered WhatsApp to now allow users to decide whether they want WhatsApp to share data with Meta or not

Meta in its Indian tribunal challenge also took a critical position about the CCI and its functioning, arguing the watch dog should have consulted with Meta and WhatsApp before passing directives to change company behaviour.

The Commission does not have the necessary technical expertise and knowledge to understand the ramifications of the remedies," Meta said.

and ucts." it said. "It Meta's and WhatsApp's ability to remain commercially viable," the company added,









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Facebook's registered entity





## PORTS



# **Eves annihilate Ireland**

### Women in Blue breach 400-run mark for the first time, joining Australia and New Zealand in that elite list

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rajkot, Jan 15: Records tumbled like nine pins as the Indian women's cricket team, powered by skipper Smriti Mandhana's 70-ball century, demolished Ireland by a whopping 304 runs to claim its biggest-ever ODI win and complete a 3-0 clean sweep here Wednesday.

The result of the match was a mere formality once India set Ireland a massive target of 436, and Ireland could only garner 131 before getting bundled out in 31.4 overs

India put the first step forward towards a crushing victory through record-breaking Mandhana (135, 80b, 12x4, 7x6) and her opening partner Pratika Rawal (154, 129b, 20x4, 1x6), reaching 435/5, highest total by an Indian team men's or women's — in ODIs.

India men's highest ODI total is 418/5 made against the West Indies in Indore in 2011.

Mandhana and Rawal added a whopping 233 runs for the first wicket in just 26.4 overs and there was no looking back.

Then spinners Tanuja Kanwar (2/31) and Deepti Sharma (3/27) took over, sharing five wickets among them to decimate the Irish line-up, which was well short on experience.

Orla Prendergast (36) and Sarah Forbes (41) added 64 runs for a fluent third wicket stand that helped Ireland to recover from a shaky 24 for two to reach 88 without further damage.

### SHORT TAKES

### Humpy's new target

Stavanger: Reigning World Rapid chess champion and Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy will return to compete in the Norway Chess Women in May. Currently ranked world number six in women's classical chess, Humpy aims to make her mark in the prestigious chess tournament. Humpy's return to Norway Chess Women highlights her remarkable career, filled with significant milestones. In 2002, she became the first Indian woman to achieve the GM title, securing her place in chess history. Today, she remains India's top ranked women's

But once Prendergast was cleaned up by Kanwar, India were all over

0

the tourlike ists 501 a bad rash, claiming the remaining

DREAMI en wickets for just 33 INDIA runs. It

> helped India eclipse their previous largest margin of victory (by runs) -249registered

sev-

also



435 - India's highest total. fourth-highest total in women's ODI 135 - Mandhana's fastest century 154 - Newcomer Pratika's maiden ton

against the same opposition in 2017 at Potchefstroom. South Africa.

### **Stunning Smriti**

Mandhana's 10th ODI century came off just 70 deliveries as the left-hander surpassed Harmanpreet Kaur's 87-ball hundred mark against South Africa last year.

It also set the tone for India breaching the 400-run mark for the first time, joining Australia and New Zealand

Women's ODIs 304 - India's biggest-ever ODI win in that elite list. Mandhana was in her usual

233 - Mandhana, Pratika

become fourth Indian pair

to record a 200-run stand in

destructive self, and was not afraid to take the aerial route over the 'V' and clear the 30-yard circle.

#### **Prolific Pratika**

Pratika complemented her captain brilliantly with a measured knock, making the occasion even more special by notching her maiden international century in her sixth innings.

planned. I was just thinking not many matches you can go out and attack. So, I thought of trying a few shots. Sometimes it comes off, sometimes it doesn't. Today it did SMRITI MANDHANA

Pratika relied on precise placement and deft touches in the point region and she

It (onslaught) was

showed her aggression only after reaching the ton, hitting Freya Sargent for her first six. Demonstrating hunger for bigger knock pow ered

way to an impres-URCHIN 150sive — a perfect blend of composure and aggres-

а

she

her

sion. Their 233run partnership made them only the fourth Indian pair to record a 200run stand in Women's ODIs. It was

also the third instance of both

I just had the celebration in my mind when I would kiss the helmet, and I was visualizing that. I just wanted to do that PRATIKA RAWAL

Indian openers scoring 10. hundreds in ODIs, following and Reshma Gandhi Mithali Raj's feat at Milton Keynes in 1999 and Deepti and Raut's ship at Potchefpartnerin 2017 -- all stroom 🛓 Ireland. against duo added 90 The

🚩 during the runs 5.5 Power Play and in the subsequent 10 overs, maintaining

a brisk scoring rate. Mandhana reached her first century of the calendar year with an exquisite drive off Arlene Kelly. Kelly bore the brunt of her

67

onslaught, conceding successive sixes in one over. Even Kelly's variations, in-

cluding back-of-the-hand deliveries, were dispatched with ease, with the Indian batter following a six with another boundary in the 24th over. Mandhana also took on Ireland's leading bowler, Prendergast, smashing her

for a boundary down the ground and a towering six over long-on. Promoted to No 3, Richa Ghosh also returned to form, making a 37-ball fifty, her fifth

**INDIA OPEN** 

in ODIs.

"While the displaced people fought tooth and nail for their substance, the club had to fight the stigma and the tag of a 'Ref ugees Club' to establish itself as

the leading football club of the country," East Bengal general secretary Rupak Saha wrote in a statement. "We are surprised that even

75 years after independence, we are in a situation where East Bengal Club has been victimised in almost every match of the ISL.

### Yuki-Olivetti make opening round exit

• Former world number one Rohan Bopanna and his new **Colombian partner Nicolas** Barrientos also made a first-round exit Tuesday PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne. Jan 15: India's Yuki Bhambri and his French partner Albano Olivetti bowed out of the Australian Open after the game. a straight-sets loss to local wildcards Tristan Schoolkate and Adam Walton in the opening round here Wednesday winner. The Indo-French duo, struggling with errors, fell 2-6, 6-7 in

### Indian teams enter Kho Kho WC guarters

Bhambri and Olivetti failed to New Delhi, Jan 15: The Inconvert any of their three break dian men's Kho Kho team sepoints and committed five doucured its quarterfinal berth ble faults, compared to just one with a convincing 70-38 victo by their Australian opponents. ry over Peru in the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup 2025 at the After surrendering the first set without much resistance, Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium Bhambri and Olivetti showed here Wednesday. The Indian more resilience in the second women's team too continued set, holding serve for most of its dominant run as it over-

powered Iran by 84 points, However, they fell behind 0-2 winning the match 100-16 earwhen Schoolkate and Walton lier Wednesday. Continuing their impressive executed a stunning backhand run in the tournament, the Men in Blue demonstrated their championship credentials with a dominant performance that showcased their tactical superiority and athletic prowess. A strong start set the tone for Team India as they dominated the opening stages of Turn 1, though Peru showed resilience with a brief defensive stand in Turn 2. India's dominance extended into Turn 3, and by Turn 4, the score had mounted to 70 points. Earlier in the day, it took 33 seconds for Team India to get the first batch of Iranian women to be eliminated, setting the platform for another win for the women's team.

### Men disappoint in singles INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE Lakshya, Priyanshu, Prannoy

*suffer contrasting defeats* while Anupama, Tanisha-Ashwini enter second round

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 15: Former national champion Anupama Upadhvava advanced to the second round, but India's men's singles campaign suffered a setback as none of the players could make it past the opening round on Day 2 of the India Open here Wednesday. For all the talk of home advantage. Kiran George was the only Indian to survive in men's singles as Lakshya Sen, Priyanshu Rajawat, and HS Prannoy all suffered contrasting defeats on Day 2 of the USD 950.000 Super 750 tournament. In women's singles, Anupama joined PV Sindhu in the second round, defeating her good friend and fellow Gopichand Academy trainee Rakshitha Sree 21-17, 21-18. "This is my first time playing in India Open



### **'STEP-MOTHERLY TREATMENT'**

### East Bengal seek govt intervention over ISL's bias

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 15: Alleging "step-motherly treatment" by the Indian Super League orga nizers, century-old East Bengal club has sought Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandavi ya's intervention, claiming that systemic bias, the outdated 'ref ugees club' tag, and refereeing controversies have stalled their progress in the top-tier football

competition. The incident occurred during the 'Kolkata Derby' in Guwahati Saturday where East Bengal lost to arch-rivals Mo hun Bagan by a solitary goal.

The club claimed the match was marred by biased officiating, including the denial of a clear penalty and a contro versial yellow card issued to midfielder Souvik Chakrabarti which led to his red card and team being reduced 10 players.

In an emotional plea to the sports minister, East Bengal highlighted how the 'refugees club' tag has led to their ongoing marginalisation in Indian foot ball. Fight, Fight and Fight -- this has been the perennial motto of East Bengal club for the last 150 years. This club and its support ers have endured the tumultuous period pre and post-partition only through its fighting spirit.

player in the country. Her achievements include winning the World Rapid Championship title twice -- in 2019 and 2024.

### Odisha Warriors lose

Ranchi: Soorma Hockey Club continued their strong showing in the Women's Hockey India League, winning their second match by overcoming Odisha Warriors 2-1 here Wednesday. Hina Bano (6') opened the account for Soorma Hockey, while Sonam (47') doubled the lead in the last quarter. Freeke Moes (57') scored a late goal for the Warriors but could not change the outcome of the match. Warriors came out all guns blazing in the initial minutes with Balieet Kaur cutting through the rival lines and forcing Soorma goalkeeper Savita into action. But soon, Soorma Hockey Club initiated a counter attack through Ajmina Kujur on the left wing and found Hina Bano, who deflected the ball past Jocelyn Bartram to score the first goal.

### Djoko breaks a tie with Federer

Melbourne: Novak Djokovic added yet another record to his lengthy list, breaking a tie with Roger Federer for the most Grand Slam matches played in tennis history by reaching 430 Wednesday at the Australian Open in what was a tougher-thanexpected second-round victory. Djokovic improved to 379-51 for his career at major tournaments, a .881 winning percentage, by defeating 21-year-old Portuguese gualifier Jaime Faria 6-1, 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-2 in a match briefly interrupted by light rain before Rod Laver Arena's retractable roof was shut. Oh, yes, Djokovic already holds so many marks, many of which used to belong to Federer - who went 369-60 during his 429 Slam matches.

The Indo-French pair later lost their service game again due the men's doubles match that to a forehand error to trail 2-4, lasted one hour and 20 minutes. ultimately conceding the match.



Super 750 level. Last year, I was just watching all of them play. Before this I had played in the Super 500 but the standard at this level is different. Last year, I played my first 750 in China and last week also played the Malaysia Super 1000. These performances help me believe that I can be their equal. I have the speed and compatibility against the top players," said Anupama.

The 19-year-old from Almora will now face former world junior champion and sixth seed

Priyanshu put up a valiant fight before succumbing 16-21, 22 20, 13-21 to world number 7 Kodai Naraoka of Japan in a physical battle that lasted an hour and 22 minutes. Meanwhile, Prannoy was defeated by Su Li Yang of Chinese Taipei 21-16, 18-21, 12-21 on the adjacent court.

Tomoka Miyazaki of Japan.

Lakshya, who won the Syed Modi International Super 300 title last month. sunk to a 15-21 10-21 loss to Chinese Taipei's Chun Yi-Lin in another opening-round match

game against

name is in

### LOOKING FOR FORM

### Struggling stars return to domestic cricket

### DREADFUL PERFORMANCE IN BGT LEADS PLAYERS LIKE ROHIT, PANT, JAISWAL AND GILL TO PRACTICE IN RANJI TROPHY

#### REUTERS

New Delhi, Jan 15: The Ranji Trophy has benefited from an unexpected sprinkling of stardust with several big-name India batters returning to domestic cricket looking to find form after their horror run over the last three months.

Rohit Sharma and his team are still smarting from a 3-0 series sweep at home by New Zealand followed by a 3-1 hammering in Australia which ended their decade-long hold on the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

The setbacks also ended their hopes of making a third straight World Test Championship final.

order.

India dropped their woefully out-of-form captain Rohit for the final test in Australia after he failed as both an opener, his usual role, and in the middle



second phase of the Ranji Tro-Rohit, who has ruled out test phy beginning January 23.

retirement despite managing The 37-year-old is likely to play at least one of Mumbai's reone fifty in his last 15 innings in the format, trained with the maining two Group A matches, nine years after his last appear-Mumbai squad at the Wankhede Stadium Tuesday ahead of the ance in the country's premier

domestic first-class tournament. Rohit's opening partner Ya shasvi Jaiswal, who was India's highest scorer in the five-test series in Australia, has made himself available for Mumbai's home match against Jammu and Kashmir next week.

Top order batter Shubman Gill, who tallied 93 from five innings in Australia, will be seen in action in Punjab's next match against Karnataka in Bangalore.

Rishabh Pant, whose natural aggression occasionally bordered on recklessness in Australia, will play Delhi's next match against Saurashtra. The exciting stumper-batter has not played a Ranji Trophy match since the 2017-2018 season.

India's next test assignment is a five-match series in England from June 20.

### 'Silent' Kohli sent blunt Ranji Trophy message

As suspense continues to remain over Virat Kohli's participation in the next Around of Delhi's Ranji Trophy 2025 campaign, the star batter has been sent a blunt message by the Delhi & District Cricket Association. Rishabh Pant, also a player hailing from Delhi, has already made himself available for selection, while a number of other players like Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal have agreed to play in the Ranji Trophy as well. Though Kohli has been named in Delhi's provisional squad, there's still no confirmation of his availability. DDCA secretary Ashok Sharma has urged Kohli to take a leaf out of Mumbai

cricketers and play Delhi's next Ranji Trophy Saurashtra, beginning January 23. "Virat Kohli's the probables list. Rishabh Pant has confirmed that he will be available for selection for Delhi's Ranji Trophy game against Saurashtra in Rajkot January 23. Virat should take inspiration from Mumbai cricketers and play for Delhi in domestic cricket, whenever he is available. See in Mumbai, there has always been a culture where their India players turn up for Ranji matches whenever available. It is missing in the North, especially in Delhi," Sharma said. Batting stalwart Virat Kohli also returned with a battered reputation from Australia having managed 190 in nine innings, including an unbeaten 100 in the series opener in Perth.

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